

SHEL: SOULFUL, SPUNKY SISTER QUARTET TAKES FLIGHT

By Rhea Maze

Sisters make each other laugh like no one else can. They share clothes, code languages, and every detail of their lives with one another.

Anyone who has sisters can easily relate to the folk/pop/rock sister quartet known as SHEL (an acronym for Sarah, Hannah, Eva, and Liza Holbrook) who used to intimidate their peers when they were younger by always being in a four-part mob of laughing energy.

"Growing up, my dad said: 'Treat your sisters well. They're your best friends.' He was right," says Hannah Holbrook, the oldest of the four, who studied piano performance and composition at CSU.

After a coast-to-coast tour in August, SHEL hopped on the road again in October for their third tour this year, playing shows in Nashville, Massachusetts, and at the CMJ Music Marathon in New York City. SHEL's credits also include appearances at Red Rocks, Lilith Fair, and South by Southwest. You may even catch one of their tunes on the new CBS series "Made in Jersey," or in a Glade or Splenda commercial.

The girls however, who quit school in 2008 to pursue music full-time, are most excited about the August 2012 release of their self-titled debut album. It was recorded in their Fort Collins home studio with Grammy award-winning producer Brent Maher of Moraine Music Group.

"There's a moment for each of us to shine on this album, where our personalities come out and we give the world a good glimpse of who we are," Hannah says.

Though SHEL originally signed on with Universal Republic, they later broke off from the label in order to release an album independently and preserve the originality they've always strived for.

Reflecting the culmination of a lifetime of playing music together and several years refining their songwriting process, the album propelled SHEL to the highest point in their professional music career thus far. "It's been a gradual process for us but I feel like it was meant to be," says Eva Holbrook, lead vocalist and mandolin player.

The SHEL sisters are all classically trained musicians who began studying music at a young age. The four grew up on 45 acres in north Fort Collins where chickens and turkeys ran freely and where there were plenty of musical instruments to learn. With a musician father and a visual artist mother, creativity runs in the family. The girls used to back-up their singer-songwriter father at local shows and have played music together for as long as they can



remember, which made forming an official band in 2005 feel like a natural step.

"It's nice that everyone brings different personalities and skills to the table so we can hash things out in order to make something that none of us could have done alone," says Sarah Holbrook, violin player and vocalist, on the wealth of talents within the group that allow them to accomplish everything from songwriting, recording, and production to design and videography on their own.

While they all play a key role in every aspect of the band, each sister has a specialty. Sarah does a lot of the band's videography, Hannah arranges harmonies and manages social media, Eva is the stylist and does a lot of the production work, and Liza, on drums and percussion, is the graphic designer. She is also a rather talented beat-boxer and regularly brings her sisters fresh sounds to listen to. Though they grew up on Led Zeppelin and the Beatles, "I introduce a lot of techno into the group and the girls usually like about two songs and then they make me shut it off," Liza, who is the youngest, jokes.

SHEL practices together every day except Sunday, fitting in early-morning sessions even when they spend full days shooting videos or traveling. "We know that if we want to keep doing this we have to work really hard and create the best art that we can," says Eva.

SHEL's future goals include headlining a national and a European tour. They also think it would

be insane to open for some of their favorite artists, like Muse or Coldplay. But no matter how high they fly, Fort Collins will always be home. "We love Fort Collins and are very grateful for the support we've received from the community," says Eva.

SHEL's musical journey proves that when you dream big, work hard, and stay true to yourself, good things will come. And with your sisters by your side, the sky's the limit.

SHEL is:

Sarah Holbrook- Violin, Bass, Vocals
 Hannah Holbrook- Piano, Keyboard, Vocals
 Eva Holbrook- Acoustic Mandolin, Electric Mandolin, Cello, Lead Vocals
 Liza Holbrook- Drums, Percussion, Vocals

Upcoming Shows:

-Moab Utah Folk Festival, November 14th
 12:00 pm
 -Sunrise Ranch, Loveland, November 17th
 7:00p.m.
 -The Soiled Dove Underground with The Vespers, Denver
 November 18th 7:00p.m.

Visit www.shelmusic.com for more information, a free song download, and to see their latest self-produced music video, "Freckles." ●

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