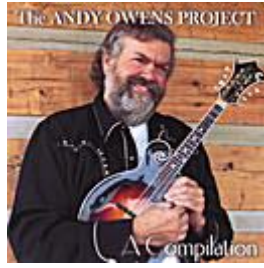


# Mp3 The Andy Owens Project - A Compilation



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Since 1975, Andy Owens has played Bluegrass music, sometimes in the mainstream, sometimes in the tributaries or the branches, but always with one thing in mind, to perform music that speaks to him, and that he hopes speaks to his listeners. 16 MP3 Songs COUNTRY: Bluegrass, COUNTRY: Traditional Country Show all album songs: A Compilation Songs Details: If multi-instrumentalist, globe-trotting bluegrass ambassador Andy Owens had a single-word on his business card above his telephone number and email address, it would read: Adventurer. This is how Andy Owens does things with an adventurous, contagiously enthusiastic spirit. In addition to multi-faceted musical talents (he sings, writes songs, produces engineers, builds repairs instruments, and plays mandolin, banjo, guitar, fiddle, bass, Dobro and pedal steel), Owens is committed to taking bluegrass music literally around the world, with performances in 34 different countries, so far. Andy has three albums of original bluegrass music to his credit, recorded in the 90s for the Real Records label: Kerosene Circuit (1992), which includes all-star cast Sam Bush, Start Duncan, Jerry Douglas, David Grier, Alan OBryant Terry Eldredge; Real Music (1994); and One Eye Open (1997). Originally from Louisville, Kentucky, Andy has either been leading or playing in bluegrass bands since 1975. Past credits include The Fredonia Rebellion, The Foves, Danger in the Air, Killbilly and The Andy Owens Project, in addition to his current appearances with Czech bluegrass superstars, Druha Trava. He also served on the International Bluegrass Music Associations Board of Directors from 1991-2000 as an Artist Composers rep, with the last years in the Vice-Chair and Chairperson seats, and served two terms on the International Bluegrass Music Museum Board of Trustees, including a stint as Vice-Chairperson. Andy lived in several towns in Kentucky while growing up, with moves to Los Angeles, West Virginia and then Texas while his father pursued a medical education and practice. In fact, while in Dallas in the 80s Andy convinced Dixie Chicks founder Robin Macy that she

needed to leave folk music and play bluegrass with him in a band they co-founded called Danger in the Air. He later introduced her to the Erwin sisters and recorded the first Dixie Chicks demo for the band. It was three songs, he recalls, smiling: Leaving Louisiana in the Broad Daylight, Rider and Sally Goodin. I have a cassette copy of it somewhere. I wonder what that is worth? Owens also introduced the Chicks to Austin-based producer/engineer Larry Seyer, who helped them with their first full length CD, Little Ol Cowgirl. Larry, in turn, introduced the girls to Lloyd Maines, father of current lead singer, Natalie Maines, and the rest is history. Andy likes to joke, If not for me, there would be no Dixie Chicks, but they still dont take my calls now. Owens was introduced to bluegrass music by friends. I coon hunted a lot as a teenager in east Texas, hunting until 3 in the morning and driving an hour and a half to get home at 5 in the morning and then going to school the next day, he recalls. Back in the early 70s WBAP would play a bluegrass breakdown at the top of hour, and I always made sure I had the radio on during those late night hunting trips. I had some coon hunting buddies who played, and I just kind of became surrounded by people who played. I picked up a banjo and took some lessons from Gerald Jones, Andy continues. I went to Austin College in north Texas, which was a pre-med specialty college. I have no clue how my dad got me in there, he marvels. I was coon hunting every night and dragging in at 3 or 4 in the morning and going to my physics classes and it was not where I needed to be. Andy left school and took up construction work, continuing to play music (and coon hunt). He met some young musicians at a local jam session who were about to become freshmen students at Stephen F. Austin University in Nacogdoches, Texas and decided, on a serendipitous whim, to register at their college the following week to continue the picking sessions. I was there for six or seven years, Owens says. Thats where I met Steve Hartz, whos written a lot of songs for me, and I also met a lot of other people there who ended up making my whole business career happen later in life, too. It was kind of weird. I never did well in school, Andy admits. I always felt like Id rather play the banjo. I started singing and playing the banjo and then I started the mandolin, and whatever band configuration I was in whatever we needed I would just learn to play it. I wanted to play everything and be the utility guy in the band. In line with his adventurous nature, Owens, who now holds a masters degree in business administration, has been very successful in a number of endeavors that developed parallel to his music career over the years. In fact, if you look up the word, Entrepreneur in the dictionary, theres probably a photo of Andy there with a big smile on his face, holding his F-5 mandolin. In addition to construction work, past businesses include managing practices for

