

Cuz's Corner

By Dennis Frost

Welcome to yet another edition of Cuz's Corner. By the time you read this, I'm hoping the thermometer is a bit more cooperative. Today it's 101 degrees outside and climbing. I guess it's a good day to stay indoors and flash back to cooler times in the North Carolina mountains and a couple of festivals I attended that exceeded my high expectations.

It's been three years since I last attended **FloydFest** and I must say I was amazed at how the community of Floyd, Virginia has improved on an already beautiful festival. The music ranged from old-time and traditional bluegrass at the Virginia Folklife stage to traditional African music and dance at the Global Village stage. The setting is wonderful, the food was exceptional, and the festival had energy one rarely experiences these days. I must also mention those new pegged-beam permanent stages that Bob the Builder and neighborhood volunteers have constructed – just amazing! **FloydFest** demonstrates what a community can accomplish by working together for the greater good of both the community and the planet. The weekend was all about music and community, so hats off to Floyd and I'll see you next July 24-27!

Last weekend I attended my first **Ola Belle Reed Festival** in Lansing, North Carolina. A half dozen other music lovers from the Charlotte area and I had the time of our lives. This is an extremely small festival that never loses sight of its purpose, which is to pay homage to the music and the family of **Ola Belle Reed**. I really can't recall a festival as small as

this with such a high level of musicianship. If you are tired of those big ole festivals that sometimes tend to lose sight of what it's "all about," this festival might be for you. The highpoints for me were **The Whitetop Mountain Band**, area favorites; **Tim O'Brien's** solo set; and the exceptional **Laurelyn Dossett, Kari Sickenberger**, and **Polecat Creek**. Laurelyn and Kari's songwriting workshop in the old turn-of-the-century Lansing schoolhouse absolutely blew my wife, Carolyn, and me away – their songs and harmonies are just simply as good as it gets.

Speaking of **Polecat Creek**, this is a great place for this article to morph into my monthly gig of the month and that will no doubt be their September 14th concert for the CFS monthly Gathering. When you combine an instrumentalist of the caliber of **Riley Baugus** with two amazing vocalists and songwriters, one of which (Laurelyn Dossett) has won MerleFest's Chris Austin songwriting contest in the gospel category and has a song on the upcoming Levon Helm CD, you have a no-miss concert. Please read the write-up on this show and I hope to see you there!

Another compelling September (30th) show takes place at the Neighborhood Theatre (www.neighborhoodtheatre.com) and features **Rodney Crowell, Elizabeth Cook, and Tim Carroll**. Across the street the night before (29th), **The Believers** bring their brand of folk/country/ punk originals to The Evening Muse and are definitely worth a listen. (www.maxxmusic.com) Craig, Cynthia and their pug, Beenieboy, take the stage at 8 PM.

There were a bunch of great CDs that came out since last time and

Polecat Creek's Ordinary Seasons was one of them. If you like well constructed songs, beautiful harmonies, and back-up instrumentals that accompany perfectly, this one should be part of your collection. The street date for this recording is October 9, but is available through the **Polecat Creek** website and will be at the September Gathering – hint, hint! (www.polecatcreek.net)

Mock Turtle Soup's Bound for Carolina is another recommendation that not only has Carolina roots, but also connections to the Charlotte Folk Society (**Willie Repoley** and **Chris Holleman**). This CD is both well played and sung throughout and covers about every aspect of acoustic folk music from Celtic to old time and bluegrass to Western and Hispanic genres and back again. It's great to see such a young group of players with such a mature take on folk music – well done! (www.mockturtlesoup.net)

Staying close to home, you might check out the new one from some CFS members and Gathering performers, the **Buffalo Creek Stringband (Jackie Burgess, Annie Grifey, Joy Moser, and Scott Dixon)**. Released near the third anniversary of the passing of their band mate and friend **John Bloom, Weary Woman Blues** is dedicated to his memory. I found it to be a potent instrumental album and suitable for listening on a long road trip. (www.buffalocreekband.com)

Now let's take a trip over the mountains, past Knoxville and the Cumberland plateau, to the town of Nashville and check out a couple of hot releases I am enjoying immensely. The self-titled **Kane Welch Kaplin** is the third great effort from this Americana super group. I just can't say enough about the groove, the instrumental prowess of Fats Kaplin, and the fine songs from both **Kieran Kane** and **Kevin Welch**. In a month of excel-

lent releases, this one is Cuz's "pick of the month." (www.compassrecords.com)

