

Butch Thompson & Pat Donohue

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VICKSBURG BLUES

Red House Records

If, like me, you're addicted to the A Prairie Home Companion world of Garrison Keillor then you'll require no introduction to Butch Thompson (piano, clarinet) and Pat Donohue (vocals, guitar) and their 19-track release, VICKSBURG BLUES. They have long been musical pillars of this quirky retro-radio variety show; the latter, still a member of Guys All-Star Shoe Band. Donohue is a Grammy winner by virtue of his playing of "Peter Gunn" on PINK GUITAR (2004)—a celebration of the music of Henry Mancini. In 1983, in Winfield, Kansas, he won the National Fingerpicking Guitar Champion, and his compositions have been covered by the late Chet Atkins, as well as Suzy Bogguss and Kenny Rogers. A liking for Delta blues guitarists, Robert Johnson and Blind Lemon Jefferson led this Minnesotan to the music of Blind Blake, Robert Johnson and Muddy Waters. In 2008 the Martin Guitar Company released a signature Pat Donohue model. Fellow Minnesotan Thompson was house pianist and bandleader for A Prairie Home Companion from 1974 to 1986. The Butch Thompson Trio was created for the show in 1978, and continues to perform to this day. Butch has gone on to perform with the eight-piece New Orleans Jazz Originals, the Butch Thompson Big Three, and a chamber music duo with cellist Laura Sewell. He was development consultant on the Gregory Hines Broadway hit Jelly's Last Jam and later joined the touring company of Jelly Roll! The Music And The Man. Butch and Pat have extensive back catalogues of recordings; VICKSBURG BLUES being their first outing as a duo. The fare on offer here, whether songs or instrumentals, is an eclectic mix of covers and original compositions that run the stylistic gamut of jazz, ragtime, swing, blues and folk. Nine of the former appear mainly in the opening half of the album, whilst the ten instrumentals mainly occupy the second half of this disc. Butch's mentor, and blues legend, Little Brother Montgomery penned the title song as well as "Blues For Little Brother," whilst the instrumental "Sunday Rag" is collaborative effort with Butch. Pat reflects on his roots with a cover of Blind Blake's "Poker Woman," and has included a trio of self-penned instrumentals, including "A Minor Fantasy." VICKSBURG BLUES ends with a couple of the aforementioned instrumentals, namely the Butch Thompson/Pat Donohue collaboration, "That D Strain" and the former's "Yancey Blues."

Arthur Wood

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