medical doctors in the Dallas area and a sleep disorder clinic. Andy is also an avid Scuba diver, with more than 300 dives in his log book, including training in deep technical diving and depths of 330 feet on dives exploring shipwrecks and reefs. In 1999 Andy and Cathy Owens sold everything and left Dallas with their two sons to go on a 12-month musical walkabout they called The Bluegrass Expedition. Endorsed by Gibson Instruments, Fishman, DAddario and Intellitouch Tuners, the family performed in 28 countries before ending up back in the states 63,000 miles later, settling in the mountains of North Carolina near guitar stylist Doc Watson's home town, Deep Gap. In addition to current gigs managing a telecom marketing business (1-800-Pathways.com) and the bed breakfast-style Lonesome Pine recording studio (lonesomepine.com), Andy made the decision in 2006 to return to an aggressive international performing schedule, beginning with a late summer and fall tour with Druha Trava, followed by a long string of dates in May 2007 with the band. Some shows will be billed as Andy Owens Druha Trava, which will feature Owens on lead vocals and mandolin, backed by Lubos Novotny on resonophonic guitar, Lubos Malina on banjo whistles, Emil Formanek on guitar and Petr Sury on bass. Renowned Czech singer/songwriter/guitarist Robert Krestan will lead Druha Trava at some appearances, with Andy as a featured guest. Owens has a new CD out, Drive South, with Druha Trava on his own 1-800-BLUEGRASS label, and they're working on a second one. Drive South, featuring Andy on lead vocals and mandolin backed by Druha Trava, has a couple of originals on it, alongside covers from The Allman Brothers, John Hiatt and Warren Zevon. No matter which way the set list zigs or zags, Andy's soulful, free-flying vocals and galloping mandolin are the connecting elements, backed by a band that can literally handle anything thrown at them. They're so tight, it's just unreal, Andy says about Druha Trava. They pay such attention to dynamics, more not playing than playing sometimes, and only playing things that make a difference to the song. Also, they're a great band because they play together all the time. Most of the members have been together for 13-20 years in one configuration or another. Known for a unique, progressive sound that combines elements of bluegrass and central Euro-flavored folk music with a rock-edged driving rhythm section, intricately layered instrumental arrangements and poetic lyrics in Czech, Owens says the current Druha Trava line-up is playing more traditional-sounding bluegrass than ever. I told Robert, It's so great to me that you're playing bluegrass, and he said, Well, that's my music. What else can I do? Andy laughs, appreciatively. They're playing more straight-ahead bluegrass, and some of Robert's songs have been translated to English, but it's kind of difficult. It would be like trying to sing English words to a Japanese

folk song melody. It would be hard to make it work. Andy says the camaraderie he feels with this band, both musically and personally, is like family. They're my brothers, and it's been that way since I met them 12 years ago at the IBMA convention, he states emphatically. It was a chance meeting, the first year they came to Owensboro (KY). I was always looking for a jam that didn't have a mandolin player, and they were jamming in the back room in the Bluegrass Unlimited suite. I picked up a mandolin and started playing with them. Then we got to be friends, and I started to facilitate tours for them. They would come to my house and use my vehicles. In fact, Druha Trava toured across America for a period of seven years in one of Andy's vans. It just feels like home when I'm in the Czech Republic, Owens notes. It's a brotherhood, based on a lot of time on the road. But you know, I have friends like that all over the world. For example, I've spent so many late nights talking to Sab (Watanabe Inoue, in Japan) about bluegrass. I have a lot of friends who don't speak English at all, and I don't speak their language. Sometimes someone will translate for us, and sometimes we'll just hang out. Music is the universal language, especially when you're in some country where you can't talk to each other, but you're singing harmony together! It's a strange thing. Owens says most people in the U.S. don't realize how famous Druha Trava bandleader, Robert Krestan is. He's literally like the Bob Dylan of the Czech Republic, among the top three or four singer/songwriters, ever, Andy explains. He has written national classics it would be like writing 500 Miles or Blowin' in the Wind. He's written songs that, when you go and play for a crowd of 3000 people, they know every word. His songs are in folk song books, and they're taught to every kid in grade school. He's unbelievable. At 51, Andy's goal is to perform bluegrass music in 100 countries around the world before he turns 60. I remember one of the last conversations I had with (Bill) Monroe, he recalls. I told him one of the things I was doing was trying to take bluegrass to other parts of the world, and that was something he told me to do. He said, I want you to take my music to as many countries as you can. So that was kind of my direction from above, Owens smiles respectfully. That conversation was one of the few times I got to spend much time with Monroe. So I kind of got this mind set: wouldn't it be cool to be a bluegrass missionary, in a more secular nature not a religious missionary, but a bluegrass missionary from a musical standpoint? Before we went on the Bluegrass Expedition, I'd already toured Japan a couple of times, I played in China with Killbilly, and I'd already been to Australia and done a few things in Europe, Owens continues. I really like the idea of playing for people who don't get to see what a bluegrass band from the U.S. sounds like very often, he confides. They don't take it for granted. And at the same time, I get to

