Shovels & Rope - By Blood

As the Brontë sister wrote, “The ties that bind us to life are tougher than you imagine.” Shovels & Rope,
the musical duo of Michael Trent and Cary Ann Hearst, embody that bond. Married for a decade, their
covenant extends to blood and beyond: as lovers, parents, bandmates, and creative collaborators who can
now add the pursuits of festival curators, film subjects, and children’s book authors to that mighty list.
Having released a fistful of albums since 2008, Trent and Hearst have built their reputation on skill,
sweat, and, yes, blood. Now, with the tough and elegant new record
By Blood
, as well as their High Water
Festival in their hometown of Charleston, South Carolina,
Shovels & Rope: The Movie
, and the picture
book
C’Mon Utah!
, Shovels & Rope are primed for their biggest year yet.
Accomplished musicians in their own right prior to teaming up for the
Shovels & Rope
album in
2008, Trent and Hearst have made a career together by seizing opportunities and never resting on their
laurels or being complacent in doing something
just because
. Carving out a niche in the Americana world
with strong, rootsy efforts like 2012’s
O’ Be Joyful
, 2014’s
Swimmin’ Time
, and 2016’s inward-looking
Little Seeds
, as well as their powerful live show, far-reaching tours, and myriad TV and festival
appearances, Shovels & Rope have earned the right to follow their own muse. And so, in an effort to
satisfy their numerous creative interests and adapt to a changing industry, Trent and Hearst have firmly
planted their flag in realms beyond recording and releasing albums. As parents they learned to divide and
conquer their days efficiently, and with a packed slate ahead of them in 2019 they have learned to do the
same with their business.
“While this year we’ve made what I think is our greatest-sounding production work yet, theres’s a
suite of other things on our plate as well,” Hearst says. “With the music industry changing we have to
navigate how the business functions and how it pertains to our living. And that requires releasing stuff
that’s interesting, so when we’ve had the opportunity to put out something super cool we’ve tried to take
it. We have the privilege to basically do whatever we want while making music and raising our family—a
movie, a book, a festival. And by the time one comes out we’re already on to the next thing; that’s how
our creative machine rolls. We’re trying to take control.”
The third annual High Water Festival curated by the band will be held over a weekend in April
and bring 10,000 fans to a park in North Charleston to witness a lineup of artists comparable to some of
the best in the country—including Leon Bridges, The Head & The Heart, Lord Huron, Jenny Lewis,
Mitski, and Shovels & Rope themselves. High Water benefits select organizations and water conservation
charities in Charleston and aims to avoid the feeling of corporate inundation and discomfort that plagues
many big-name music events. Trent and Hearst work with production companies and agencies to book
acts, then serve as on-site hosts in addition to headlining the weekend. “We go about it as ambassadors for
our city and our music scene,” Hearst says. “We’re by no means experts for all the production details. We
curated it to be super artist-friendly, so it’s comfy and cozy with great local food and drinks. We spoil the
artists to make them excited to come to Charleston. And we want to give the audience a pure, affordable
festival experience. It’s catered to be a lovely day outside.” Trent adds, “We’ve played so many festivals
through the years that we have a good insight to the span of what they can be. It feels intimate and it’s a
little more fraternal so the artists get the chance to form bonds.”