

HIGH SOUTH

A Change in the Wind

With impressive three-part harmonies, a dedication to songwriting, and unwavering optimism, the Nashville-based band High South has developed a dedicated following across Europe, where they've been touring regularly there since 2015. Now they're breaking into the American market with *A Change in the Wind*, a captivating project that draws comparisons to classic rock bands like the Eagles, Doobie Brothers, and Crosby, Stills and Nash.

The group – composed of Jamey Garner, Kevin Campos, and Phoenix Mendoza – sums up it this way: “As vocalists we are always drawn to harmony. It’s such a naturally pleasing sound that we're absolutely hooked on -- and it was never more prevalent than the 1970s. Every kid learns from their environment and we were all fortunate to have parents that exposed us to the music of this era. In a sense, it’s in our soul.”

With a desire to carry on that iconic ‘70s vibe, High South teamed with producer Josh Leo, known for his work with Glenn Frey, Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, Jimmy Buffett, and Kim Carnes, as well as No. 1 hits for country artists Love & Theft and Emerson Drive. Other collaborators on *A Change in the Wind* include engineer Niko Bolas (Neil Young, Don Henley, Warren Zevon), guitarist Jack Pearson (Allman Brothers Band), keyboard player Tony Harrell (Flying Burrito Brothers), drummer Nir Z (Genesis), and singer Raul Malo (The Mavericks).

Although the band released several singles internationally through Universal Germany, *A Change in the Wind* is their first release with distribution in America. The project’s empowering lead single, “Make It Better,” doubles as a mission statement for the band.

"We're positive dudes," Garner says. “We want to put forth a positive message. And we honestly believe that in the course, together we can make it better. That song is about people coming together. Even in the video, we made sure to show a lot of images of people coming together -- people of all colors, all races, all genders, all religions.”

High South’s origins stretch back to the early 2000s, when Garner and Mendoza met shortly after each had moved to Nashville. Interested in songwriting and influenced by ‘70s music, they were pursuing solo careers and trying to get discovered. Around the same time, Campos was growing up in Los Angeles with an early desire to be a performer – one that led to singing background vocals on three world tours with Enrique Iglesias. It would take 12 years before Garner, Campos and Mendoza ever got in a room together playing guitars together and bonding with the harmonies of some of their favorite artists, such as Crosby, Stills & Nash and America; almost immediately, they realized they had created something special.

Garner grew up in the small town of Chester, Illinois, near the Mississippi River. His family lived in a large Victorian house, the kind you’d expect to be haunted, he says. As a boy he

happened to find a harmonica laying in his backyard. Curious, he picked it up, dusted it off, and started to play. That moment sparked a lifelong interest in music, although his college degree is in public relations. On the advice of a respected friend, he moved to New York after graduation, where he did some acting and worked on his songwriting.

In contrast, Mendoza was raised in Arizona, as the second of five kids. His father played Spanish guitar and Flamenco music, which enchanted Phoenix from a young age – particularly because of the way it compelled friends and family to gather around and listen. At 15, Phoenix started playing guitar, too; a few years later, he formed a band with two of his brothers. As that group started getting traction in the Southwest, Phoenix decided that they should all move to Nashville and try to make it big. The brothers didn't agree, so at 21, he headed to Nashville without them.

By playing at songwriter nights, Mendoza landed an audition for a publishing company in Nashville. Initially they passed, but decided to introduce him to other writers, including Josh Leo. He eventually landed the publishing deal and started getting road gigs playing for country artists. Yet the work felt unsatisfying, to some degree, because they weren't his own songs.

It was an emotion that Garner and Campos knew well. As a guest vocalist on tour with Trans-Siberian Orchestra, Garner delivered powerful anthems to 20,000 listeners a night but still felt empty inside. He started thinking about ways to get his songs to audiences while still performing live. Meanwhile, Campos had just graduated from the Musicians Institute in Los Angeles and promptly started touring with Iglesias. Through a friend of a friend, Garner was introduced to Campos, who needed a gig after the tour wrapped.

Campos says, "I got this phone call to try out for this band that was getting together that sounded like the Eagles. That's right up my alley – I love that harmony. Harmony goes back to the reason I started doing this in the first place. That's when I met Jamey."

After some personnel changes following High South's European releases, Garner and Campos decided to forge ahead with a new lineup. Garner tracked down Mendoza, flew him to Dallas (where Garner was living at the time), and decided to see if they were all compatible. The trio immediately clicked. Then, Mendoza took it upon himself to convince his old friend Josh Leo to produce them on a shoestring budget. After a productive songwriting retreat in Joshua Tree, California, all four men were fully on board.

With Garner, Campos, and Mendoza trading out lead vocals, High South effortlessly embodies the enduring '70s mantra of peace, love and harmony. That upbeat spirit transcends geography, considering that they've performed multiple times in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland, both on stage and on television.

"Because of the legwork that those two guys put in earlier, I have been able to see the world and sing these songs," Mendoza says. "We made these wonderful things, we pulled them out of the

air, and to be able to stand and sing your own words, regardless of the size of the crowd – that's pretty awesome.”