



PHOTO BY DAVID TUMAN

## ANDY GRAMMER

“Ladies and gentlemen, give it up for ANDY GRAMMER!” A round of applause from the audience greets Andy and his guitar. At age 26, he’s a rising star doing what he loves most: writing and performing his own music. After growing up with the example of his parents, songwriters Red and Kathy Grammer, Andy studied music in college.

In 2007, he released his first collection of songs called “The World Is Yours.” Now he’s a popular performer on college campuses and at music festivals, and has toured around the U.S. and abroad. When he’s home in California, Andy can spend eight hours a day writing music. He wants to reach as many people as possible with encouraging lyrics such as these from the song “Couple More Sleeves”: “Take the sparks from your heart, let them burn like a star in the sky, for everyone to see. Don’t be scared of who you are, let it out of the jar.” \* *Brilliant Star* talked to Andy about his adventures as he charts his career path.

**Q. What was the most challenging experience for you as a kid, and how did you handle it?**

The most challenging thing was . . . when I was getting teased by certain friends, not understanding what the heck that was. Like, why are you guys doing that? . . . I learned that [if] you just stop hanging around people like that, that they’ll stop. [The teasing] only works if you engage the way they engage.

**Q. What was it like to grow up with a father who is a musician?**

Really cool. He would be gone for long stretches, but then he’d be home for long stretches . . . When he was home, he was *really* home. We got to make tree houses and do stuff . . . It was great. I learned from him. I just saw how, when you’re doing art for a living, it’s just a lot of work. So when you grow up seeing that, you can start doing the work early, rather

**Q. When did you know you wanted to be a performer?**

It’s funny, because I just always thought that that would be what would happen . . . I knew it was a struggle. I just knew I wanted to do *something* creative . . . In high school, I took screenwriting



Left: Andy, age 8, with the family dog, Millie, at home in New York. Right: In middle school, Andy started playing guitar. His favorite sport, at that time and through high school, was basketball.

than kind of thinking it’s some random thing that’s going to happen that’s going to make you famous . . . Art as a career . . . [is] a business.

classes and joined the theater. Then when I went to college, I studied theater . . . [I figured] out that that wasn’t quite right, and that I wanted to write the things I was going to say. So I learned music instead.

**Q. How does being a Bahá'í affect your work?**

I think it affects your life, like it's your whole outlook on why we're here. It affects your work. Anything you do, you're attempting to do in the best possible way. If you're dealing with the money you receive for the night, you want to deal with [it] very justly. If you're writing music, you want to be writing from a place that's real . . . I think it's the biggest effect of anything on my career . . . Sometimes it's hard [being different] . . . It's created a real interesting challenge of how do I, with who I am, connect to everybody else? . . . The whole idea is that we are all really similar. So I try to not make any barriers in my music, because I don't think there are any.

**Q. In this issue of *Brilliant Star*, we're talking about planning for the future. Any words of wisdom?**

Everything around you changes . . . Like my dad told me when I was in school, that all the people that are popular one year, or mean to you at one point, everything changes. So always make moves just based on *love* . . . You can't be basing your friendships . . . and the way you treat people on any sort of social status. It's just gotta be like, I love everybody and I'm going to be the best guy that I can be to everybody . . .

**Q. What advice do you have for kids who want to be professional musicians?**

My advice is: do. Do the work . . . I think, in anything, if you're talking more than you're doing, you're in trouble . . . If you want to be a musician, take the simple steps. Really, really work on your music and then find a way to do it . . . Go play open mike. Or figure out a way to get all your friends together and play a lot.

**Q. If you had one wish for *Brilliant Star* readers, what would it be?**

My one wish would be that . . . you are a safe place for every friend . . . in your school. You're the safe person. And you really have to fight to be that person.



Left: "My message that I want to convey is one of truth. Being true to yourself," says Andy about his goals as a musician.

PHOTO BY TY WATKINS

Below: Andy plays at an open mike night at The New Spot in Encino, California.

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**Q. How do you get ideas for songs? Do you start with the lyrics or the melody or the rhythm?**

It's different all the time. Most of the time I start with the chords that I think are really cool, and then try to write a melody on top of those chords. And then finding what the colors of those chords make me think of and what emotions they bring out of me, and then try to fit words to the chords. I just started doing things where I'll write lyrics and then try to go backwards, and it was a completely different process for me. But I like both ways . . .

But everyone respects you and loves you for that. And it's the most fulfilling place to be. That would be my wish . . . you're the safe one with your friends.