

# Music as 'a cleansing wave'

By Leota Harriman

Edgewood musician Jimbo Merrill's newest album, 2011, expands on the folk style he is known for around the Tricounty area, where he performs regularly at various venues.

Known only as Jimbo, his latest effort has a richer and more mature sound than his previous five CDs, all self-released. Jimbo reflected on the collaboration of creating the album and writing music in a recent interview.

Songs on 2011 are all original, and feature piano by Karron Lee, fiddle by Robin MacKenzie, and harp by Buddy W. All other instruments on the album are played by Jimbo.

"I think it's the best work I've ever done," Jimbo said, crediting the other musicians involved for the success of the project.

Robin MacKenzie's fiddle playing is the "secret weapon" on the CD, Jimbo said. "Every note she played was the exact note that should have been played. It just flows out of her naturally—her playing sets my CD apart."

The "richer, warmer sound," he said comes from Kirk Brown of Oasis Sound in Edgewood. "Kirk Brown is an incredible engineer as well as an incredible person," Jimbo said. "We had a connection and he knew exactly where things should be, how to mix it. ... He was always there with the answer."

The guitar Jimbo played on the album was made by Cedar Grove luthier Mike Dezavelle, and has "better sound than any Martin or Gibson I've ever had," Jimbo said.

The album is an expression of many emotions, Jimbo said. "There are a lot of different moods in this CD. ... When I listen to the songs it makes me revisit the places I was at when I wrote them. ... I've been blessed enough with a gift that I can express that. I used to think anybody could do it but I realize now that not everybody has a doorway they can open and walk through and have a song appear."

Jimbo has been sober for 20 years and came to New Mexico from New Hampshire, where he once owned a music store, to start life over where "people didn't know me as a drunk," he said. He still smoked marijuana but a few years ago gave that up, too, and has now been totally sober for about two years. He credits both God and music for helping him through.

"I used to think you had to get high for inspiration, but it's just the opposite," he said, describing addiction as "faith being blocked by darkness."

Music is healing him, Jimbo said. "I can't help it when I write. If I couldn't play music I wouldn't be able to live. I thank God that God provided me an outlet for my emotions—I don't know where I'd be without it."

Jimbo had worked in restaurants all around the area until six years ago when he paid off his mortgage. Since then he has made a living as a musician. He said, "I forget that not everybody in the world gets to do what they want to do and get paid for it."

Describing the process of writing a song, Jimbo said: "I get an uneasiness in my body—a tension. Then what happens is I get uptight. Then I realize the same thing happened last time a song was coming. There is an intensity in my whole body, especially my heart."



As he writes the song, the sensation is like "a cleansing wave coming through my body, and I write it all down." Afterward he feels calm, he said.

"Some of my best songs I've written in four and a half minutes," he said.

Jimbo said he's been sober for 20 years but does not take it for granted, describing himself as a "messenger for what God wants other people to hear."

"Every time I play, I play like it's the last time I'm going to play," Jimbo said, "one more time to affect somebody in a positive way, one more time to bring God's light into their life."

The best place to purchase a CD is in one of the various venues where Jimbo plays, including Katrinah's East Mountain Grill in Edgewood, The Hollar in Madrid, Sandia Crust in Cedar Crest, and The Grill and Buford restaurants in Moriarty. He also performs occasionally at Wildlife West in Edgewood and every year at Bethel Storehouse's birthday celebration.

A website, jimbo.music.net, is in the works but is not up yet, he said.

# Cibola Sunshine features sun-related theme for art

Cibola Arts Gallery in Mountainair is holding an art show called Cibola Sunshine, featuring works of the 12 member artists with the theme of sun-related topics (like sunflowers) as a lead into the Sunflower Festival.

The opening reception is Aug. 13, from 2 to 4 p.m., with refreshments served and artists present for meeting and greeting. The annual Sunflower Festival is Aug. 27. Contact Cibola Arts at 847-0324 or visit cibolaarts.com for details.



Mountainair Sun, by Dianne Doan, will be featured in Cibola Arts Gallery's Cibola Sunshine show.

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