

# NO DEPRESSION

## FOUNDERS' KEEPERS: Norah Jones, Sheryl Crow, Shane Smith, and More

Peter Blackstock POSTED ON MARCH 25, 2024

About a year ago, celebrating Willie Nelson's 90th birthday at the Hollywood Bowl with an all-star cast of dozens, I was reminded how much Norah Jones and Sheryl Crow have contributed to popular music over the past few decades. Both have new albums out in March, which seemed like a good place to start this month's column. Also in the mix are a couple of Texas troubadours: Bruce Robison has been an influential songwriter since the 1990s, while Shane Smith is a rising star with his band the Saints. I'll wrap things up with two personal favorites, from Poi Dog Pondering – an archival release documenting their early days in Hawaii – and Charley Ramsay, who (full disclosure) was in a band I briefly managed when I had no idea what I was doing. Perhaps I still don't! But I'm glad all of these folks are still making music today.



### Shane Smith & the Saints – *Norther*

Austin's music scene is so deep, particularly when it comes to Americana troubadours, that I was only slightly aware of Smith's gradual rise during my recent decade on the music beat there. *Norther* is his fifth album with the Saints, which also features fiddler Bennett Brown, guitarist Dustin Schaefer, bassist Chase Satterwhite, and drummer Zach Stover. Appearances in the TV series *Yellowstone* have heightened the group's profile in recent years, and it's a good fit: The Saints' songs often have an Old West feel both musically and lyrically, while Smith's dramatic vocal style has a cinematic quality. Though the Saints' music remains grounded in the moody roadhouse honky-tonk of numbers such as "Adeline" and "Navajo Norther," Smith seems increasingly willing to shift gears for a more direct connection, as he does on the piano-centric ballad "All the Way."