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music

contemporary spring 07

# Howe Gelb + Friends

Wed 2 May 7.30pm

[www.barbican.org.uk/contemporary](http://www.barbican.org.uk/contemporary)

Free programme



Celebrating  
25 years of the  
Barbican

# Howe Gelb

## + Friends

**Howe Gelb** vocals/guitar/piano

### **Giant Sand:**

**Henriette Sennevaldt** vocals

**Peter Dombrowsky** drums/percussion

**Anders Pedersen** guitar

**Thøger Lund** bass

**Isobel Campbell** vocals/piano

**David McGowan** bass

**Jim McCulloch** guitar

**Emiliana Torrini** vocals

**Lonna Kelley** vocals

**Mary Margaret O'Hara** vocals + band:

**Rusty McCarthy** guitar

**Great Bob Scott** drums

**Fernando Vacas** + band 'Flow':

**Rocio Barrio**

**Luis Cortes**

### **The Handsome Family:**

**Brett Sparks** guitar/vocals

**Rennie Sparks** guitar/vocals

**Stephen Dorocke** pedal steel

### **Sno Angel:**

**Howe Gelb** vocals/guitar/piano

**Fred Guignon** slide guitar

**Andrew McCormack** drums

### **Voices of Praise Gospel Choir:**

**Steve Johnston** director

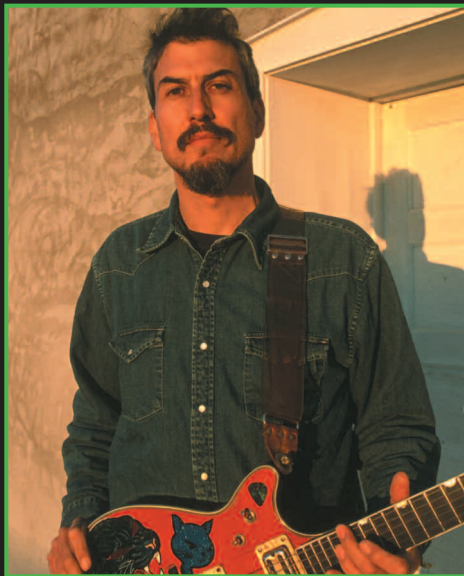
**Patrick Joseph**

**Neema Mugala**

**Christine Methengye**

**Jerusha Lewis**

**Michael Shaw**



Howe Gelb

Hollywood handsome and larger than life, Howe Gelb is an unusual man. Strange and beautiful with a genial air, mystic charm and subtle, charismatic glow, he stands tall and sits apart. A brown-eyed ball of cuddly. A mystery wrapped in a riddle. A shifty enigma. A twisty conundrum. A wolf in a sheepskin jacket.

His song titles recall Mingus and Miro, Ergo. 'Once I followed the field path down to the gully and careened there in the shimmer of simpatico churning like kumquat rapids of froth and green simmer, I could almost smell the sip of purpose.'

Boldly oblique and swingingly prolific, Gelb releases albums like other people send postcards. Exotic hello's from far-flung reaches, and in myriad musical styles. He won't be pinned down and can't be second guessed. For nearly two decades his ever shifting musical collective *Giant Sand* (from whence sprung *Calexico*) have hooked, snagged, baffled and enthralled. Elsewhere, solo or in a variety of guises (*Arizona Amp And Alternator*, *The Band Of Blacky Ranchette*, *OP8* and more), his music

continues to shuffle, groove, slam and blam, lope, putter, swirl and bomp. Graced with a voice of slow, velvet burr, he is the desert sage, always challenging, constantly redefining. 'Everybody's lives are the same mostly,' he notes. 'Tragedy and comedy. Romances and happenstances. The end.'

Half a century old, give or take, Gelb follows his own path and leaves a fascinatingly scattered musical trail... Places been, songs sung, times had and memories seared. Music isn't a career but a lifestyle. From homebase Tucson, he travels the world, not just another airhead rock 'n' roller in search of chicks and fame, but a musician seeking the new and visiting with friends. There's a dignity in that. He doesn't just cock his hat for no purpose. People who meet him fall in thrall to his magnetic calm, seductive craft and sonic ways.

And the Barbican is proud to be part of the story. Gelb's extraordinary 2001 show, (*Upside Down Home*, still ranks as one of the most memorable evenings the centre has ever known. 'The name HOWE is HOME spelled upside down. DOWN HOME is a phrase for a good time home spun feeling. UPSIDE DOWN is just what happens when our music gets all topsy turvy... which happens a lot,' explained Howe. Joined that night by a stellar cast including Evan Dando, Vic Chesnutt, Mark Linkous, John Parish, PJ Harvey, Kurt Wagner and Calexico, Gelb cast a quixotic spell; a luminescent dream-weave of beguiling wonder. He was ever present, at the piano or on guitar, centre stage or off in shadow to the back or side, band-leader, ring-leader, lion-tamer all. 'That was truly one of those once in a lifetime occasions,' gushed Polly Harvey afterwards.

Gelb has subsequently returned to London many times, twice last year, once as part of the Barbican's tribute to Daniel Johnston, and then with full gospel choir at nearby St Luke's in support of his justly acclaimed album *Sno Angel Like You*. So many shows, so many new directions, but enough time has now passed following that 2001 triumph to warrant a full Barbican return. Not a repeat, it should be stressed - he doesn't phone-in nothing for no-one - but a big, other thing, with yes, an echo perhaps of that *clasico* all embracing gaucho spirit of yore. 'Sometimes it's fun being a human,' he says. 'Incoherent, but fun.'

Whilst not exactly seeking to define the indefinable, tonight's show will touch on all aspects of the man and his music. (And that's a buffet demanding of a long and sturdy table. Chile Relleno, rice and beans, and a whole feast more). Be prepared for a Gelbian tickle of glee, an avant-twang of textured hue and burnished chromium sheen. As well as Giant Sand's spectral derring do, the clarion haunt of the Sno Angel choir is to be reprised. Other delights in store include guest slots from Howe's extended family of friends - this time around featuring Emiliana Torrini, Isobel Campbell, Henriette Sennevaldt and Mary Magaret O'Hara among others. There will also be a tribute to the late great Rainer Ptacek. (Note: If Howe is huckster, hero, wizard and angel, the ghost at his shoulder is Rainer). Expect to be touched and moved.

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Produced by the Barbican

There will be an interval in tonight's concert. No smoking in the auditorium. No cameras, tape recorders or other recording equipment may be taken into the hall.



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## Friday 11 May Bush Hall

Eat Your Own Ears presents  
**A HAWK AND  
A HACKSAW**  
with The Hun Hangár  
Ensemble + guest JACK ROSE

A Hawk and A Hacksaw is Jeremy Barnes (accordion/vocals) and Heather Trost (violin/vocals) from Albuquerque, New Mexico. Their sound is an emotive mix of East European folk, Gypsy song, Klezmer, Mexican fanfare and gorgeous cinematic flourishes.

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