

MAVERICK

CD REVIEWS - THE NEW RELEASES

Andrew Calhoun GRAPEVINE

Waterbug Records

★★★★

On the label it says: *GRAPEVINE*—sic. a robust and intoxicating, mainly traditional folk music infusion

GRAPEVINE features nineteen, mostly old, folk songs, meticulously selected, researched—certainly so, based on Andrew's comprehensive liner note—and in a few cases restored to their original configuration, drawn from sources on both sides of the Atlantic. Seven of the foregoing titles bear composer credits, the remainder are trad. arr. Recorded at home in Chicago using only a Zoom H4n (a digital recorder, that measures all of 70mm * 150mm * 35mm), Andrew Calhoun's voice and acoustic guitar are the only instruments heard on this recording.

Performed a cappella, Andrew opens the collection with the children's lullaby / *Gave My Love A Cherry*. It appears that the foregoing was a particular favourite of his late mother Joy, while the musician's own childhood favourite, a three-verse version of *I Ride An Old Paint* appears later. I alluded to both sides of the Atlantic earlier. That said, the 'old world' selections are strictly Irish—Andrew's 2004 collection TELFER'S COWS amply promoted Scottish folk ballads. Set in Donegal *Gartan Mother's Lullaby* is based on a poem by Seosamh MacCathmhaoil (real name Joseph Campbell (1879-1944)) and therein Emerald Isle locations and figures in Irish mythology are referenced. The lyrically humorous *The Little Beggarmen*, a jig, follows and the Irish contingent is completed by *Johnny Has Gone For A Soldier* (adopted by the military during America's Revolutionary War), Charles O' Neill's *The Foggy Dew* a remembrance of those who perished during the 1916 Easter Uprising and, finally, the contemporaneous *Buskers* by Colum Sands. The latter, a tribute to Vedran Smailovic, the celebrated 'Cellist of Sarajevo,' appeared on the collaborative recording SARAJEVO TO BELFAST (1999) by Smailovic and Colum's older brother Tommy.

Back in them there United States of Americy, Calhoun's rendition of Stephen Foster's *O Susanna* features a couple of reworked verses, while *Noah's Dove* and *Hanging Out The Linen Clothes*, are drawn, respectively, from the 20th century collections of folklorists John Lomax and Carl Sandberg. Also gracing this collection is the well-known spiritual *O Mary Don't You Weep*, the evergreen river song *Shenandoah* and retaining a watery theme, *15 Years On The Erie Canal*. As for train related songs there's the blues influenced *John Henry* and the original version of William Saunders' *Casey Jones*.

Andrew became familiar with the ballads *We'll Rant And We'll Roar* (a whaling song based on *Spanish Ladies*) and *Sperm Whale Fishery* (aka *The Greenland Whale Fishery*) from a UK release by A L Lloyd and Ewan MacColl, however because of the place names referenced, both lyrics possess an international flavour. This almost sixty-minute long folk song collection closes, appropriately, with the hymn *How Can I Keep From Singing?*

Arthur Wood

<http://waterbug.com/catalog/index.php?cPath=26>



Becki Sue & her Big Rockin' Daddies BIG ROCKIN' BOOGIE

Self-released

★★★

Entertaining mix of Chicago blues and retro rock'n'roll

This Seattle-based outfit bring us an unpretentious selection of bar-room boogie. The music jumps and swings and I imagine they get a regular supply of gigs over there in Seattle. There's nice slice of saxophone and harp by Jim King. Lead singer Beckie Sue has a raunchy voice and a lively personality that comes through the recordings—they look good as well—Becki's outfits, the band hats and boots are all colourful. The tracks are a mix of originals and some covers including *Rocket In My Pocket* and *Neighbour, Neighbour*. The originals are okay without being outstanding. There's no compelling reason for readers to purchase this as it won't be anything you haven't heard before, but as a record of a good hard working band it works well and I'm sure they'll sell shed loads at gigs and locally. *Vicky Martin*



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maverick 61