

Antonio Andrade long bio

Antonio Andrade is a recording artist who released his ninth album, the all-cover *Here We Go!*, in March 2025 on Lifeshakes Recordings. He is a songwriter who has co-written with Louisa Branscomb and Freebo and earned an honorable mention in the 2023 Mid-Atlantic Song Contest for “You Don’t Until You Do.” He is a performer with more than 45 years’ experience who has appeared on the juried showcases at both SERFA and SWRFA, whom the Central Pennsylvania Music Awards honored as "Best Male Solo Artist" for 2021. At his very core, however, Antonio Andrade is an entertainer, winning audiences with his passion and enthusiasm in spirited performances of what he calls “rockin’ folk.”

Veteran reviewer **John Apice** found a lot to like in Antonio Andrade’s *Here We Go!* per his review in *Americana Highways*. “No one can say Antonio Andrade doesn’t have a sense of humor. He boldly starts his set with a “Looney Tunes Medley” (Tracks 1-4) & while one would take this with a grain of salt & dismiss it as novelty shtick – it isn’t. Antonio’s arranged & performed these melodies with a good sense of medley & with enthusiasm & a few shots of harmonica. Each tune is short, concise & nostalgic. I’m a baby boomer, so I know these tunes by heart & I’m defensive if they’re ridiculed but in Mr. Andrade’s hands they’re wonderfully rendered.... Antonio provides lots of surprises through his performances & slips a few into this 16-song set. It’s a fun listen.”

On *Here We Go!* Derek Euston engineers his seventh album with Andrade at his Green Room Recording Studio in Harrisburg, PA. Credited as co-producer, Euston also contributes mightily; playing bass, electric and acoustic guitars, mandolin, and organ. Amma Johnson returns for her fifth record with Andrade on vocals, while singer Kj Reimensnyder-Wagner is the lone performer on board for the first time. Broad patterns are again painted by Richie “raggs” Ranaglia as he plays all the saxophones, clarinet, and flute. Denny Niedich on drums and congas and Ed Lesser on drums both return to round out the studio band.

The legendary **Robert Christgau** has enjoyed a seven-decade career as a record reviewer, most prominently during 37 years at *The Village Voice*. Like Richard Flohill he has moved the Substack, where his **March Consumer Guide** appears. This month Antonio Andrade’s *Here We Go!* earned a spot in the Consumer Guide. The 83-year old Christgau wrote: “Congenially matter-of-fact old-timer broadens the parameters of the great American songbook (“Is You Is or Is You Ain’t My Baby,” “Forever Young,” “Love Shack”) ****”

In *Steemit*’s “Now Playing,” Will Phoenix described the many rewards of *My Reward*, Antonio’s 2023 album of all original compositions. “His hard work has paid off. Overall, this is an album that while often said to focus on themes of loss and death, is more than that. It is also an entertaining compilation of simple yet memorable tunes.... His unpretentious vocals and love of songwriting have resulted in a

playlist of pieces that are innocent yet experienced and oft'times whimsically wise. It is, in essence, a collection of 'kids' songs' for adults. So, check out Antonio Andrade's 'My Reward' and 'Sing' along with him!"

A guitar serves as the narrator, singing "the song is my reward." Singing, playing, and writing these songs is Andrade's reward. "It is my purpose these days," he said. "Having a purpose is my reward in life!"

Andrade is at an age where losing family and friends has become a sad trend. "A number of the songs are about death or somebody dying, but the songs might make you laugh, or cry, or both!," Antonio says.

The Pennsylvania-based singer-songwriter and guitarist believes that "singing and playing, presenting songs, and connecting with an audience are more fun than anything else I can imagine. I think it was fun that inspired me more than any one person. The Beatles sure looked like they were having fun, and the fans were going crazy, so music had my attention. Music seemed like fun for just about everybody, meaning the singers, the players, and also the listeners. I was about 10 years old, and I wanted to be the entertainer."

The holidays also proved important to young Antonio, inspiring *Jingle All the Way*, his seventh, and first holiday themed, album, *Jingle All the Way*, released in November 2021. "On Christmas Eve, 1961, when I was seven, I was in bed, still awake. I heard a thump and voices. Santa? I looked out the second-floor window. It was my parents getting wrapped gifts out of the trunk of the car. The magic of Christmas for a kid may change as the kid gets older. Christmas may change. The magic in the music may change too, but it's still magic!"

The root of this project was the covid pandemic, the shutdown, and the concomitant changes and adjustments. These songs provided a big part of happy days and happy years in Antonio's life. The magic of Christmas, for him, was the magic of Santa Claus. Years passed, lives passed, the pandemic came, and Antonio wasn't singing his Christmas covers cause there were no live audiences in 2020. Music had always been a big part of the fun for Antonio at Christmas, and he decided the three months starting at Thanksgiving, 2020, was a good time to have fun in the studio.

The eight songs, written between 1934 and 1962, range in age from 59 to 87 years old. All are widely known, and people of all ages sing them. In a certain sense, they have become folk songs. Antonio built his interpretations here around acoustic guitar and harmonica.

