

## **MOUNTAIN HEART Biography**

Josh Shilling – vocals/guitar  
Jim VanCleve – fiddle  
Barry Abernathy – banjo  
Jason Moore – bass  
Aaron Ramsey – mandolin/dobro  
Jake Stargel - guitar

Mountain Heart is the band that has been fearlessly revolutionizing the way acoustic music can be presented and played. The band's name has been synonymous with cutting-edge excellence in acoustic music circles since the group's creation in 1999. Widely known throughout the music industry for continually redefining the boundaries of acoustic music, the band has gained legions of loyal fans both as a result of their superlative musicianship, and more notably, their incomparably exciting live performances.

As one of the most highly awarded ensembles ever assembled, Mountain Heart, or members of the band, have either won or been nominated for Grammy's, ACM, CMA, and multiple IBMA Awards. They have appeared on the revered stage of the Grand Ole Opry in excess of 125 times and have shared the stage with acts ranging from Lynyrd Skynyrd, Montgomery Gentry, Merle Haggard, George Jones and Brad Paisley to Alison Krauss, Tony Rice, The Avett Brothers, Yonder Mountain Stringband, Levon Helm, John Fogerty and Patty Loveless.

Mountain Heart's musical virtuosity, unmatched energy, and keen sense of entertainment dynamics have helped them to forge a highly unique sound, and stage show, which appeals to an incredibly wide variety of musical tastes. From large outdoor folk music and bluegrass festivals, to sold-out arena shows opening for Southern Rock icons, Lynyrd Skynyrd, to co-headlining concerts with the acoustic guitar legend, Tony Rice, Mountain Heart always makes an undeniable connection to an audience, leaving them on their feet. In short, this rare combination of abilities makes Mountain Heart one of the most versatile acts ever assembled.

This year will see Mountain Heart booked to play some of the most prestigious outdoor multi-genre festivals in the nation as well as theaters and clubs as they tour in support of their 7<sup>th</sup> album, "That Just Happened", which was released in late 2010 on their own imprint, MH Music Group.

## ABOUT THE BAND

### **Josh Shilling**

Versatile singer/songwriter Josh Shilling boasts an impressive combination of experience and musicianship, belying his youth. Only 27 years-old, Shilling's musical forays have been diverse and considerable, ranging from jazz and funk-tinged ensembles to soul and contemporary country, jam-band and folk projects.

As a teenager, Shilling fielded offers to tour nationally with professional bands, and at 17, he graduated high school one year early to begin his musical pursuits. He began traveling with The Kings, a successful regional band from Roanoke, Virginia. Subsequent gigs soon followed with nationally touring artists including Cimmaron, country star Billy "Crash" Craddock and Chicago's Bill Champlin, who proclaimed Shilling "has the potential to be one of the greats."

Esteemed trumpet and trombone player Mic Gillette also enlisted Shilling's services. Stints with The Funky Loophole that featured members of group Tower of Power, along with Balancing Act and crowd-pleasers The Embers, expanded his musical palate. His collaborations with Gillette prompted the revered musician to dub Shilling the "real deal." His 2005 collaboration with Detroit-based Balancing Act led to resounding affirmation of Shilling's songwriting skills. In addition to providing lead vocals and keyboard work, he penned several compositions for the group's album. One of the tunes attracted the attention of MTV, who obtained licenses to incorporate the song into episodes of popular shows "Punk'd" and "Making the Video."

2007 found Shilling joining Mountain Heart. His robust vocals, evolving signature piano stylings and nimble guitar work enhance the group's rich acoustic sound. The same year, Shilling wrote or co-wrote all of the four new songs featured on the group's live album, *The Road that Never Ends*, including project's title track, which reached the fourth slot on Billboard's bluegrass chart.

Mountain Heart's January 2007 appearance on the Grand Ole Opry introduced Shilling to an eagerly receptive crowd; after performing one of his original songs, he earned a standing ovation and encore that evening - a rarity and intoxicating distinction for any artist on that revered stage.

Now based in Nashville, Shilling is a full-time songwriter and spends much of his time working in studios as a session musician/vocalist. When he's not writing material for upcoming projects or on the road with Mountain Heart, guest appearances with artists who inspire him also line his schedule. Young but prodigious, Josh Shilling's future promises both success and tireless innovation guaranteed to delight music lovers all over the world.

### **Jim Van Cleve**

At 31, fiddler Jim Van Cleve has already achieved more than many musicians do in a lifetime, and with the release of his solo debut, *No Apologies*, the dynamic youngster has taken a bold step forward. Producing, arranging, performing, and sharing in the writing credits for more than half of the CD's eleven selections, Jim has created a collection of unusual depth and breadth that can only enhance his reputation as one of the leading musicians of his generation.

“No Apologies”, his amazing solo effort was one of the most critically acclaimed albums of the year, garnering a 2006 Grammy Nomination, an IBMA Instrumental Album of the Year Nomination for 2007, and taking "Album of the Year" honors in the Folk Music category of the Indie Acoustic Awards. It was also included in the Top 10 Best Albums Lists in The Wall Street Journal, the Chicago Tribune, The Washington Times, USA Today and CMT. The project boasts an impressive total of 3 charting singles, with the first single holding down the Top Spot for an amazing 3 months. Following the success of his album, Jim was nominated as IBMA Fiddle Player of the Year.

