

Cuz's Corner

By Dennis Frost

I welcome you, one and all, to the first official Cuz's Corner of Autumn 2009! These past few days qualify as my definition of picture perfect weather - one begins the day with warm layers of clothing but short sleeves are the order of the day a couple of hours later! Being a long-time Charlotte resident, I feel one of the rites of the fall season is the annual Festival in the Park. Over the past few years, the CFS stage has become a musical anchor of the weekend and this year was no exception. Surviving wind, rain, and the collapse of the plywood stage backdrop, spirits were high and the music and dance were outstanding. A big thanks to all the musicians, dancers, and volunteers that made it all happen!

As mentioned in my last article, one of my personal fall pilgrimages is my annual seven-hour trek west to Nashville for the Americana Music Association Conference and Festival. In good weather, the drive up to Asheville and across the Great Smokies and Cumberlands is among some of the finest driving this side of the Mississippi. Well, folks, that was not the case this year, as the same system that flooded Atlanta was draped across the mountains both coming and going. If any of you have driven I-40 over the mountains to Knoxville sandwiched between a retaining wall and a parade of tractor trailers in a driving rainstorm, you know what I'm talking about. As Jane Fonda used to say, "No pain, no gain." No doubt, life improved dramatically as I took my seat at Douglas Corner on my way into town for my hotel check-in. Hey, music does come first!

As usual, high points were too many to list, but favorites included a solo Marty Stuart performance at the Station Inn, an unannounced two-hour John Fogerty show in the tiny Mercy Lounge, a songwriter round with Elizabeth Cook, Mary Gauthier, and Nancy Griffith, and the awards show in the Ryman, pretty much swept by Buddy and Julie Miller. As usual, it's hard to beat bluegrass or traditional music at the Station Inn!

There are many festivals that have lots of great music, but I feel the workshops, keynote interviews, and special events around town are what make the AMAs so special.

I suppose my very favorite intimate moment was a fascinating keynote interview with Rosanne Cash. Much of the discussion revolved around her years growing up and her relationship with her iconic father and stepmother, Johnny and June Carter Cash. I found it extremely fascinating listening to her talk about her lifetime process of coming to terms with and embracing a family legacy that has no equal in American music. Evidently this journey began about 35 years ago on Johnny Cash's tour bus when Johnny, afraid his nineteen-year-old daughter lacked an understanding of country music, handed her his list of the one hundred essential country songs recorded before 1973. Rosanne kept this handwritten list all through the years. It includes Appalachian

ballads, southern gospel, as well as perfectly crafted gems by the likes of A. P. Carter, Jimmie Rodgers, Hank Williams, Bob Dylan, Woody Guthrie, and many, many others. Evidently the idea of recording some of these songs began during a promotional tour of her Grammy-nominated **Black Cadillac** disc, a work and song cycle dealing with the loss of her father, mother, and her stepmother, June. The result and Cuz's pick of the month is her just released **The List**. This CD is just perfect, beautifully produced by her husband/producer John Leventhal, and includes such gems

as **Motherless Children, Sea of Heartbreak** (with Bruce Springsteen), **I'm Moving On, 500 Miles, Girl From the North Country, Silver Wings, Heartaches by the Number** (with Elvis Costello) and **Bury Me Beneath the Willow**. I just love this disc and was left wanting to hear her



"Cuz" and Little Bit

record the other eighty-eight songs on the list. (www.rosannecash.com) Johnny and June cast a loving shadow over the AMA proceedings this year, as they have every year since they walked into the hereafter, hand in hand!

Another highlight included an open house at the Compass Records studio where Johnny Cash, Waylon Jennings, and other legends recorded in the past. The legendary **Highwaymen** project was recorded here! An unplugged set by **Bearfoot** in the studio, as well as good food and good company, made the trek across a difficult city to drive in well worth it. By the way, Compass Records, co-

founded by musicians Alison Brown and Garry West, is a class act, as is this talented couple. As a note for our lovers of Celtic music, Compass has recently absorbed the Green Linnet catalog and may well have the world's largest collection in this genre today. (www.compassrecords.com) Compass is for and about the artist, so I would encourage you to check them out.

Quickly, another magic moment was catching a CD release party for Kieran Kane's **Somewhere Beyond the Roses** disc at tiny Grimey's record store. It's always a treat to hear the artists on a disc performing it all the way through just the way it was laid down in the studio. I especially enjoyed the guitar work by legendary session man and producer Richard Bennett, as well as a cameo appearance by the legendary David Olney. There is just something about a hundred or so folks squeezed between the funky record bins in a living room-sized space listening to great organic music! This album not only is typically poetic and topical, but also has texture and groove to spare and is another October pick.

In the news, the renovated Don Gibson Theater in Shelby has its grand opening on November 21, featuring **Marty Stuart and the Fabulous Superlatives**. Hats off to the fine folks at Destination Cleveland County for turning the idea of making Shelby a musical destination into a reality! Also, speaking of little ole Shelby, don't forget about the Art of Sound Festival, October 22-24, in Uptown Shelby, featuring **Jones and Leva, Elizabeth Cook, Darin and Brooke Aldridge**, Malcolm Holcombe, **The Harris Brothers**, Kari Sickenberger (**Polecat Creek**), **Fayssoux McLean and Brandon Turner**, and many others. (www.ccartscouncil.org) We at WG WG radio are proud to be hosting all the stages this year!

"No miss" October shows in town include **Joe Newberry and Mike Compton** on October 9th at the Great Aunt Stella Center (CFS gathering - see the article!), plus **Blue Highway** with **The Farewell Drifters**, a co-bill of John Cowan with **The Waybacks**, and the **Carolina Chocolate Drops**, all at beautiful McGlohan Theater. Please check out www.maxxmusic.com for all the dates and times. There is more live music than you can "shake a stick at" the rest of the year, so I hope to see you at a venue or festival soon. As always, if you have great recordings to share or know of a "no miss" concert or festival the readers would be interested in, please contact me! The best in music!

Cuz

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