

Andrew Calhoun – Bio

Andrew Calhoun was born in New Haven, Connecticut on 30th November 1957. The Calhoun family later settled for a time in Long Branch, New Jersey. Andrew's father worked for Bell Laboratories, and they eventually moved to Naperville, Illinois. Andrew is the youngest of four siblings, and has one brother and two sisters. Calhoun's mother attended Middlebury College in Vermont, studied French, and upon graduation became a high school teacher. Andrew's father read to the Calhoun children from the Bible every Sunday, while their mother fulfilled that duty every night in the process introducing the quartet to countless wonderful books.

According to Andrew, growing up was a mixture of playing baseball with his brother Matthew and the local kids and reading Marvel Comics. In Illinois, Andrew's mother began to house *troubled kids* from New Jersey who were experiencing problems at home. According to Andrew "*They were hippies, and played guitars.*" Enamoured, the youngster asked his parents for a guitar. His initial guitar lessons were with Anne Jones of Lombard, Illinois. Aged thirteen, and weekly for the ensuing year, Calhoun travelled into Chicago with his parents where he saw John Prine, then a postman, perform his songs in a city club. "Goin' Down To See John Prine" on Andrew's latest album "**Tiger Tattoo**" recalls that time. Concurrently, Andrew began writing songs and went on to perform in public soon afterwards. With his brother Matthew and Doug Tursman on banjo, they formed a short-lived trio called The Osbornes. When they broke up, Andrew began performing as a solo act in local coffeehouses.

As a teenager Calhoun attended Glenbard West High School and during his free hours relentlessly practised playing his guitar. His musical influences at that time included Elizabeth Cotton, Mississippi John Hurt, Bob Dylan, Kris Kristofferson, Etta Baker, Joseph Spence, Joni Mitchell, Leo Kottke, Leonard Cohen and, perhaps, most importantly Ewan MacColl and Martin Carthy. Once he turned sixteen Andrew began travelling into Chicago where he performed in open mics at The Earl Of Old Town and Somebody Else's Troubles, clubs that, sadly, no longer exist.

Aged twenty Calhoun made his base Evanston, Illinois. These days, Chicago's social centre for alcoholics is known as Harper House, but when Andrew performed there, on a monthly basis, in his late teens, it was called Save The Alcoholic and subsequently Center For Street People. Two management board members of the centre financed Andrew's debut recording, "**Water Street**," which was released by the local Hogeye label in 1983. Andrew subsequently made a couple of recordings for another Chicago imprint, Flying Fish, which was founded and owned by the late Bruce Kaplan. These days, Rounder Records own and manages the Flying Fish catalogue.

In the late eighties Andrew published a book titled "**Twenty-Four Poems**" and later recorded a tape of guitar tunes "**Banks Of Sweet Promises.**" He continued to perform in the Chicago area and after teaming up with Kat Eggleston, the duo recorded a couple of tapes that featured folk ballads. In 1992 Calhoun founded Waterbug Records and in the ensuing years the label has released fifty albums, and distributed *hard to find* self-releases by folk artists. Among the artists who have recorded for or had their work distributed by the label are Chuck Brodsky, Cosy Sheridan [#], Kate MacLeod, Dar Williams, Steve Fisher [#] and Michael McNevin [#]. During the nineteen-nineties Andrew managed to record and release three solo albums via Waterbug. Andrew first attended the Kerrville Folk Festival in the early nineties, and as a tribute to *his creation* a handful of Waterbug artists were featured in a two-hour long mainstage showcase during the 1999 event. Andrew moved to Portland, Oregon later that year and had to curtail his public performances for a time when he was struck down by tendonitis [inflammation or irritation of a tendon]. In the Fall of 2002, Calhoun's "**Tiger Tattoo**," a collection of thirteen original songs penned by Andrew and one traditional cover, was released by Waterbug. Andrew's next project involved *the translation* of a dozen old Scottish folk ballads, and the resulting recording "**Telfer's Cows**," was released in early 2004. "**Shadow Of A Wing**," a collection of his own compositions, was released later that year. In early 2005 Calhoun moved the base of Waterbug Records back to Illinois, and in the late summer of that year released an album containing sixteen previously unrecorded songs that he composed between the ages of fifteen and twenty-four, titled "**Staring At The Sun : Songs 1973 - 1981.**"

With a running time of over seventy minutes, and credited to Andrew Calhoun & Campground the thirty-five track "**Bound To Go**" is a thoroughly researched collection of spirituals, shout songs, prison ballads and secular folk songs. Andrew's notes in the accompanying twenty-four page liner booklet are copious in detail [including a three-page Bibliography and one page of recommended recordings]. Accompanying Calhoun on this project, which he has dedicated to his late mother Joy, are numerous Chicago area session

musicians including Andrew's daughter Casey, Bruce Roper, Sue Demel [Sons Of The Never Wrong] and Fred Campeau [The Polecats, The Volo Bogtrotters, The Cook County Refugees], while from farther a field there's contributions from Dave Moore [harmonica], Bob Soper [fiddle, vocals] and Richard Shindell [vocals].

Note.

[#] - Kerrville Folk Festival New Folk Songwriter competition winners.

Discography :

with Kat Eggleston "**Jack Spratt**" cassette only [1992] ; "**First Comes Love**" cassette only [1995] :

Solo "**Water Street**" [1983] ; "**The Gates Of Love**" [1984] ; "**Walk Me To The War**" [1987] ; "**Banks Of Sweet Primroses**" cassette only [1990] ; "**Hope**" [1993] ; "**Phoenix Envy**" [1996] ; "**Where Blue Meets Blue**" [1999] ; "**Tiger Tattoo**" [2002] ; "**Telfer's Cows**" [2004] ; "**Shadow Of A Wing**" [2004] ; "**Staring At The Sun**" [2005] ; "**Bound To Go**" [2008] :

Arthur Wood

Kerrville Kronikles 12/02, 01/04, 10/04, 09/05 & 04/08

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