

AMERICA BIO

In the midst of their fourth decade of music making, America have been perennials on the concert circuit for 34 years, pleasing their loyal fan base and attracting new generations of followers. The band's new 2-CD set, *Here & Now* is a spectacular distillation of the group's signature sound past and present, comprising one studio record of all new material and a second live disc taped at XM Radio featuring renditions of songs found on the group's multi-platinum greatest hits album, *History*.

Their new studio album is a fresh blast of classic Americana shaped by the contemporary sensibilities of producers Adam Schlesinger (Fountains Of Wayne) and James Iha (Smashing Pumpkins) and features guests, Ryan Adams, Ben Kweller, Jim James and Patrick Hallahan (My Morning Jacket), Ira Elliot and Matthew Caws (Nada Surf), Stephen Bishop and Mark Rozzo (Maplewood). "One of the main attractions for Adam (Schlesinger) and James (Iha) was their initial love of the America sound," explains Gerry Beckley. "We have intentionally tried to keep that being the main focus. We're not trying to emulate or go backwards but the initial ingredients have always remained common to us, which were an abundance of acoustic instrument sounds, a lot of vocal harmony and interesting melodies and lyrics in the forefront." Dewey adds, "Adam and James are terrific to work with. We've tried to maintain the elements of our own traditions so those things haven't changed. We're not moving into electronic music but there are a few quirky things on the album. We're doing a few outside tracks including "Always Love" by Nada Surf."

The world discovered America in 1972 when a nameless horse began its gallop across the international airwaves. If this sounds like some sort of fairy tale, it seemed like one for the young musicians who harmonized their way to the top of the charts on the strength of their signature song. "A Horse With No Name" made America a global household name, paving the way for an impressive string of hits following in its wake. Slightly more than a year after launching the group, Gerry Beckley, Dewey Bunnell, and Dan Peek were bonafide superstars, thanks to a timeless sound that seamlessly assimilated strands of rock, pop and folk elements into a thrilling musical stew.

America's journey has found them exploring a wide variety of musical terrain. Their best-known tunes, which also include "I Need You," "Ventura Highway," "Don't Cross The River," "Tin Man," "Lonely People," and "Sister Golden Hair" were cornerstones of 70's Top 40 and FM rock radio. Yet beyond their impressive catalog of hits, listeners would discover there was always much more to America than surface perceptions. The combination of Gerry Beckley's melodic pop rock and Dewey Bunnell's use of folk-jazz elements, slinky Latin-leaning rhythms and impressionistic lyric imagery contrasted well with Dan Peek's more traditional country-rock leanings and highly personal lyrics.

America's albums--six certified gold and/or platinum, with their first greatest hits collection, *History*, hitting four-million in sales--displayed a fuller range of the trio's talents than did their singles. Their material encompassed an ambitious artistic swath; from effects-laden rockers to oddball medleys to soul-bearing ballads, America displayed a flawless blend of disparate genres and styles as wide-open as the great American plains.

Enjoying massive success early in their career, America earned their stripes as musical soldiers on the battlefield amidst the excess, craziness and chaos of the 70's. Winning a Grammy for Best New Artist and landing a # 1 record while barely in your twenties came with its own pitfalls and the exacting pressures of their international stardom affected each member of the group.

By the mid-70s, inter-band conflicts combined with an exhaustive touring and recording schedule exacted its toll on the group. With Peek's departure from the fold in 1977, his band mates rose to the challenge and carried on as a duo. Shifts in sound and direction, changes in producers and managers, and a renewed dedication to the craft of songwriting helped rocket America to the upper reaches of the pop charts in 1982 with their smash single, "You Can Do Magic." During this tumultuous time in their career, Beckley and Bunnell immersed themselves in their craft, infusing a newfound maturity into their rich body of work. And their growth as singers, songwriters and musicians has continued unabated into the present day as illustrated by such landmark releases as 1998's *Human Nature*, 2002's *Holiday Harmony*, an album comprised of seasonal classics and the live showcases, 2000's *'America - Live'* and 2002's *Grand Cayman Concert*.

America's songs have frequently dealt with themes of travel, displacement and restlessness illustrated on such early compositions as "A Horse With No Name" and "Ventura Highway" through more recent tunes like "From A Moving Train." Issued in 2000, their comprehensive box set, *Highway*, deftly captured the artistic highlights of a spectacular career.

From their formative years, America has been a band capable of transcending borders with its uplifting music and positive message. Embracing a rainbow of divergent cultures, America's audiences continue to grow, comprising a loyal legion of first, second and third generation fans, all bearing testament to the group's enduring appeal. "I think that the ingredients of the America sound are the basic fundamentals that translate internationally," explains Beckley. "The Italians are huge fans of dance music, but they also love a ballad--they're romantic at heart. It's the same in the Far East. A lot of times in these countries, we see people singing along, and they don't really know what the words mean. Music is truly the international language."

It's been a long ride indeed for these two old friends. "We've grown up in a world of show biz, seen styles change, seen technology change," Bunnell muses. "But basically Gerry and I have stayed very much the same. We still have those standards in songwriting that we were hoping to establish. We've lived pretty full lives and managed to hold on to some sanity, although the world seems crazier every day."

From anonymous horses to fast-moving trains, America's extraordinary four-decade musical legacy of consummately crafted pop/rock songs, trademark lush harmonies and evocative lyrical landscapes will never go out of style.

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