



JAMES HART

The Santa Fe ★ all stars ★

A HARMLESS LITTLE BAND
FROM NEW MEXICO

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What began as a “why not” proposal by a beer-hall waitress has gone on to become something of a small-town supergroup. The Santa Fe All-Stars consist of roots luminaries Joe West, Sharon Gilchrist, Ben Wright and Susan Holmes, all brilliant on their own—at least according to the locals of New Mexico’s capital city. West, of course, has long been the slightly askew alt.country king of Santa Fe, a songwriter as smart and talented as they come and completely fearless when it comes to either campy parody

or straight-up emotion. Gilchrist (from the Peter Rowan & Tony Rice Quartet) continues to enchant audiences with her glorious musicianship and lovely countenance; Wright, a man just as comfortable ripping through a weird rock set as fingerpicking through an old standard, is as indispensable as they come, and Holmes has been a rhythm section stalwart for years. Collectively they are a can’t-lose proposition. Their type of roots music—smart, fun, a little twisted—is the soundtrack to Santa Fe.

Sharon Gilchrist grew up in Dallas, Texas playing mandolin, upright bass and singing her heart out. Most of her time was spent traveling the country with her big brother Troy in a kid’s bluegrass band. From there, she moved to Nashville and studied mandolin at Belmont University. While immersed in Music City USA, Sharon’s musical bag of tricks diversified by quantum leaps as she began playing classical music, swing, country and rock, and composing music for a series of performance art pieces, an endeavor she plans to pursue in the future. Sharon then left the bright lights of Nashville for the solitude and serenity of The Land of Enchantment: New Mexico—to explore the world of abstract art and such. Upon her arrival in Santa Fe, things took an unexpected turn when Sharon rediscovered her bluegrass roots. She has since toured with the likes of Mary & Mars, The Bill Hearne Trio and Uncle Earl. Sharon can currently be seen performing with the Peter Rowan and Tony Rice Quartet.

Ben Wright, an active and exuberant musician since the age of 6, grew up in a small suburb of New York City. He began studying guitar with his father (professional finger style guitarist Edward Wright) at age 12 after six years of cello study. He played in numerous bands and ensembles throughout high school and college and in 2001 graduated from the Colorado College with a BA in music. While attending CC he performed and toured with the Balinese gamelan, Tunjung Sari, and the illustrious Bowed Piano Ensemble led by Stephen Scott. After graduating, Ben headed for Santa Fe, NM where he quickly found himself too busy making music to hold down a day job. He formed the bluegrass group Mary and Mars in 2002 with band mates Sharon Gilchrist and Josh Martin and, within the year, they were touring nationally. After Mary and Mars parted ways in 2004 Ben began delving into the world of live electronic music, building compositions out of improvisations sampled and looped in real-time. He now performs and tours w/ local alt country legend, Joe West; experimental electronic rockers, D Numbers, and most recently with global jazz groovers, BING.

Since moving to Santa Fe in 1994 Susan Hyde Holmes has become a rhythm section mainstay. For years she played bass for folk icons Bill and Bonnie Hearne and later the Bill Hearne Trio, traveling to Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Arizona, Utah and Nevada, often opening for artists such as Steve Earle, Nancy Griffith and Lyle Lovett. Susan produced and played on Bill Hearne’s 2004 solo release “From Santa Fe to Las Cruces,” now in its third printing. Currently, Susan is happy playing in several groups: with the soulful singer/songwriter Boris McCutcheon as part of his fine band the Saltlicks, also the somewhat-surfy, all-instrumental band Milo de Venus, and, most recently, a delightful foray into jazz and swing in an as-of-yet unnamed combo with guitarists Lewis Winn and George Langston and drummer Ryan Anthony. Something of a songwriter, back in her home town of Lawrence, Kansas, Susan has twice been a finalist in the Kaw Valley Songwriters’ Competition. But in New Mexico, it was her Milo de Venus composition “Little Big Hair” that took honors as Best Musical Production in the Punk category at the 2004 New Mexico Music Awards.

Through the early '90s Joe West performed music and theater in New York City in Off-Off Broadway companies and as a regular street performer and folk-club troubadour. Then in 1997 Joe moved to Austin, Texas where he formed the bizarre Alt-Country band Joe West And The Sinners, often sharing the stage with such Texas legends as Jon Dee Graham, Dale Watson, and Wayne “The Train” Hancock. In 1999 Joe’s first self-released CD, “Jamie Was A Boozer”, was voted as one of the “Top-Ten Texas Platters” by the prestigious Austin Chronicles’ Critic’s Poll and Joe was voted one of the “Top Male Vocalists” by the Chronicles’ Reader’s Poll. In 2001 Joe returned to his hometown of Santa Fe, New Mexico where he became a local mainstay, holding a weekly residency at the notorious Cowgirl Hall of Fame. In 2002 Joe signed on with Frogville Records, an independent label focused on the fringes of alternative country music. Frogville supported the recording of his last two CDs: “South Dakota Hairdo” and “The Human Cannonball”. Both albums have received marvelous reviews and have charted in the Top 5 on both the Freeform Americana Radio Chart and the Euro-Americana Radio Chart. Since then Joe has toured extensively in the United States and Europe, sharing the stage with an eclectic list of artists such as Sarah Lee Guthrie, Iris DeMent, and the Violent Femmes.