

OLD TIME NEWS

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CD Reviews

Joe Newberry & April Verch



Going Home (Slab Town Records)

Joe Newberry: banjo, guitar, vocals;
April Verch: fiddle, step dancing,
vocals

*Yellow Jacket - Half Past Four / I'm
Going Home / Will You Wait For Me /
Waiting For Joe / My Childhood Days /
Jericho / New Waltz / Baby I'm Blue /
Back Up and Push - Carleton County
Breakdown - John Brown's Dream /
Roses Are Blooming / I Can't Sit Down /
The Arkansas Travelers*

It's right that these two are billed as a folk/roots duo. Both are steeped in the folk tradition of their continent and this CD 'goes home' to those roots. Bringing together old-time and

traditional bluegrass, this is a varied and upbeat CD, offering punchy fiddle/banjo duets, poignant and pacy songs, with a dose of step dancing thrown in too! It draws a lot on a lot original work and also offers some great takes on classic old-time numbers.

With ten albums under her belt, April Verch is well-known as an acclaimed Canadian fiddler and step-dancer. Joe Newberry, a North Carolina-based singer, songwriter and multi instrumentalist, is becoming well known to us too. Through Transatlantic Sessions, joyful banjo and vocal harmony workshops at SoreFingers Summer School and tours with Mike Compton, Joe has earned a place in many of our hearts.

This is a good quality CD to get to know these two stellar musicians. Having performed together many times, it's their first recording collaboration. I enjoyed the fun and exuberance that flowed from my speakers, so I look forward to seeing them live when they tour the UK together in Spring 2018.

The 12 track CD has a few more songs than tunes but, unsurprisingly, the tunes still pack a big punch. It starts with a

couple of sparky paired tunes *Yellow Jacket* and *Half Past Four* featuring April's clean crisp fiddle playing and Joe's impeccable banjo as back-up. But it's later tunes that really stayed with me - April's self-penned up-beat fiddle instrumental *Waiting for Joe*, which I can imagine becoming a session favourite. Plus *Back Up and Push/Carleton County Breakdown/John Brown's Dream*, where April pulls out her step-dancing shoes and Joe offers a clawhammer banjo solo. *New Waltz*, is just a super 'nice' tune and the final track of the CD *Arcand-Saw Traveler* takes us out in a true finale! This fiddle/banjo duet rattles along at an exciting pace.

As a singer I was drawn to the songs on the CD and with skillful guitar and fiddle accompaniment, combined with some strong vocals and song writing, there are some pearls in there. Joe co-wrote *I'm Going Home*, which gives the CD its name, with the amazing Si Khan (who wrote the timeless *Aragon Mill*). It's a reflective ballad, with nice fiddle treatment, that will resonate with all world-weary travellers. *Will You Wait For Me?*, has a 'Carter family feel and old-time spiritual style, and was co written by April with Jon

Weisberger. April also sings lead on a cover of Doc Williams' *Roses Are Blooming*. *My Dear Childhood Days* - another Joe/Khan co-write adopts a further reflective vocal tone, with sparse fiddle backing.

However the three songs that made my ears prick up were two of Joe's compositions - the pulsy *Jericho*; plus a favourite of mine, *Baby I'm Blue* - with its clever lyrics, catchy melody and fiddle 'tears'. The third, a show stopping gospel cover *I Can't Sit Down*, has traded vocals with great presence.

Someone wrote that these two clearly had a great time recording together, you can really hear that. It's fun and upbeat CD, by two accomplished musicians which celebrates so much about this music.

Issy Howie

Available from: Amazon, CD Baby