

THE HOLMES BROTHERS

Simple Truths

“This is the first great record of 2004.” — Thom Jurek, *All Music Guide*

The New York Times says THE HOLMES BROTHERS’ sound is “deeply soulful, uplifting and timeless.” *The Chicago Tribune* refers to the trio as “the undisputed masters of blues-based American roots music.” *The London Times* says “their rhythms take over your body while their voices go straight for your heart.” *OffBeat* declares the group possesses “great spirit and outstanding vocal harmonies with a jam band aesthetic that anticipated the ‘sacred steel’ movement by a decade.” Ever since they first joined forces and started performing together in 1979, THE HOLMES BROTHERS (bassist Sherman Holmes, guitarist/keyboardist Wendell Holmes and drummer Popsy Dixon) have been bringing their brand of gospel-inflected, spiritually moving and funky music to audiences around the world. Their breathtaking harmonies resonate with a passion and conviction matched only by their inspired musicianship and their ability to perform sanctified gospel, low-down roadhouse blues, deep soul, barroom country and pure pop—all in one set. They’ve recorded with Van Morrison, Peter Gabriel, Odetta, Phoebe Snow, Jungle Brothers and Joan Osborne, and have gigged all over the world—even performing for President Clinton. They joined the Alligator Records family in 2001, and their label debut—the inspirationally stirring *Speaking in Tongues* (AL 4877)—amazed and delighted everybody who heard it. Greg Kot of *The Chicago Tribune* called it a “joyous, foot-stomping carnival... a gift to the world of music.”

Now THE HOLMES BROTHERS return with *Simple Truths*, helmed by the same Grammy-winning pair—producer Craig Street (Cassandra Wilson, Chris Whitley) and engineer S. Husky Höskulds (Tom Waits, Joe Henry, Wallflowers)—who were part of the creative team for the 2003 Norah Jones smash *Come Away With Me*. *Simple Truths* features 13 striking songs reflecting THE HOLMES BROTHERS’ wide-ranging musical palette. The CD brings the group back into the secular world while still holding tight to their rich gospel harmonies and rough-edged vocals. The album features an amazing collection of songs written by some of the greatest songwriters of the last 60 years, including Townes Van Zandt (“If I Needed You”), Bob Marley (“Concrete Jungle”), Gillian Welch (“Everything Is Free”), Willie Nelson (“Opportunity To Cry”) and Hank Williams (“I’m So Lonesome I Could Cry”) as well as choice covers of Collective Soul’s “Shine” and Bruce Channel’s “Hey Baby.” THE HOLMES BROTHERS’ spirited original material (“Run Myself Out Of Town”; “We Meet, We Part, We Remember”; “You Won’t Be Livin’ Here Anymore”; and “I’m So Lonely”) fits perfectly alongside the rest of the songs on this transcendent, boundary-defying release.

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Sherman and Wendell Holmes were born and raised in Christchurch, Virginia. Their schoolteacher parents fostered the boys' early interest in music as they listened to traditional Baptist hymns, anthems and spirituals as well as blues music by Jimmy Reed, Junior Parker and B.B. King. They both sang in the church choir. Sherman studied clarinet and piano before taking up the bass, while Wendell learned trumpet, organ and guitar. Sherman studied composition and music theory at Virginia State University, but in 1959, he dropped out and headed to New York for a promising job with a singer named Jimmy Jones. His younger brother Wendell joined him after completing high school. The two brothers played in a few bands before forming The Sevilles in 1963. The group lasted only three years, but they often backed up touring artists like The Impressions, John Lee Hooker and Jerry Butler, gaining a wealth of experience. After The Sevilles disbanded, Sherman, Wendell and a fellow Virginian, drummer Popsy Dixon, continued to play in a variety of Top 40 bar bands—Wendell even toured with Inez and Charlie Foxx (“Mockingbird”)—until 1979, when the three joined forces and formed THE HOLMES BROTHERS band.

