

# Andy Clifton



**The Story of  
a Guy, a  
Guitar and a  
Whole Lot  
of Gratitude**



by Joy Blackburn,  
MSA Staff Writer

*Andy Clifton & Company will be performing at the MSA's upcoming Septemberfest event: Saturday, September 17th, from 10:00am to 2:00pm. The indoor/outdoor festival will be held at 7011 Campus Drive, Colorado Springs, 80920.*

The summer after my freshman year, my older sister had a guitar that I wanted to try playing, so... I took it," singer-songwriter Andy Clifton recalled, laughing. "I got in trouble, of course. My mom said, 'Andy! Do you have anything to say for yourself?' And I said, 'Listen to this!'"

Andy had spent the afternoon in his upstate New York bedroom teaching himself to play "Louie Louie," which he now played for his mother.

Andy's mom was thunderstruck. Her anger vanished as she responded with simply, "Wow!" "That Christmas, she got me my own guitar."

Andy had fallen in love with music and the course of his life was now charted. Within three short years, his high school class had voted him "Most Musical."

Today, Colorado Springs locals faithfully pack the house to hear Andy playing at such hotspots as Townhouse Sports Grill, The Brass Tap, Prime 25, Atmo-

*Andy poses with Toasty, the mascot for the Colorado Vibes baseball team, after performing at an outdoor event..*



sphere, or Abby's Irish Pub. The music is great, but what brings the crowds repeatedly back is Andy's passion and raw talent.

"There's a kind of zen to it," he told me during our recent interview. "With a guitar, the thoughts fall out of you, and if you have a pen and paper handy, you can write a song."

Andy discovered Colorado Springs when he was stationed at Fort Carson after high school. Whenever possible, he'd zip into town to play at the now-shuttered Underground Pub, where he quickly developed a reputation as an original musician and songwriter. "I don't want to say I got 'stuck here,'" he laughed. "But the area has a powerful feel that I'm drawn to." He saw no reason to leave, so he never did.

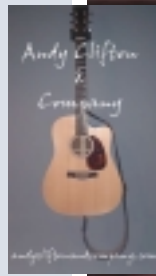
Upon his army discharge, Andy soon had too many shows booked to hold even a part time job as a bartender. "The work doesn't begin with your four-hour set," Andy told me. "You have to be able to schedule, put the music together, get the gear, set-up and strike your stage, and follow up with the people who hired



*Andy speaks with Travis Ruiz of Fox21 News about the Meadowgrass Music Festival, where tickets go for as much as \$200 each. This festival in Black Forest takes place each year over Memorial Day weekend.*

you – not just to get paid, but to get feedback so you can keep improving your show. It takes your full attention." But even the most trivial task holds Andy's interest. "I see the value in a beautiful procedure, and it gives me happiness."

When the MS Alliance first spoke to Andy about playing at Septemberfest, he was deeply moved. "I'd recently lost my dad to Parkinson's," he told me. After Andy's mother passed, his father moved in to spend the last year of his life with his son. It helped heal Andy's sorrow over the loss of



*Above, Andy Clifton & Company performing at the Stargazer's Theater, one of the Springs' longest-running top venues.*



*Left: Andy sets up to perform at the Patty Jewett Clubhouse. "Since I began handing out my CDs for free," he told me, "I'm suddenly getting a lot of resort gigs. It pays to give back."*



his mother, and prepare him for losing his dad. It was both the most painful and joyful year of Andy's life, and it left him feeling enormously grateful. "Here I am living the life I want in this beautiful state, and this last year with my dad has been the definition of heaven. When I lost him, I just wanted to help others." So when Nikki Pfeiffer, the Executive Director of the MS Alliance, called Andy about the job, "I said, 'Yes! I want to help!' It was a chance to give back and to be the me I wanted to be."

Andy and Nikki have yet to meet and will likely be meeting for the first time at the Septemberfest event. Andy is looking forward to it. "Normally you get a text or a quick phone call, and the gig is on," he said of the booking process. "But Nikki and I spoke for two hours! She's got a power!" Andy laughed as he recalled their conversation. "She kept telling me how short she is, but over the phone she has a much bigger presence. Her compassion for others generates a force!" Andy had found a kindred spirit.

"During the pandemic, when all my regular venues closed down, I chose not to panic," he told me. Instead, "I learned to use some recording equipment and recorded my first solo album. It's really good, and I never would have had the time to try this without the pandemic." After the album's initial release, Andy looked around and noticed how gloomy everyone else was. The lockdowns had taken a major toll on his friends and his industry.



*Nikki Pfeiffer, in blue, right, holds giant scissors as she prepares to open the festivities in 2019. Both indoor and outdoor activities are offered.*



"I had this intuitive impulse to give the CDs away," he said of his newly-minted album. "It felt so good to say, 'would you please accept this as a gift?'" People took them, enjoyed them, shared them with others, and suddenly Andy has more bookings than he's ever had in his life — including at Colorado's major resorts. Things have never been better.

To Andy, however, the album holds a greater significance. "My dad is on the CD," he told me. "He's clapping and snapping, and there's a song with the two of us singing 'In The Garden.' I put it at the end of the album, and when I want to hear him, I just listen to it"

Join the MS Alliance on September 17th, from 10:00am to 2:00pm at the 2022 Septemberfest. Enjoy a beautiful day listening to Andy Clifton as he gives gratefully back for the life he's been allowed to live. Perhaps he'll give you a copy of his CD. "It's my work, my joy, my therapy, my social life," Andy said, summing up the interview. "It's not just what I do, it's what I am."

To find out more about Andy Clifton & Company, go to [AndyCliftonandCompany.com](http://AndyCliftonandCompany.com), or look for him on Facebook at Andy Clifton and Company (AC&Co). ✨

*The Clifton Men posting for a selfie in 2021. "This last year with my dad has been the definition of heaven," Andy said.*