

# Mp3 Heather Shayne Blakeslee - Treon's Cut Rate



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Acoustic based alt-country, folk, pop, and blues with smokey vocals, smart lyrics, and moody arrangements...driving music. 12 MP3 Songs FOLK: Folk Pop, COUNTRY: Country Blues Details: Heather Shayne Blakeslee is an American songwriter with a long past. Hiding in the brambles of her family trees are a grandfather who sang in the church choir and another who played squeezebox in the family band; bible beaters and Native Americans; teetotalers and drunks; stories of unnaturally long and robust lives, and others of early deaths in suspicious mine blasts. It's fitting that one translation of her last name means 'dark woods' in Old English-it's her ability to listen to all those voices as she roams around in shadowy groves that makes her a standout songwriter, adept at folk, blues, and country. As a performer, it's her own voice that draws people in. It's been described as "honey-toned," "luxurious," "molasses," and "downright seductive" by a bevy of reviewers. Blakeslee now has three recordings to her name: 2002's well-received *Bones*, the recently released *Treon's Cut Rate*, and the forthcoming *Mercy Mountain*, a three song EP that will be available in 2005. Her song "Mrs. D." from *Treon's Cut Rate* will also appear in the Winter 2005 issue of the literary magazine *Gargoyle*, which annually includes a CD of music with its journal. Blakeslee's unexpected musical life started in 1996 when she walked away from her college graduation with a degree in English, a degree in Philosophy, and guitar stolen from her father's closet, all of three of which she put to use in New York City. She slowly learned to play, and then in 2001 she recorded her debut at the request of a growing fan base. Blakeslee enlisted the help of musician and producer Jimi Zhivago, now a member of the gospel band Ollabelle, one of the latest acts to be hand-picked by T Bone Burnett and DMZ records. The pair recorded and mixed ten songs in just five days, producing 2002's spare and eloquent album *Bones*. Select AAA radio stations around the country picked up the record, and started spinning Blakeslee next to other artists drenched in roots music: Gillian

Welch, Mary Gauthier, Tracey Grammer, and Kris Delmhorst. In 2002 when Blakeslee officially released the record, she earned the number three spot on a CD Baby Top-Seller album, which showcased her work alongside artists like indie favorite Melissa Ferrick. She toured the Northeast in support of the album, sharing the stage along the way with rising folk luminaries Edie Carey, Ina May Wool, and Pamela Means, and her performances, says Long Island Music Scene, are "always something to write home about." Critics nailed the mood of *Bones* by comparing it to "the smell of Autumn," (Splendid E-zine) and called the characters of her tightly woven narratives, "strangers rapping softly on the window." (Daily Hampshire Gazette, Northampton, MA.) Demorama called Blakeslee's debut "striking in its non-intrusiveness...the songs are subtle, intelligent, and observant narratives that bring together issues, personal dramas, and character studies to form a tapestry of mood woven by Blakeslee's mature, downright seductive voice. Recordings, observers, and commentators on real American life are needed, and Blakeslee shows plenty of potential to become an important contributor. " Now back in her home state of Pennsylvania after a six-year stint in New York City (and having traveled as far as Shanghai, China to perform) Blakeslee is looking forward to settling into her new hometown-Philadelphia-and continuing to play shows in the Northeast. But it's her thematic territory that she really calls home. It's often the shaky ground between righteous religion and the stark spirituality of the natural world, as well as the heartache or heroism of everyday people-an unintentional interest that probably comes both from her DNA and her own experience. Jimi Zhivago worked with Blakeslee again on her current full-length release, *Treon's Cut Rate*. Like her first album, Blakeslee's sophomore effort is populated with shadows and infused with the same scent of autumn nights, but it shows her stretching musically. The hints of blues, country, and pop that characterized *Bones* are more refined, and back porch serenades that feature voice, guitar, and dobro and nestled next to fully-fleshed out pop tunes with drum kits and electric guitars. The theme of loss still runs throughout the songs on the new album, but there is more redemption here too: people who have struggled are picking up and moving on-much like Blakeslee has done. The move from post 9/11 New York was a rough one, and Blakeslee took almost two years off from playing shows. She spent part of the time in a small stone cottage on Stone Hollow Farm in rural Pennsylvania as she finished production on *Treon's Cut Rate*, but still wasn't writing new songs. Then Blakeslee had two serendipitous meetings in local stores with Kerrville-award winning songwriter Jackie Tice, who began mentoring her. Over following months, Blakeslee felt her way back into music and finding her voice again

as Tice pushed her toward writing, fingerpicking, and exploring more traditional songs. The result is Blakeslee's newest effort, the EP Mercy Mountain, which she describes as "transformations in the key of D." She captured just voice and guitar for three original songs: a gospel tune named "Mercy Mountain," a rerecording of her murder ballad, "The Ballad of Anna Mae," from Bones, and the redemptive blues song, "Ready to Rise." Mercy Mountain is a hint of what's to come on a future album, but until then, fans will enjoy Treon's Cut Rate. What's Up Magazine in Boston, MA says the release is, "as intimate as a lullaby and as gritty as a roadhouse band." "Pop this in," they say, "the next time you're cruising down route 66."

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