Rooted in blues and gospel, THE HOLMES BROTHERS' sound is all their own. The rhythmic foundation laid down by Sherman's bass playing and Popsy's drumming perfectly compliment Wendell's hard-driving guitar solos. But even more gripping than their instrumental prowess is their amazing three-part harmony singing, mixing Wendell's gruff and gravelly vocals with Popsy's soaring falsetto and Sherman's rich baritone, creating a multi-layered and ornately textured sound, bringing the soul of gospel music into everything they perform.

In the early years, the band worked primarily at Dan Lynch's, a New York club that featured weekly jam nights and performances by a wide variety of blues acts, most notably, THE HOLMES BROTHERS. More importantly, the club served as a meeting ground for many members of New York's blues community, including future members of Blues Traveler, Joan Osborne and producer Andy Breslau, who brought the group to Rounder Records.

Since their debut on Rounder in 1989, THE HOLMES BROTHERS have worked virtually non-stop. In addition to their four critically acclaimed Rounder albums, they recorded *Jubilation* for Peter Gabriel's Real World label in 1992, becoming the first American group to record for the standout world music imprint. In 1994 they joined Van Morrison in the studio on the song “That's Where It's At” for the Real World compilation album *A Week or Two in the Real World*. 1996 found THE HOLMES BROTHERS starring in the independent motion picture, *Lotto Land*, for which they also recorded the soundtrack. The albums all received massive praise. “Mind-blowing,” said the Boston Herald. “Rich and satisfying,” raved *The Washington Post*. In 1997, Joan Osborne asked THE HOLMES BROTHERS to be her backing band when she opened for Bob Dylan.

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After signing with Alligator in 2001, THE HOLMES BROTHERS released the magnificent *Speaking in Tongues*, produced by multi-platinum superstar—and close friend to the band—Joan Osborne, who also sings backup vocals throughout. With Osborne at the helm, along with Grammy-winning engineer Trina Shoemaker (Sheryl Crow's *The Globe Sessions*), THE HOLMES BROTHERS created a contemporary album of spiritual soul music. Throughout *Speaking in Tongues*, the sweet gospel harmonies and classic soul shouting radiate authenticity and passion. The interplay of voices and instruments borders on telepathic.

Response to *Speaking in Tongues* was phenomenal. THE HOLMES BROTHERS appeared on *The Late Show with David Letterman*, *The CBS Saturday Early Show*, as well as *National Public Radio's Weekend Edition*, *A Prairie Home Companion* and *Mountain Stage*. They've been the subject of features and reviews in *Rolling Stone*, *Billboard*, *Newsweek*, *USA Today*, *The Chicago Tribune*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The San Francisco Examiner* and countless other publications. They continue to tour all across the globe, and never fail to win over audiences everywhere they play.

In 2003, THE HOLMES BROTHERS recorded versions of "Trouble" (Cat Stevens) and "You're Gonna Need Somebody on Your Bond" (Blind Willie Johnson) for the soundtrack album for the popular television series *Crossing Jordan*. Other artists on the album include Richard Thompson, Lucinda Williams, Joe Henry, and Alison Krauss. In addition, THE HOLMES BROTHERS appear on Adam Levy's (Norah Jones' guitarist) new CD, *Get Your Glow On*, on the Gerry Goffin-Carole King penned song "No Easy Way Down" and on the M.C. Records tribute album to Sister Rosetta Tharpe, *Shout, Sister, Shout*, backing Joan Osborne (who is currently singing and touring with The Dead), Odetta, Victoria Williams and Phoebe Snow.

Now, with *Simple Truths*, THE HOLMES BROTHERS will bring their uplifting and foot-stomping music to old and new fans as they continue touring the country and the world. With their deeply soulful singing, chilling harmonies and telepathic musicianship, THE HOLMES BROTHERS amaze audiences and leave them in a state of utter disbelief. Of their live performances, *The Boston Globe* declares, "Straight-out, raw and real soul shouts, Jimmy Reed-influenced country blues, and juke-joint salvation. THE HOLMES BROTHERS can get down or raise crowds to sweaty bliss with soul-power." From concert halls to roadhouse bars, THE HOLMES BROTHERS raise roofs and spirits while dropping jaws and opening eyes to the power and passion of their performances. And that is the simple truth.

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