

Cuz's Corner

By Dennis Frost

I surely hope all of you had a wonderful summer season and are looking forward to the fall colors and cool temperatures as much as I am. It's again that time of the year when I anticipate my annual pilgrimage to Nashville and the Americana Music Association Festival and Conference. Every year it strikes me just how regional roots music is by its very nature. Isn't it wonderful that in an age where it is difficult to distinguish one city from another, due to the nationwide abundance of strip malls and fast food chains, each part of the country has its own unique rootsy sounds? For years, a hot topic at the AMA conference was how to define Americana music. Thankfully, now the consensus seems to be that it depends on which part of the country you live in. When you think about it, we have an amazing variety of musical styles just within North Carolina. Aren't we lucky we appreciate a genre of music that isn't symbolic of those strip malls and fast food restaurants? By the way, this year's conference features Buddy Miller, Marty Stuart, Nancy Griffith, Roseanne Cash, **Asleep at the Wheel**, John Prine, Sam Bush, Jerry Douglas, **Hot Club of Cowtown**, Rodney Crowell, **The Traveling McCourys**, and way too many more to list. In addition to the great music and informative panel discussions, the conference is a great opportunity to see friends from all over the country that I only get to see once a year!

I don't know about you, but my listening habits definitely go through phases. Right now, I'm on a duet singing kick for some subconscious reason, so I thought I would share just a few of my favorites. For old-

time bluegrass duets, I just love the two CDs **Norman Blake and Tony Rice** recorded together around twenty years ago – the first is self-titled and the second is simply named **Two**. Both Blake and Rice are known for their virtuosity on guitar, and these recordings feature harmony vocals that are as tight as they get. Doc Watson is featured on the second disc, which spices up the proceedings significantly! **Tony Rice** also paired up with **Ricky Skaggs** in 2000 for a recording more in keeping with the old-time country duet recordings of the early years of the last century. This self-titled disc features sparse instrumental work and there is no doubt the vocals are the name of the game here. Another wonderful recording in this vein is one by **Dudley Connell (Johnson Mountain Boys and The Seldom Scene) and Don Rigsby (Lonesome River Band)** entitled **Meet Me by the Midnight**. I've been a long time fan of Dudley's baritone voice and it blends perfectly with Don's high lonesome tenor.

Male-female duets have long fascinated me. At their best, there is a tension between the two singers that just plain works if the chemistry is just right. Every blue moon a recording of original songs emerges that just blows me away. **Chip Taylor and Carrie Rodriguez's *Let's Leave This Town*** is, for me, that recording. These performers put out two more great

recordings before going their separate musical directions, but this one simply has the magic. As a personal note, it's been great to get to know the both of them over the years, as they are both the nicest folks you would ever want to know. In fact, when I was going through the confusion and trauma of my prostate cancer diagnosis, it was Chip that really encouraged me to come to the Americana Music Association Conference, mentioning that it's in these times that you really need your adopted family – advice taken, Chip!



"Cuz" and Little Bit

We lost a great last month when we lost Mike Seeger. Not only was he known for being a collector of traditional song and instrumental stylings, but he and the **New Lost City Ramblers** added their own modern interpretations to the music and passed it on to the next generation. I feel the revival of bluegrass

and old-time music that occurred in the early 1980s was due in part to the life's work of Mike Seeger – he will be missed! Having also lost Teddy Kennedy last month, it occurred to me that we should perhaps give a daily prayer of thanks to those who give us so much of themselves for the common good.

The concert scene always kicks into gear in September, and this year is no exception. Speaking of duets, check out **The Believers** at The Evening Muse on September 10th. This is original country music with a punk attitude at its finest! On September 24th, for a sound indicative of the music coming out of the Kentucky coal mines early last century, you might just enjoy **Jeni**

and Billy, also at the Muse. These artists created a stir opening for Claire Lynch a number of months ago. Changing gears a bit, one of the great songwriters of our time, **James McMurtry**, will appear on September 15th at the Visulite. James' social commentary is sharp and edgy and his live shows rock! More information on these shows can be found at www.maxxmusic.com.

Late in September, the Neighborhood Theatre might appeal to roots music fans as the legendary **Marty Stuart and his Fabulous Superlatives** take the stage on the 25th. Mixing roots, country, Native American, and gospel and featuring one of the best bands in the business, including legendary guitarist Kenny Vaughn, this one is a no-miss. The next night on the 26th, I would highly recommend the **Railroad Earth** show. **Railroad Earth** is pigeonholed as a jam band, but I just see them as an amazingly good band that mixes together all the roots music branches together in a creative and captivating way. These guys are amazing players. (www.neighborhoodtheatre.com)

That's it for this month! Hope you have a great September and we'll visit again next month. I'm sure to have some AMA adventures to share. Until then you know the drill – get out and enjoy yourself some live music!

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