

September 2008 Cuz's Corner

*By Dennis Frost*

As the saying goes, be careful of what you ask for. That was certainly the case last week as the tropical storm that wouldn't go away dumped, by my calculations, about ten inches of rain in my neighborhood, causing widespread flooding and many a headache. I think the drought was busted! Other than the deluge, the past weeks have been full of magical musical moments, but I suppose my greatest thrill came from the reincarnation of concerts at the wonderful Great Aunt Stella Center with the first CFS Gathering of the season. By 7:00 that evening, it was obvious that any fears of folks not coming downtown for a CFS gathering were unfounded. And by the time the **Little and Flowers Families** were set to play, the floor and a sizable part of the balcony were filled with smiling faces. There is nothing like those family bands to illustrate the passing of the torch from one generation of pickers to the next – both bands did an excellent job, skillfully christening the Stella stage for the 2008-2009 Gathering season!

Another August highlight was catching David Lindley's solo set at the Muse. Not only is Lindley a rock legend, having played with the likes of Dylan, Jackson Browne, Linda Ronstadt, Ry Cooder, **Blind Boys of Alabama**, **Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young**, and many others, but since 1981 he has been a student of world musical styles and a mad collector of stringed instruments from around the world. Imagine the traditional **Oh, Death** played on a Middle Eastern oud and performed Reggae style. My high point, though, was his rendering of a traditional Iraqi folk tune, which basically had no beat or rhythm structure – mesmerizing! For interested instrument collectors, go to David Lindley's website ([www.davidlindley.com](http://www.davidlindley.com)) and click on photos/instruments. You will find there a gallery of his instrument collection. There are certain performers I have met through the years that go well beyond being accomplished musicians and I feel David Lindley is one of them. I see these rare folks as spirits that come among us to share the gift of music!

Every once in a while, one stumbles into a special musical happening, which was the case on a group camping trip we took to the beautiful Grayson Highlands State Park in Virginia. As we were checking in, we noticed the park was presenting Wayne Henderson and friends in the amphitheater. Turns out his "friends" were Zeb (guitar) and Samantha Snyder (fiddle) of the **Snyder Family Band**, thirteen and nine years old, respectively. It's been many a year since I've heard two youngsters so accomplished on their instruments at such an early age. You can check them out at [www.snyderfamilyband.com](http://www.snyderfamilyband.com) or, better yet, look for them at an event near you. Wayne Henderson, sporting the 400th handmade guitar of his career, was his usual wonderful and humble self. Hats off to the staff at Grayson Highlands for always featuring the traditional music of the

Crooked Road every weekend and understanding that the history of the area, the culture, and the land are all interconnected!

Speaking of young, talented bluegrass bands, I would highly recommend checking out **Bearfoot** at the Evening Muse on September 10. ([www.Maxxmusic.com](http://www.Maxxmusic.com)) I caught this band from Alaska last year at MerleFest and was struck by their original tunes, harmonies, and instrumental prowess, especially for a band of such a young age. This may be a sleeper!

It's always exciting when the world's best dobro player and master composer comes out with a new disc and Jerry Douglas's **Glide** satisfies. If you like variety on a disc, this one flirts with jazz, includes a New Orleans funeral march dedicated to the victims of Katrina, contains a wonderful Rodney Crowell composition sung by Rodney himself, a dash of newgrass, and an outstanding instrumental version of **Home Sweet Home** with none other than Earl Scruggs. Other guests include Tony Rice, Sam Bush, Edgar Meyer, Luke Bulla, and others. Many thanks to Alison Krauss, now touring with Robert Plant, for giving Jerry a break from the road so he could treat us to some of his original music – it's been a while. ([www.jerrydouglas.com](http://www.jerrydouglas.com))

For you bluegrass fans out there, I'd like to recommend the sophomore effort from the **Grascals**. **Keep on Walking** features great original material, fierce picking, some unusual covers, and great harmony vocals. The sound is fresh and new, but, at the same time, the **Grascals** stay true to their traditional bluegrass roots. No wonder this disc is a chart topper! ([www.grascals.com](http://www.grascals.com))

Sometimes the most enjoyable discs come out of left field and are a total surprise. Australia's Kasey Chambers and Shane Nicholson's **Rattlin Bones** fits that description with its lean, traditional instrumentation, soaring vocal harmonies, and great originals. It's great to see Kasey come back to her folk roots; this is reminiscent of her early material. Add Shane Nicholson's prowess on all things stringed and his pure tenor vocals, and you have Cuz's pick of the month. This one is a keeper!

I'll be heading once again across the Cumberland Plateau on the 17<sup>th</sup> of this month to the Americana Music Association Conference and Festival in Nashville. Being that I'll be spending not one, but two evenings in the historic Ryman (Levon Helm's Ramble and AMA Awards Show), attending four days of showcase performances and panel discussions, I'm sure I'll have plenty to talk about in October. See you at the Stella for **Mangsen and Gillette** and for all the jams – it's going to be a good one!

Cuz

*To share with Cuz about your favorite music, contact him at 704-532-8846 or [dcmfrost@mindspring.com](mailto:dcmfrost@mindspring.com).*