As one of the most in-demand top-call session musicians in Nashville, Jim has played on countless recordings over his impressive career to date. He played a prominent role as fiddler on the 2004 Country Album of the Year *Livin', Lovin', Losin': The Songs Of The Louvin Brothers*, garnering him his first Grammy. He also recorded fiddle for a smash-hit single drawn from American Idol winner, Carrie Underwood's *Some Hearts* (2005)-his first participation in a multi-platinum seller where he was prominently featured on the Billboard Magazine #1 hit single “Don’t Forget to Remember Me”. Jim was also featured along with the other members of Mountain Heart on the recording “Strumming With The devil” (with David Lee Roth of Van Halen fame). In early 2009 Jim was asked to write an instrumental track for the new studio project by the rising star Sierra Hull. This marks the second song he has written for her that was recorded.

In addition to his session work Jim is also an in demand producer. Recent projects have included his solo effort, Mountain Heart’s “Live “ CD, the latest project from rising group Newfound Road, both of the releases by the IBMA award nominated group Carrie Hassler and Hard Rain, the super-group Mashville brigade and the instrumental “Pickin on Taylor Swift”.

As one of the original members of Mountain Heart, Jim has become legendary for the intense energy, charisma, and dazzling musicianship he brings to the stage. In his impressive career Jim has recorded and/or performed with legendary artists like Johnny Cash, Vince Gill, Merle Haggard, Alison Krauss, Willie Nelson, Dolly Parton, Emmylou Harris, Linda Ronstadt, Ricky Skaggs, Del McCoury, Doc Watson, Glen Campbell, Tony Rice, Carrie Underwood, Jerry Douglas, Sam Bush and many, many more.

### **Barry Abernathy**

Winner of 1997's Banjo Player of the Year award from the Society for the Preservation of Blue Grass Music in America, Barry began his musical career performing bluegrass gospel with Silver Creek, but first came to national attention as a member of one of the decade's hottest bluegrass bands, IIIrd Tyme Out. From 1994 to 1998, the Georgia-born banjo player/lead vocalist was a featured member of Doyle Lawson & Quicksilver, recording five albums with the award-winning ensemble before leaving to form Mountain Heart.

Barry's heartfelt and earthy vocal tones are in perfect compliment to Josh's soaring tenor lines and his banjo playing defies logic, considering he was born with no fingers on his left hand. Barry's on-stage demeanor and his ability to relate with his audience is one of the cornerstones for Mountain Heart's exciting live performances.

### **Jason Moore**

Mountain Heart's bassist belies his youth with a deep well of experience and mastery of bluegrass. First introduced to national audiences as a band member with an earlier IBMA Emerging Artist, James King, Moore has become a first-call recording musician, gracing the IBMA award-winning *Knee Deep In Bluegrass* (which also featured Adam Steffey), as well as IBMA Fiddle Player of the Year Michael Cleveland's solo albums, which have also won recorded event of the year a number of times. He has been nominated 4 times for bass player of the year at IBMA and been on several other award nominated projects. Jason has become one of the genre's premiere bassists and is in high demand in the studio these days. His enthusiastic and spirited demeanor on stage is infectious and his ferocious bass line is the anchor for this band!

### **Aaron Ramsey**

At the age of 26, Aaron Ramsey has been immersed in playing music for over half his life. Bass was his first instrument, but mandolin is his musical love. Aaron began playing mandolin at the age of 12 and by 13 was participating in his Dad's Gospel group, Damascus Road. Then, he won the MerleFest mandolin competition at the age of 17 in 2002. He was a founding member of The Linville Ridge Band, playing mandolin and guitar from 2002 through early 2006. In March of 2006, he became a member of Randy Kohrs' band, the Lites, playing bass. Later that year, he moved to the mandolin and recorded mandolin and bass on several cuts of Randy's two most recent recordings, *I'm Torn* and *Old Photographs*. As a member of the Lites, Aaron also got to contribute his mandolin playing to the 2006 IBMA Album of the Year, *Celebration of Life: Musicians Against Childhood Cancer*.

In the fall of 2007, Aaron was called on to fill-in for Adam Steffey with Mountain Heart. Later, Barry Abernathy said given the short notice, he could not have asked for Aaron's playing to have been any better. Barry was impressed. In December of 2007 Aaron followed Josh Shilling's lead, from earlier that year, as he played his first official gig with Mountain Heart, on the stage of the Ryman Auditorium.

### **Jake Stargel**

Jake Stargel is a native Georgian born with a guitar in his capable hands. Only 20 years of age, Jake has a phenomenal feel for his instrument and is blazing a trail to become one of the masters of the genre. He first came to national attention with the Lovell Sisters at the tender age of 15 and has since been a member of Grammy nominated "The Greencards" and most recently "Bearfoot".

Acoustic guitar legend Bryan Sutton has high praise for this young man's talents and future. "Jake is great! He can do pretty much anything on the guitar. He seems to have a good character, too. He's going to be a monster addition to Mountain Heart."

In addition to the guitar, Jake also plays piano, mandolin, mandola and electric guitar. But it is Jake's intensity and fire on the acoustic guitar that is unmatched...anywhere ...period.