



ANDY COHEN

One of our greatest living fingerstyle guitarists

ANDY COHEN IS A VIRTUOSO FINGER-STYLE GUITARIST and a walking folk-blues-roots music encyclopedia. Growing up in a home with a piano and lots of Dixieland Jazz records, he got hooked on the music of Big Bill Broonzy and the Jim Kweskin Jug Band during the Folk Revival of the sixties. Then, when he was 17, Andy heard South Carolina's Rev. Gary Davis play at the Brandeis Folk Festival, and the effect on him was profound. He has devoted the rest of his life to studying, performing, and promoting traditional blues and folk music of the pre-World War II era. Beyond his virtuosity on guitar, Andy also plays Clawhammer banjo, Boogie Woogie piano, Old Time fiddle and pretty much anything else with strings on it. He is also an enthusiastic proponent of a miniature piano called a Dolceola, a chord zither with little piano keys.

His music is a product of that era, interspersing intimate first-generation Delta, Piedmont and big-city covers with a handful of originals, providing aural relief for those seeking a respite from the misery of modern times.

He's toured with Martin, Bogan and Armstrong, John Jackson, Rev. Gary Davis, Brother Daniel Womack, Rev. Dan Smith, Jim Brewer, and Honeyboy Edwards. He also worked extensively with Walt and Ethel Phelps, Big Joe Duskin, Pigeat Jarrett, Etta Baker, Big Boy Henry, and Son Thomas. He's also helped support a number of his mentors and younger players, by organizing festivals and other venues for them to play in.

Andy has written about several of the old masters and studied their

work in a systematic way. Many of his students are now professional touring musicians. One thing for sure is, the boy can pick. He is one of a few people around today who had a chance to learn from the old generations, get this good at it and continue to cherish and preserve the old traditions. He has been assiduous in sharing that expertise in classes, camps, and anywhere people are making music. Andy has about twenty full length recordings to his credit on multiple labels.

Along the way, he earned a Master's Degree in Anthropology, which fits nicely with his fondness for diggin' up bones, musical and otherwise. His passions come together in his essay on "The Hands of Blues Guitarists," published in *Ramblin' On My Mind: New Perspectives On the Blues*, edited by David Evans (2008). His other writings are mainly reviews for *Sing Out* and a raft of unpublished poems ('expostulations') that pop out of him during emotional moments.

His wife, Larkin Bryant, passed away a year ago. Since that time Andy has reinvigorated her Folk and Blues label, Riverlark Music, which she founded in 1984, and is turning their house into a finishing school for Folkies.

At an Andy Cohen concert, expect to hear blues rooted in Mississippi, the Piedmont, Memphis, and Chicago, as well as some ragtime, gospel, and original tunes. "With tons of style, a well-used voice and an astounding familiarity with early folk/blues, Memphis-based guitarist Andy Cohen sounds as if he's been playing on somebody's front porch for generations. But Cohen doesn't just perform these tunes, he lives in them." – Fred Kraus, BluesInTheNorthwest.com.

TESTIMONIALS

Andy Cohen's breadth of knowledge in the field of blues music and his consummate musicianship are matched only by his ability to communicate with, entertain, and educate any audience. – HEATHER WOOD, PROGRAM CHAIR, FOLK MUSIC SOCIETY OF NEW YORK, INC.



Andy Cohen wows people of all ages and backgrounds. It was great to see new fans of traditional music being recruited at the concert he did last year at The Green Door! We were honored that he also performed a lot of his own wonderful compositions. The audience found it not only entertaining and fun, but educational as well. We want him back soon!

– CHRIS AND GRANT AT THE GREEN DOOR, HACKENSACK, MN

Andy Cohen is one of our greatest living fingerstyle guitarists, and probably the authority on the playing styles of Reverend Gary Davis, Blind Blake and other giants of early blues and ragtime guitar styles. He is also a gifted and enthusiastic teacher of instrumental skills and received many accolades from students when he worked for me as our fingerstyle guitar specialist at Midwest Banjo Camp.

