

Bluegrass fans enjoy spring album releases

The warm days of May usher in a spate of new Sugar Hill releases. Doc & Merle Watson's bluegrass album, completed only days before the younger Watson's untimely death, features Bela Fleck, Mark O'Connor, Sam Bush, T. Michael Coleman and Alan O'Bryant.

West Coast superpickers Byron Berline and John Hickman display their prowess on the instrumental album, *Double Trouble*. "The Shining Path" leads the way to some exceptional gospel music from the Bluegrass Cardinals, while the new Doyle Lawson & Quicksilver gospel bluegrass offering is tentatively entitled *Beyond The Shadows*.

Those who could not make it to Broadway to see The Red Clay Ramblers in Sam Sheppard's "A Lie Of The Mind" can at least hear the music on the soundtrack album, also new this month on Sugar Hill.

Doc & Merle, a one-hour television special focusing on acoustic guitar's best loved father/son duo, debuted at Appalachian State University in Boone, N.C., on March 26.

Summit, the fiery hot upstate New York band best known for their backup work for the legendary Frank Wakefield, have completed their first long player for Rooster Records, *The Tall Brown Grass*.

The Lewis Family, after 16 years on the Canaan label, have signed with Nashville's Riversong Records.

The Virginia Squires, stout-hearted enough to spend January in Alaska on a Defense Department tour, head across the waters this month for nine days in Holland and France.

For the past two summers, Rodney Dillard has produced the evening amphitheater presentations at Silver Dollar City, the massive mountain theme park near Branson, Mo. He's been helped by a talented crew, including banjo picking wife Beverly Cotton and original Dillard mandolinist Dean Webb. They joined Rodney for an in-the-studio recreation of their show just released on Flying Fish as *Rodney*

Another Country



Art Menius

Dillard At Silver Dollar City.

Although much of the material is familiar, it receives energetic treatment with drums and electronic keyboards. Certainly not traditional bluegrass, the record finds vocalist Dillard and fiddler Fred Carpenter in very fine form indeed.

John Hartford will appear May 13 with the Tulsa Symphony Orchestra. The orchestra has the musical resources to recreate the wall-of-fiddles approach of John's recently completed followup to 1984's *Gum Tree Canoe*. No title or release date yet for what promises to be yet another direction in acoustic music for Hartford. Those who've been lucky enough to preview the product have commented on its full, melodic sound, comparing it in some ways to Bill Monroe's triple fiddle experiments from the mid-1950s.

Peter Rowan departed April 21 for a 30-day tour of Great Britain, France and Italy. Keeping the incomparable Rowan company are a couple of guys named Jerry Douglas and Mark O'Connor.

Hot Rize recently returned to Colorado from their most extensive West Coast tour to date. They'll have precious little time to regroup for the festival season after playing 17 Far West dates between April 2 and April 20.

Like the Nashville Bluegrass Band, Hot Rize has recorded a video record in stereo dig-

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Bluegrass music fans enjoy

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ital sound for Cap Wineberger, Jr.'s Sun Videos.

Rick Alred has replaced Billy Wheeler as banjoman for Ferrum, Virginia's Lonesome River Band. Alred, who picked the five-string on the second Summer Wages album, is best known for his vocal and mandolin work with that group, Bluegrass Blend, and, of course, The Country Gentlemen.

Gibson's Charlie Derringer handed a relieved Bill Monroe his completely repaired 1924 Lloyd Loar F-5 mandolin on March 4. The instrument had originally been thought vandalized beyond hope of restoration.

When Eddie Adcock brought his Talk Of The Town to Nashville's remodeled Station Inn on March 7, the quartet was joined onstage by musical guests David Allen Coe, Gene Johnson and Pete Kuykendall. The Adcock band was in Music City to wax their bluegrass record as a group.

Bill Monroe, Peter Rowan, Riders In The Sky and The Nashville Bluegrass Band appeared at The Station Inn during January in a benefit for dancer Jacky Christian, who lost her home to a New Year's Eve fire.

Rounder Records recently released an album of the Si Kahn, John McCutcheon, and Susan Freundlich "Signs of the Times" project. McCutcheon said he believes a video of the live tour will also appear soon.

New old-time musician McCutcheon and Trapezoid founder Paul Reisler spent 17 days in January touring and performing in Nicaragua. Their taping of Nicaraguan folk musicians will appear on the forthcoming Rounder album.

Returning stateside, Reisler rejoined Trapezoid for a three-week swing through Texas, Arizona and California during March.

The Echoes of Bluegrass picked up four tro-

phies, including Best Bluegrass Band and Best Album, at the seventh annual Canadian Bluegrass Awards, sponsored by *Canadian Bluegrass Review* and the Northern Bluegrass Committee. Ottawa's Mike O'Reilly won for both Entertainer and Composer of the Year.

The Greenbrier Boys, John Herald, Bob Yellin, and Ralph Rinzler, who proved to Southerners a quarter century ago that Northerners can play bluegrass, will make a few choice reunion appearances this summer. The Newport and Philadelphia folk festivals are among the dates for the outfit, which disbanded in 1968.

The April taping of *Fire On The Mountain*, the weekly bluegrass program aired on The Nashville Network since March of 1983, was suspended as part of a widespread budget cut-back at TNN. The show, at one time the network's top-rated offering, may be revived. It currently can be seen at 1 a.m. (CST) on weekdays.

"Carolina Sky," Mike Cross' musical salute to his native home, will be a theme song for an hour-long special on cultural events in the Tar Heel State. Cross will narrate the spring broadcast on the North Carolina Center for Public Television.

Chuck Webster, co-host of the Saturday evening bluegrass program on WTQR-FM in Winston-Salem, N.C., reported that the two-hour show received a whopping 19.9 market share during the most recent Arbitron sweeps, easily outdistancing all the other radio offerings of all kinds in that market for the 5-7 p.m. slot.

I'll be seeing you at the festivals, but if we don't cross paths, just send your news and views to me at Rt. 1, Box 710, Pittsboro, NC 27312.

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