

Andrew Vogts



Sasquatch With an Alien on its Head (Patuxent Music)

Andrew Vogts: fiddle; Victor Furtado: banjo; Danny Knicely: guitar; Mark Schatz: bass; Aila Wildman: fiddle; Eli Wildman: mandolin

Boxing Reel / The Pig and the Devil's Eye / Durang's Hornpipe / Dixie / Catharsis / Rosin on the Gourd / Sasquatch with an Alien on its Head / Bumblebee in a Jug / Spider Shoe / Ashokan Farewell / Sadie at the Back Door

Andrew Vogts is an excellent fiddler and, at the time of this recording, still only fifteen years old. According to the sleeve notes provided here by veteran old-time/bluegrass bassist Mark Schatz who is playing bass on this CD (and who by the way is also no slouch on the banjo), Andrew started playing Suzuki classical method aged four and then became enthused with traditional fiddling. I have seen Andrew compete

(last year) at Clifftop and remember being very impressed by his evident talent.

It's a little hard to classify this CD as it doesn't fit neatly into an old-time category (I guess the title is a tiny clue there!) nor a bluegrass one, though there are strong elements of all these, as well as a notable Irish and Cape Breton influence. Mark Schatz, as previously mentioned, provides interesting detail about Andrew's background and musical associations. I would have very much liked information on the sources of these tunes – it's always good to know where inspiration comes from, and always worthwhile listening to those original versions; for me this leads to better understanding of the context of a tune, and so enhances the listening experience.

What you have here is a selection of eleven tunes which showcase Andrew's talent very effectively. I personally like the fact that the CD isn't crammed with tunes, as is now often the case, and all of these have been well chosen. It is, as the title credit suggests, a solo album, but the backup band, The Psycho Exploding Orangutans, are very good indeed. Victor Furtado is an awesomely intuitive banjo player and sticks to the melody like glue, (listen to Nate Leath's *Spider Shoe*, where the fiddle and banjo are just working beautifully together) while never being obtrusive, and all the band members between them provide an immaculate framework for the fiddle.

Overall, the tunes on this CD are pretty full-on: the fast tunes are played just that, fast! and in the case of the title track, which Andrew wrote (and it's a very nice tune too), dangerously fast. The CD opens with *Boxing Reel*, brought in with a haunting bass swell and building to a gorgeous melody – it's listed as traditional, but the only source I could find is Jeremy Kittel. I'm guessing this is from Cape Breton. There are a couple of written tunes by Nate Leath, whose fiddling I also much enjoy – the aforementioned *Spider Shoe* and the traditional-sounding *Rosin on the Gourd*. The fine, Irish-style *Catharsis* credited to Amy Cann (who according to my research is a Vermont-based contra fiddler and teacher) and Cape Breton fiddler Natalie McMaster. *Ashokan Farewell* from Jay Ungar will be familiar to most people, having been well incorporated into the old-time repertoire. *Sadie at the Back Door*, written by Jere Canote is taken by Andrew to new, bluegrass places – and there is some excellent band interaction here. The showstopper for me has to be *Durang's Hornpipe* from Clark Kessinger which has got to be up there with ultimate contest tunes; it's a great version and great fun. Andrew does a wonderful job on this. I still think Clark deserves a source credit though.

This is a very well-recorded, well-played CD with bags of energy. If you're after a showcase of dead-cert fiddle contest tunes, go buy this. If you're into source

recording-based, traditional old-time, this isn't that. As for me, I'm hoping Andrew will make a recording as a band enterprise to follow this solo one, because this is a very interesting and talented group of musicians. The solo aspect of this album inevitably means there is a bit of separation much of the time, but tunes like *Sadie at the Back Door* and *Catharsis* offer a taste of treats to come. Andrew, lucky thing, is a good enough fiddler to do just about whatever he'd like with the instrument, and it will be very interesting to see where his musical journey will take him and, given his youth, how his life experiences will feed in to that. He is well placed to make a significant contribution. I guess we watch this space.

Emily Poole Henley

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