Antonio sang and played acoustic guitar on "Winter Wonderland" and "Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas," then added harmonica to each. He did "Silver Bells" in 4/4 time rather than 3/4 time. Derek Euston added bass to all of them. Amma Johnson is back for her third record with Andrade. She adds her angelic background vocals and her spirit to four of the eight tracks. "Let It Snow" followed. "If I can do

eight, I'll make a record. It will be good to do songs that I can sing," Andrade thought. "Jingle Bell Rock," "The Christmas Song (Chestnuts Roasting)," "Sleigh Ride," and "A Holly Jolly Christmas!" The songs appear on the record in the order he recorded them.

Euston earned co-producer credit, while engineering his 5th album for Antonio at his Green Room Recording Studio. "There are a couple of songs where we used a bass line or a guitar lick from a traditional version. Derek was the full orchestra on bass, electric guitar, and keyboards!" exclaimed Antonio.

He has greeted the limited return to performing with similar enthusiasm. "The sensation of sharing energy with an audience arouses passion in me. Music has a presence and a life of its own. I am trying to share it, and I am attracted to the possibilities. I am seeking to honor my passion," the Centralia, PA native explains.

That level of commitment to the song and the audience and that drive to share music he loves makes Andrade a consummate cover artist despite his success as a songwriter. He earned a career highlight with his interpretation of the Talking Heads' "This Must Be the Place" on his first covers project, 2010's *See If You Recognize This One*. The next year his song was used in the movie of the same name starring Sean Penn, Frances McDormand, and Judd Hirsch.

The modest Andrade admits that "my ability to re-interpret songs might be a noteworthy skill. My perspective as an entertainer leads me to cover songs in which I find a character that speaks to me. I become that character when I act out the song. I believe the words when I say them."

That talent shines in his sixth album, *Lucky in Love*, released in May 2020 and consisting of all covers except the title song. It peaked at #34 on the Folk Alliance International Folk Chart. His third album since he retired from his professional career in 2014, its eleven songs span seven decades of music history from writers as diverse as Gregg Allman, Karla Bonoff, and Tom Waits. The root of this project comes from Antonio's dramatic interpretation of "Ask A Man," by his friend, Robert Bobby, upon the singer-writer's untimely passing in 2018. Robert's death was among several losses in Antonio's year. By the start of 2019 Antonio had recorded nine more covers of songs that have been part of his live sets through the years. Almost all of them are about love or loss. Antonio had an idea from a decade ago, a song almost completed, that would be the perfect song to tie everything together. Antonio and "Steel Rails" composer Branscomb finished it together. "Lucky In Love" became the title track.

Derek Euston engineered this, his 4th album with Andrade and provided bass and guitar parts on *Lucky in Love*. Mark Stuart (of Stacey Earle and Mark Stuart) returned for his third recording with Andrade. Stuart, whose bio includes touring and recording with Steve Earle, Freddie Fender, Joan Baez, and Steve Forbert,

plays assorted guitar parts on six songs. The old-time influenced sound of Ordinary Elephant, Crystal Hariu-Damore and Pete Damore, brings a powerful dynamic to the two oldest songs on the record.

Working with top-level artists for *Lucky in Love* was nothing new for Andrade. Freebo, Stuart, and percussionist Ed Lesser joined him on his two previous albums, *Something Happened* (2017) and *Life Shakes*. The latter appeared in 2014 to coincide with Andrade's retirement from a 38-year daytime career in social services.

That career started when he was graduated from Penn State in 1976. Andrade's performing career had begun there in the shadow of Mount Nittany. "I wanted to be a baseball player. But when I saw The Beatles on The Ed Sullivan Show, something happened!" I learned chords on my own. I started singing and playing Bob Dylan songs in 10th grade. After singing two songs at a 12th grade assembly, I started singing and playing at parties during college, Bob Dylan and John Prine songs," Andrade says.

While entering full-time work, he also started taking paying gigs - bars, folk festivals, the odd opener at a bigger room - a bit more often than once a month and continued to do so for around 15 years. Then came a transformational decade, ending in 2003, playing in a rock cover band for dances. "I realized over time that playing in the band helped my confidence to grow. I think it started to show in my solo work by the start of the new century."

As his confidence grew, in 1996 Andrade resumed playing solo dates in addition to the band and full time work. The next year he wrote his first song, quipping "I have been writing an average of one per year ever since!"

Andrade put ten original songs on his first recording in 2000, *Straydog*. His sophomore release, 2007's *What Do You Want From Me*, delivered more original songs marked by the rock, folk, and pop influences that have come together in his sound. His performances became closer to weekly than monthly, and he began to become better known in the folk music community.

Andrade has stepped up his game since retiring from his day job in 2014. He has become well known and regarded in Folk Alliance circles by increasing his attendance at its international and regional conferences and earning official showcases at SERFA and SWRFA in 2019. He has released four albums in seven years as compared to three in the previous sixteen and had pushed his performances up to five or six a month pre-COVID. Andrade has also worked on his performing and his songwriting.

"Nobody brings more passion to the stage than Antonio." - James Lee Stanley, veteran singer-songwriter, recording artist, music industry professional, and one-time singing Klingon.