– KEN PERLMAN, DIRECTOR, MIDWEST BANJO CAMP, HOLLAND, MI

Andy Cohen is our roots. His reverence for the greats of yesterday, and genuine love of the flawed humans that inhabit the lyrics, shows us how to listen to these old songs. The years fall away when you listen to Andy, and you get to see the strong shoulders that the current generation of music makers is standing on. – SARAH CRAIG, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CAFFE LENA, SARATOGA SPRINGS, NY

AWARDS

- 2014 Lantern Bearer's Award from Folk Alliance Region Midwest (FARM).
- 2012 Lifetime Achievement Award from the California Autoharp Gathering.
- 2011 The Eisteddfod Award from The Pinewoods Club of New York Eisteddfod Traditional Music Festival — given for dedication, inspiration, and service to the practice and dissemination of traditional folk song, music, and dance. Festival Director Dr. Jerome Epstein said, "We decided to give the award to Andy, one of this year's performers, because of his outstanding contributions to the field of traditional music, as performer, collector, and advocate."

MAJOR FESTIVAL PERFORMANCES

- California Autoharp Gathering
- Chicago Blues Festival
- Clearwater Festival
- Eisteddfod Traditional Music Festival
- Fox Valley Folk Festival
- Kansas City Blues & Jazz Festival
- Kent State Folk Festival

- King Biscuit Blues Festival
- Mariposa Folk Festival
- Memphis Dulcimer Festival
- Mississippi Valley Blues Festival
- Old Songs Festival
- Ottawa Folk Festival
- Owen Sound Folk Festival
- Philadelphia Folk Festival
- Smithsonian Folklife Festival
- Sunflower River Blues Festival
- University of Chicago Folk Festival
- Vancouver Folk Festival
- Wheatland Festival
- Winnipeg Folk Festival
- Augusta Heritage Festival
- Old Town School of Folk Music
- Pinewoods traditional dance and music camp
- Port Townsend Blues Week
- Folk Alliance Director of Traditional Studies / Resident Folklorist
- Staff Member Common Ground on the Hill
- Prairie Home Companion
- Woodsongs Radio Hour

PLUS hundreds of clubs, coffeehouses, folk festivals, workshops and house concerts, old folks homes and elementary schools across the USA and Canada in a career spanning more than 50 years.

DISCOGRAPHY

EARWIG MUSIC www.earwigmusic.com

- *Tryin' to Get Home* (2021)
- *Small But Mighty Songs For Growing People* (2021)
- *Road Be Kind* (2015)
- *Built Right On the Ground* (2010)

RIVERLARK MUSIC www.riverlark.com

- *Tuxedo Blues* WITH Joe LaRose (GREEN LINNET, 1981, REISSUED, RL, 2020)
- *Hot Dogs On Down* WITH Joe LaRose (RL, 2018)
- *Dolceola Favorites* (RL, 2008)
- *Play It a Long Time* (RL, 2007)
- *Mississippi Heavy Water Blues* WITH Larkin Bryant (RL, 2004)
- *Preachin' in that Wilderness* (MARIMAC, 1991, REISSUED, RL, 2003)
- *Ridiculous Instrumentals* (RL, 2002)
- *Grinnin' In Your Face* WITH David Rice (MARIMAC, 1993, REISSUED, RL, 2001)
- *Oh Glory, How Happy I Am* (RL, 1997)

Andy Cohen CDs on Earwig Music and Riverlark Music are distributed by CPI Distribution. Digital distribution worldwide is by The Orchard.

OTHER LABELS

- *Four Hands No Waiting* WITH Jack Radcliffe (WEPECKET ISLAND, 2003)
- *Shuffle Rag* WITH Joe LaRose, Rick Ruble, Gary Hawk, Sue Truman (JUNE APPAL, 1979)



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