

PROMISED LAND



PHOTOS BY AARON WEST/SUN-NEWS

MAX CARMICHAEL puts in some banjo time at his home recording studio. Carmichael's latest album, "Promised Land," landed the number four spot on NBT Music Radio's "50 Top Albums of 2011" list.

Musician finds freedom in Silver City

By Aaron West

AWEST@SCSUN-NEWS.COM

SILVER CITY — When Max Carmichael moved to Silver City six years ago, he knew he had finally found that diverse, eclectic place that he'd been looking for. And funny enough, when Carmichael moved to town, he brought those same qualities — and then some — to Silver City with him.

"I had been scouting for a community in the Southwest — one with some tolerance and diversity," said Carmichael. "I looked at dozens of small towns, and finally, after years of searching, I found Silver City. This was the end of the rainbow for me."

Carmichael, a local musician, writer and artist whose latest album, "Promised Land," landed on NBT Music Radio's "50 Top Albums of 2011" list last year, has a creative and professional history as colorful as the art galleries' collections downtown. He said that moving to Silver City gave him a chance to gain some perspective on his life and work — an admirable accomplishment considering everything that encompasses.



LOCAL MUSICIAN, artist and writer Max Carmichael plays the keyboard at his home recording studio. Carmichael's song, "Moses of Indiana," from his latest album, "Promised Land," was the number four song on NBT Music Radio's "Top Songs of 2011" list, alongside songs by Wilco, James Blake and more.

See **MUSICIAN**, Page 2A

Musician

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1A

Of course, there's the music career, which along with the recent top album recognition, brought him to the number four spot on NBT's "Top Songs of 2011" list with his song "Moses of Indiana," as well. Carmichael's musical experience can all be traced back to an Appalachia-infused upbringing in southeast Ohio, complete with instrument-filled family sing-alongs and church outings that eventually led him to front two bands, Wickiup and Village Voice-acclaimed Terra Incognito, in California throughout the '80s and early '90s. But that's just

the tip of the proverbial iceberg.

Then there's the early office and construction jobs, the website design and technology projects during the dot-com boom in the late '90s in San Francisco, engineering degrees at Illinois Institute of Technology and Stanford University, fiction and poetry works, various art and design projects, assisting desert scientists with wildlife biology and archaeology field work, spending a year alone in Utah's desert wilderness and even founding the Mimbres Valley Harvest Festival.

It's a vibrant history that's difficult for Carmichael himself to condense, but his move to Silver City has at least given him the opportunity to try and

do that, and then make something out of what he distills.

"When I moved to New Mexico, I was able to get some perspective on everything I'd ever done," Carmichael said. "And I said, you know, I want to do all of that at once."

Musically speaking, this involves combining what he's gotten into over the years with newer styles that he's been discovering recently like electronic and urban dance music.

"I want to be a composer who can pull from this vast palette and do any kind of music," Carmichael said. "I'd like to work with one genre today and do another tomorrow."

Carmichael said that, eventually, this many-sided approach might lead to a live show — "something laptop

based with live instruments," he said — that also incorporates a visual component that will draw from his artwork. But, then again, for all his visual-art experience, Carmichael isn't one to visualize the future.

"Some people say visualize your goal and strive for it, but I like to set things in motion and then leave myself open to change course or evolve," Carmichael said. "What I've set in motion now is this whole recorded music thing, and then maybe I'll move toward a live act — unless some asteroid hits and puts me in another direction entirely."

Aaron West can be reached at (575) 538-5893 ext. 5803