travel to some pretty amazing places. During the Expedition, we probably spent 70 of our time in peoples houses vs. staying in hotels, and its such a better way to travel. I made so many friends all around the world, and its kind of a bittersweet thing. Most of my best friends are 8 to 10,000 miles away, and I only get to see them once or twice a year. Its kind of sad in a way, but I feel good that Ive been able to go and play in so many places. Andys creative spirit has recently returned to songwriting. In fact, hes penned 15 new compositions since August, 2006. Known in the past for writing songs that tell real stories about real people, Andy says now hes writing about everything. Im writing about mid-life crises, he laughs, noting, I turned 50 this past year and it was kind of a wake-up call. Im writing about making the best use of your time, I wrote some love songs, and Im writing more ethereal songs more about life and getting older, songs that are more philosophical in nature. I think I just had the weirdest songwriting experience, ever, he reveals. My best friend of 35 years who got me started in music was recently diagnosed with terminal cancer, and I felt that losing him was going to be like losing a journal of my life history. I was doing a night Scuba dive in Bonaire off the coast of Venezuela, and I had this song line pop into my head underwater, which was, Tell me my life story, a song about losing a good friend. This buddy of mine loved to hear about all my adventures; he was a stay-on-the-farm kind of guy. I thought I would finish the song under water, so a few days later I dove by myself to a shipwreck called the Helma Hooker, and at 100 feet deep crawled inside in the dark, hung up a light and with several tanks of air wrote the rest of the lyrics. When I tried to get out I was by myself and I got stuck, and I thought, Oh, no, I dont have the melody yet! I cant die here! but I wrenched myself free and got out. The sad part is that although I didnt know it while I was writing the song, simultaneously my friend was dying of complications from his cancer. I had to rush back and bury him. I will finish the song soon, I hope, and maybe put it on the next album with Druha Trava. His newest album with Druha Trava, as yet un-named, is in the process of being finished and will include mostly Owens original songs, with a few songs from Kristofferson and Mark Knopfler. Owens says, I am really proud of this record. It is the first time I have done a record with mostly my own original songs, and the sound is fresh with such a great feel from the band. It was recorded in the Czech Republic with Owens personal portable recording equipment. Im proud of that, too, he adds. I engineered, produced and recorded the whole thing on the road with the band in several different really neat locations in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. This album will be out in time for the May 2007 tour. When hes not touring overseas, Andy and his 14-year-old son Cameron Owens, on bass, perform stateside with Andy Owens

1-800-Bluegrass and a newly formed band called freeGrass that appeals to the local college and young Deadhead market. The latter band, inspired by the New Jersey-based Railroad Earth band, features an eclectic line-up. Its kind of a jamgrass band with drums and a really good rhythm section, and a lot of original music and some covers, too, Owens explains. We have a really good fiddler named Bob Kogut. He plays old-time and bluegrass; hes just a real driving, solid fiddle player. Cameron plays bass and cello. Randy Paisley plays guitar, banjo and Dobro. Im playing mandolin, mandola, octave mandolin, guitar and probably some banjo and pedal steel. Then weve got this guy named Zawadi Morrowa former classmate of my son Stuart and a really fine musician. He plays keyboard, sax, flute, guitar, bass, whistles and drums, and hes good on all of them. Hes a scholarship pianist at Appalachian State University. What I want freeGrass to be is a dance band with bluegrass sensibilities. Whenever Andy Owens picks up his Gibson mandolin, whether its locally with his son at his side for new college-aged audiences or in some far-flung location halfway around the world backed by Druha Trava or with a group of local musicians perhaps in China, his intent is to boldly take bluegrass music where it has never gone before, in addition to showing off great bands and musicians he feels honored to share the stage with. Bluegrass music is lucky to have Andy Owens, the big man with a Kentucky bluegrass heart wearing a Texas cowboy hat, helping to spread the genre around the globe with such an adventurous, fun-filled spirit. They couldnt ask for a better ambassador.

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