



Shawn Camp & Billy Burnette's *The Bluegrass Elvises, Vol. 1*

The King, all wryly shook up

by **Edd Hurt**

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On *The Bluegrass Elvises*, Shawn Camp and Billy Burnette subvert bluegrass's compulsive tendencies into something resembling the honky blues that Presley invented and discarded. Like many a bored Memphis conceptualist, Elvis was of at least two minds about the material he performed, which means that his later repertoire often sounded disembodied, whether it was some bit of insanity like *Clambake's* "Confidence" or the occasional unclassifiable demi-song or 1967's very *Basement Tapes* rendering of "How Can You Lose What You Never Had." He might have covered Bill Monroe's "Blue Moon of Kentucky" at Sun, but Elvis's respect for tradition equaled Dean Martin's love for Jerry Lewis. Burnette, whose father was rockabilly titan Dorsey Burnette, makes a great foil for Camp, a Nashville cat too smart and hip for mainstream country. They delve into Presley's early, iconic hits, detouring a bit when they add sweet fiddles to "Burning Love." Scott Vestal's banjo obbligato turns "All Shook Up" into a refreshingly abstract take on Otis Blackwell's song, and he sounds equally unhinged on "Little Sister." The stop-and-start blues licks that underpin "A Big Hunk o' Love" and "Mystery Train" suggest craziness, not bluegrass's usual uptightness, while Camp and Burnette sing everything as if they might have actually cast a gimlet eye at someone's little sister or called a woman a hound dog. *The Bluegrass Elvises* sounds as funny as its title, and this music scoots along as smartly as anything dreamt of in Dr. Nick's philosophy.