Shawna Russell ★★★
*Back Around*
Our Land Records

Music is the family business for Shawna Russell, who is joined by her father and guitarist, Keith, and her uncle and bassist, Tim, on Back Around. The result for the Oklahoma native is a mini-album that blends country and heartland rock and spotlights her expressive vocals. The buoyant title track finds Russell discovering a resiliency amid life on the road. “If the whole world turns against you,” she sings, “you can always come back home.” “Storm Birds,” a song dealing with the loss of a love in wartime, is a plaintive ballad that Russell delivers with a sense of vulnerability. “Slow Down in Oklahoma,” a country shuffle, explores the virtues of taking life at a slower pace, while “Learn to Live Again” finds Russell gaining the strength to make a fresh start. “No More Water” is the album’s darkest track with its tale of betrayal and spiritual desolation. “No more water/Nothing left to wash away my sins,” she declares. “Horse Shoe Bend,” the closing instrumental, is soothing blend of guitars that provides a musical balm for the soul. (7 songs, 25 minutes)

— Tom Wilk