

Sept-Oct 12

Music Reviews**Honky-Tonk Rockin'*****O' BE JOYFUL*****by Shovels & Rope (Dual Tone)**

On their second album as Shovels & Rope, the duo of Cary Ann Hearst and Michael Trent have carved out a selection of songs with one foot in traditional American folk and the other in bare bones rock. It kicks off with the autobiographical "Birmingham," telling the story of troubadours playing for paltry sums of cash and living on the road. Two guitars, some beat up drums, a banjo here and there, and the occasional harmonica set the scene throughout for the duo's strongest assets: smooth, embracing harmonies and honest songwriting.

Recorded at their homes, in hotel rooms and wherever they could find space between gigs, *O' Be Joyful* is far from lo-fi. Sonically it's clear as day, but you can bet these straight-forward songs would translate comfortably to the dirtiest, smokiest bar in town. — M.K.