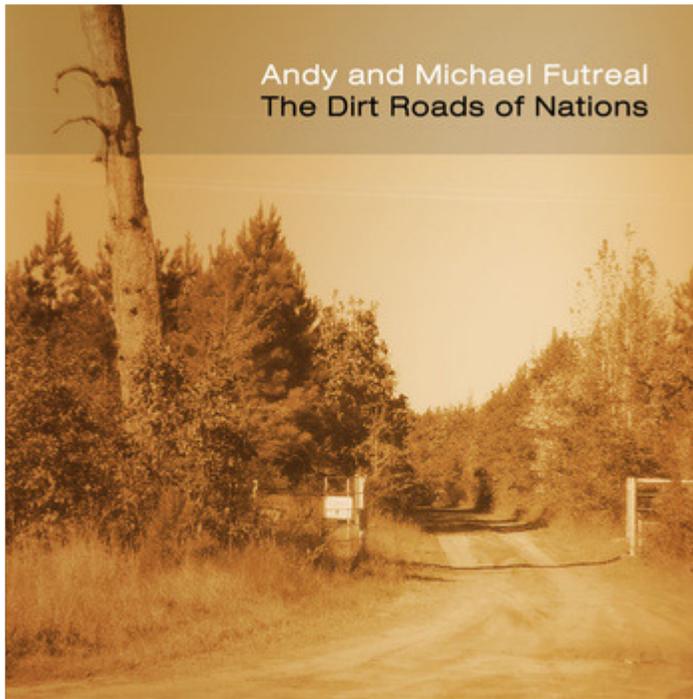


Review: "The Dirt Roads of Nations" An Album by The Offramps

Bruce W. Ford



As I age, my musical taste seems to be moving back in time and slowing down. Much of my favorite music these days wasn't written in this century and I like the slow ones. It wasn't always that way. I had my rock-n-roll days. "Dirt Roads of Nations" brought me back to those days in a pleasant way. You see...

The Offramps rock with a mountain dulcimer in the band!

The Dirt Roads CD contains six of fourteen tracks with mountain dulcimer playing a prominent role. I have no experience with dulcimers playing much other than folk or Celtic music, so I found it refreshing and fun to hear this instrument carrying the strumming rhythm in these songs, as well as contributing to the melody.

While this album is a rock CD, it is instrumental, so no worries about inappropriate lyrics. This album is definitely **NOT** the noise so frequently passed off as music these days. Michael and Andy Futreal obviously work at their craft and experiment with blending a variety of instruments and rhythmic qualities.

True to the rock genre, this is not acoustic music. Michael and Andy employ electric, slide and acoustic guitar, banjo, bass, harmonica, and mandolin in addition to the mountain dulcimer. The result is fourteen songs that are far from rehashes of one another. In fact, they sound as if each represent a bright, original idea originating in Michael or Andy's talented head.

I applaud the Offramps' innovation, not just for putting a mountain dulcimer in the band, but for writing and performing innovative music. They call it "rock music with bluesy world fusion flair" which is a fair description. With the combination of instruments these artists play they have at their disposal infinite combinations of sounds, so I look forward to the next album! **Bravo Offramps!**

The tracks that contain mountain dulcimer are:

- 2. Vacancy**
- 5. Olive Woman**
- 7. Driving to New York (This one had my three-year-old dancing!)**
- 8. Primal Man Therapy**
- 9. Spice Road**
- 14. A Porch at Midnight**

For more information about The Offramps or to obtain the CD, go to <http://michael.futreal.com>, ~~at only \$12 a copy it's an inexpensive way to diversify your collection!~~

****Late breaking news. Download this CD for \$6 at <http://michaelfutreal.bandcamp.com/album/dirt-roads-of-nations>