

Bluegrass Unlimited (July 2018)

HIGHLIGHT

THE DOWNTOWN MOUNTAIN BOYS—*HEY JOHN*



This Washington State band has a firm grasp of the genre and the winning combination of instrumental hot licks, strong vocals, and great material. They embody that West Coast sound originally heard from bands like the Country Gazette. While no one member stands out, the whole band demonstrates skill and class in their presentation of material.

The title-cut has a strong instrumental arrangement that demonstrates the prowess that marks the whole project. Bassist Terrence Enyeart's lead vocal brings to mind the late John Hartford. One way to expand the bluegrass perimeters is to push at the perceived boundaries from within. They do that with "Boats Up The River," a traditional number they learned from the late Ola Belle Reed. They also make good use of more modern material such as Mike Henderson's "I'm Wearing a Hole (In a Honky-Tonk Floor)" and Jerry Reed's "Misery Loves Company." The former displays the band's fine trio.

They present material that sounds old ("Josie's Reel") and make old pieces sound new ("Goodbye Liza Jane," again featuring their fine trio). Dave Keenan's banjo and Paul Elliott's fiddle soar and sing throughout. Tom Moran's mandolin is a solid addition, and Don Share plays some mighty-fine guitar with his distinctive touch. They lay it to the old fiddle standard "Cherokee Shuffle" and wrap-up everything very nicely with Paul Craft's "Born of the Wind."

This band is due national recognition. On this their third project, they demonstrate a considerable talent for making great bluegrass. This is a band to watch. If you ever get to the upper lefthand corner of the good ole USA or Western Canada, check them out. If not, you can still buy this fine CD (www.downtownmountainboys.com). -Robert C. Buckingham