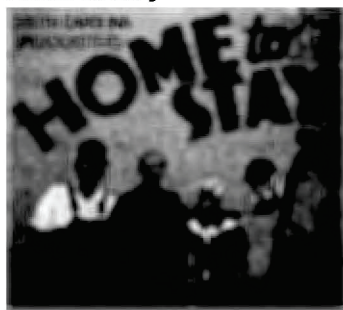


South Carolina Broadcasters
Home to Stay



Ivy Sheppard: fiddle, banjo, vocals; David Sheppard: guitar, vocals; Jackson Cunningham: mandolin, guitar, vocals; Stu Geisbert: bass

Home to Stay / Bright Crystal Sea / Rocky Island / I'm Coming Back but I Don't Know When / The Brand New Tennessee Waltz / I'm S-A-V-E-D / Things in Life / Sally Ann / Little Maud / Just a Few More Days / I Saw a Man at the Close of Day / Sunshine in the Shadows

A reviewer could be forgiven for being confused about this band's name. First, South Carolina is not as well known as a hotspot for old-time and early transitional bluegrass as North Carolina or Virginia. Still, both Carolinas have a heritage of old-time music, and this band started when founders David and Ivy Sheppard lived in Charleston, South Carolina.

Which leads to the second potentially perplexing aspect of the naming. Original members have since moved to points north and west, and more recently enlisted bandmates who all claim homes other than South Carolina—lots of roots in Virginia and North Carolina, as it turns out.

Whatever the band members' geographical pilgrimage, the pedigree of their Southern sound is unassailable. The Carter Family is an obvious influence, especially with the harmonies on vocals. I laughed when I read a quote from Tim O'Brien on the band's Facebook page: "I'd like to think that if A.P. Carter had more time to think about it, the Carter Family would have been singing like the Broadcasters." There's a plainness to the vocal solos that merge into a fine blend when the band members harmonize.

Clawhammer and finger-picking banjo from Ivy give a nice lilt (as does her fiddle playing). Bass (Stu Geisbert) and David Sheppard's guitar are suitably solid as backup and for the occasional soloed guitar break. Jackson Cunningham's mandolin is a special treat, and the

doublestops and tremolo hark back to Stanley Brothers recordings—truly fine playing that artfully keeps linkages between Appalachian roots and later bluegrass phrasing.

Lots of classics comprise the CD mix but David Sheppard's Gospel-tinged original, "Home To Stay" (also appearing on their 2017 release *We'll Sing Once More*), deserves ranking as a standard, and I won't be surprised if it gets picked up by other bands or artists.

"Bright Crystal Sea" launches with a mandolin solo with an unmistakable debt to the Rich-R-Tone version of the gospel song sourced from Cecil Surratt and his West Virginia Ramblers.

"Rocky Island," a traditional song, here gets a nice rendition from a driving clawhammer solo soon complemented by Cunningham's rollicking mandolin and kept afloat by energetic guitar and solid bass.

"Things in Life," Don Stover's classic that seems effortlessly to reside in both bluegrass and old-time circles, is always worth a spirited rendition, like the version found here.

"Just a Few More Days" and "Sunshine in the Shadows," gospel-tinged songs from the venerable A. P. Carter, cement the band's debt to Southwest Virginia's Carter Family and that stream of "hillbilly" music that would evolve and come to influence other genres. The Broadcasters have stepped into that tradition of beginning with solid roots in a region and then traversing expected categories to end up with a sound uniquely their own.

TIMOTHY JONES