The connection between **Bill Monroe**, bluegrass, and **Elvis Presley** goes all the way back to the release of Elvis's cover of **Blue Moon of Kentucky**. In celebration of the 30th anniversary of **Elvis's** untimely passing, check out the new release from **Shawn Camp** and **Billy Burnette** called **The Bluegrass Elvises**. (www.americanrootspublishing.org) Yep, you guessed it – these are bluegrass covers of your very favorite **Elvis** tunes with the backing of some of the best bluegrass instrumentalists in the business. This one is just plain fun to listen to.

I also especially love **Peter Case's Let Us Praise Sleepy John** for not only its songwriting execution and social commentary, but for its live feel. No wonder, as this ex-street performer and consummate troubadour is the real deal. Catch him live on October 12th at The Evening Muse. (www.maxxmusic.com)

Finally, **Ryan Adams** has released, in my thinking, the finest and most consistent solo effort to date with his edgy **Easy Tiger** release. This release has been number one on the AMA charts for weeks now and hopefully signals the fact that this most creative North Carolinian has now found a consistent voice. I am extremely impressed with this CD! That's all the room I have for this month, so, as always, get out and enjoy some live music in September and don't forget CFS's big 25th Anniversary coming up in October!

Cuz

To share your thoughts about your favorite music with Cuz (especially old-time), contact him either at dcmfrost@mindspring.com or 704-532-8846.

2007-2008 Gathering Schedule

CFS Gatherings begin at 7:30 PM and are family-friendly and open to the public. Admission is free. Donations are greatly appreciated and are used entirely to pay the performers and sound professionals. Gatherings feature an hour-long concert, followed by slow and fast jam sessions and a song circle. Except where noted, concerts are in the Bryant Recital Hall of the Sloan-Morgan Building, 1220 Elizabeth Avenue, on the Central Campus of CPCC in Charlotte. Free parking is available in the CPCC Staff & Theater Deck, off Fourth Street, between Charlottetowne Avenue (formerly Independence Boulevard) and Kings Drive.

October 12, 25th Anniversary Reunion Gathering. Broach Hall, St. John's Baptist Church, 300 Hawthorne Lane, Charlotte, 5:30-10 PM. Jamming, covered dish dinner, socializing, concert with **The Annabelles, Celtic Trader Jammers, The Kee Family and The Mallard Creek String Band**. Bring a dish to share or donate \$5 to help cover expenses.

November 9, An Evening With Jim Lloyd. Multi-instrumentalist, fiddler's convention champion, and humorist from Rural Retreat, Virginia shares songs, tunes, and stories.

December 2, CFS Holiday Gathering. Charlotte Museum of History Great Hall, 3500 Shamrock Drive, Charlotte, 5:30-9:30 PM. Pot-luck dinner followed by a performance by young singer/songwriter **Natalie Royal** and open jam sessions. Free and open to the public; bring a dish to share or donate \$5 to help cover expenses.

January 11, Irish, Scottish, and Bluegrass music by champion Celtic fiddler Jamie Laval and mandolin champion Ashley Broder. www.jamielaval.com

February 8, Observe Groundhog Day with storyteller and naturalist Doug Elliott as he illuminates and entertains with Groundhogology: Whistlepigs and World Politics. www.dougelliott.com

March 14, Traditional North Carolina bluegrass by Wood and Steel (Ed Dodson, Joey Lemons, Jacque Smith and Snuffy Smith). www.woodandsteelband.com

April 11, CFS Young Talent Showcase gives younger musicians such as **Carson Hedberg**, Appalachian dulcimer player and 2007 Marilyn Meacham Price Scholarship recipient, a chance to shine! These talented performers assure us that the music is being passed on and it's in very capable hands.

May 9, Old Time Stringband Music by Surry County's Pilot Mountain Bobcats (Nancy Sluys, Jacki Spector, Allin Cottrell, and Bill Sluys). Since 1989, the **Bobcats** have played at MerleFest, LEAF, Augusta and many other regional and national events. www.bobvillemusic.com

June 13, Bluegrass and Gospel by Nashville Bound, the very talented younger generation of The Hatley Family.

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