

Burns & Poe

BURNS & POE

Blue Steel Records - BSR0003

★★★☆☆

These could be the next top country duo

With Sugarland maturing into a very good country-rock duo with their inventive new album *THE INCREDIBLE MACHINE*, they have left a big gap in the pop-country genre targeting the younger fans. With Keith Burns rapping at the start of *Don't Get No Better Than That* leading to a very catchy tune with fine counter vocals from Michelle Poe I knew that these were the ideal duo to fill the void and take over the country-pop mantle.

Don't get me wrong, they are a little bit more than your normal throw-away pop of Taylor Swift (who I was far too generous with when rating one of her CDs in *Maverick*) and Shania Twain, but their music is still very American country radio friendly and their good looks will definitely attract the teenage fans.

Michelle has a very good strong voice as proved on the fine pop ballad *How Long Is Long Enough* with Keith now taking his turn with the harmony. Another very good ballad then follows with Michelle again in fantastic voice on *Ain't It Amazing*. The lively beat driven *Big Truck* will again probably be a big hit on country radio with Keith's vocals coming through strong with Michelle again showing the power in her voice. They have split the fourteen tracks evenly onto two CDs with the second CD entitled *DUETS* showing off how wonderfully their voices go together. Their press bio calls their vocal mix as 'gravel & grace', it is much more ballad orientated with their duet vocals coming across like a fine blend of whiskey and honey. Burns & Poe are being name checked alongside male-female vocal duos from the past such as George & Tammy, Dolly & Kenny and Conway & Loretta, bit early to make comparisons but they are good.

I predict that over the next few years (as long as they stay together) Burns & Poe will be top vocal duo at the CMA Awards. **David Knowles**
www.burnsandpoe.com



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Hungrytown

ANY FORGOTTEN THING

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★★★★☆

Here's proof positive that simplicity can be musically sublime, a dozen times over

Apart from background vocal contributions by Laura Molinelli on three songs, what you hear on this album is pure undiluted Hungrytown. Rebecca Hall features on guitar and vocals, while Ken Anderson, alphabetically speaking, adds accordion, banjo, bass, drums, electric piano, glockenspiel, guitar—pause for breath—harmonica, mandolin, organ, percussion and vocals. Hall contributes five compositions penned on her own, the seven other selections being Becca and Ken co-writes. The credited studio is Song Catcher Recording, in other words the duo's West Townshend, south central Vermont home. In that regard their approach smacks of the early efforts captured on America's other coast—Oregon—by the late great Dave Carter and Tracy Grammer in the latter's kitchen. Carter lyrics were Gordian Knot constructions, and Hall is no slouch when it comes to conceiving an engaging folk style lyric.

In April 1815 such was the ferocity with which the volcano Mt. Tambora erupted—the largest such event in recorded history—on the Indonesian island of Sumbawa, that weather patterns during the ensuing year were altered across America and Canada—if not the entire northern hemisphere—resulting in harsher than normal winters and bleak sunless summers. With Rebecca taking the lead vocal on the appropriately titled *Year Without A Summer*, that's where *ANY FORGOTTEN THING* begins. While the latter facts form the song's backdrop, therein the female narrator recalls New England's frozen rivers that left mills powerless, and a lover who promised but failed to marry her when springtime came. The duo's vocal harmonies on *Just Like A Song* are silky smooth and quite sublime, while on the ensuing *Never Realized* their voices brought to mind the styling's of those delightful Roche girls.

A harmonica introduces the album title song, which takes as its theme the daily struggle to keep up with life, while the waltz-paced *Calliope* was inspired by the popular nineteenth century fairground musical instrument. Once upon a time, Rebecca and Ken resided in Manhattan's concrete canyons, and the 1960s style pop melody that accompanies *Make It All Work Out*, most certainly brought to mind the Brill Building song factory—home to Gerry Goffin and Carole King, Barry Mann and Cynthia Weil et al. Performed a cappella by the duo, *The Sweetest Flower* closes this charming collection. Hungrytown will be touring UK venues throughout May. **Arthur Wood**
<http://www.myspace.com/hungrytown>



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