Offbeat musical romantic Andrew Bird and rootsy band play "Appalachia-drenched indie pop," July 10

Photos: (top to bottom) Andrew Bird, by Shervin Lainez; Jimbo Mathus by Elizabeth DeCicco.

HANOVER, NH—Offbeat, romantic musical polymath Andrew Bird comes to the Hop's Spaulding stage on Thursday, July 10, at 8 pm with his band Hands of Glory, an old timey acoustic configuration of fellow singer/songwriter/instrumentalists.

Opening for Bird is his former Squirrel Nut Zippers bandmate Jimbo Mathus and his Tri-State Coalition, a born-in-the-bone Southern roots music ensemble.

From his omnivorous musical tastes, versatile chops and beguiling whimsy, singer/songwriter/violinist Bird has crafted a unique style that's won him a devoted international following. Coming to the Hop fresh from Tennessee's Bonnaroo Festival, the Montreal Jazz Festival and New York's Summerstage, Bird and Hands of Glory go back to rootsy basics with sinuous fiddling, "high lonesome" vocals and old-soul original songs—embellished now and then by Bird's virtuosic whistling.

"Bird has become a cult superstar of the variety that attracts actual, real, live screaming fans. His music can be subtle and sweet, but Bird's concerts also bring out the fervent, electric energy of his following," wrote NPR. Writes Relevant magazine, "His music engages in ancient mythologies, jazz noodling, folk simplicity while all the time pondering the postmodern ethos all around us. He's a walking thesis statement suggesting the human condition probably hasn't altered that much over the centuries after all."

Known for solo performances in which he creates audio loops, plays multiple instruments and builds a rich sonic texture, Bird now has stripped away the electronics and brought in actual bandmates, all headliners in their own rights: singer/songwriters Tift Merritt, Alan Hampton and Kevin O’Donnell, and pedal steel player Eric Heywood.

Their music is "full of simple, subtle nuances, with a scaled down approach that works on a number of levels...the vivid sense of lyrical imagery and lingering string undertones demonstrate the loving care and attention that Bird weaves into his songs," thewildhoneypie.com wrote. Slantmagazine.com called the band's sound "steeped in dirt-streaked Americana...possesses a kind of resigned and dusky bluegrass quality, as if Bird and company gathered in a starlit cornfield to muse for a brief period before packing up and going their separate ways...a triumph of moody, Appalachia-drenched indie pop."
Bird picked up his first violin at the age of four and spent his formative years soaking up classical repertoire completely by ear. As a teen he became interested in a variety of styles including early jazz, country blues and folk music, synthesizing them into his unique brand of pop. Since beginning his recording career in 1997 he has released 11 albums and played thousands of shows. He has recorded with the Preservation Hall Jazz Band and performed at New York’s Carnegie Hall, Sydney Opera House, and festivals worldwide. Recently Bird composed his first ever film score for the movie Norman (hailed as “a probing, thoughtful score” by The New York Times), contributed to the soundtrack of The Muppets and collaborated with inventor Ian Schneller on Sonic Arboretum, an installation that debuted at New York’s Guggenheim Museum and exhibited at Chicago’s Museum of Contemporary Art. In 2012, he released two albums, Break It Yourself, and Hands of Glory, an acoustic companion album. In recent months, in addition to performing with Hands of Glory, he has been developing a children’s TV show and writing for his next album.

Along the way, Bird was an "honorary member" of the 1990s "neo-swing" band The Squirrel Nut Zippers, founded by Jimbo Mathus, who opens for Bird at the Hop. The Zippers, an ahead-of-its-time retro roots band, scored a hit with Hot and performed at President Clinton’s second Inauguration and the 1996 Summer Olympics. Previous to the Zippers, Mathus played in punk and new wave bands, most notably Johnny Vomit and the Dry Heaves, and the cult rock band Metal Flake. Following the Zippers' demise, he worked with such noted artists such as Buddy Guy and Elvis Costello, and collaborated with North Mississippi Allstars guitarist Luther Dickinson and Alvin Youngblood Hart in the South Memphis String Band. He also recorded his own albums. His latest, Dark Night of the Soul, released in February, was recorded over the span of a year in a studio near his home in Taylor, Mississippi.

The album is "great Southern rock" along the lines of the Marshall Tucker Band and the Black Crowes, wrote The Seattle Post Intelligencer. "These 12 original songs combine excellent songwriting with earnest and inspired vocal and musical performances...Mathus' guttural voice is perfect for these songs and this style."

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CALENDAR LISTING:
Andrew Bird and the Hands of Glory
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$20/40, $10 Dartmouth students
Information: hop.dartmouth.edu or 603.646.2422