

Bluegrass Unlimited, Highlight Review, August 2014

Let's see... plenty of superlatives? Check. Showers of accolades? Check. Glowing tributes? Check. Then we're off. The Downtown Mountain Boys are a group of five veteran Puget Sound area musicians who have been together for at least seven years. Heartland is their second release. To begin with, each of the band members should be considered a master of his particular instrument. None may ever be judged instrumentalist of the year, but each player - Paul Elliott on fiddle, Don Share on guitar, Terry Enyeart on bass, David Keenan on banjo and Tom Moran on mandolin - has the chops to fit easily with any band performing today, and (most importantly) they all have a great sense of how to play something that fits the tune or song perfectly. Taste - very good taste. Share, Enyeart and Keenan share lead and harmony throughout. All are strong lead singers with a nice variety between the lead vocals. One of the most compelling aspects of this release is the superb vocal blend. Sublime is not too strong a description for Keenan's harmony singing on "Going Home", on Don Stover's "Things in Life", on "If it Hadn't Been for Love" (with great lead work by Terry Enyeart) and on many others. The vocal harmonies are tight. Dead-on, and stirring. Another hallmark of this project is the attention to detail. The intricate, well-conceived and well-executed arrangements, both vocally and instrumentally, are found throughout and really set the CD apart. Clearly, a lot of thought went into how to best showcase each song or tune, and it shows. Another strength here is the nicely varied selection of material. Paul Elliott contributes two fine original instrumentals "Road to Dawson" and "Heartland Waltz". Terry Enyeart penned "Shannon's Last Ride" bidding adieu to a long time equine companion, and "Timber" a tribute to a signature northwest occupation, both of which help give the material a nice variety and a distinctive stamp. Other especially strong cuts (there are no throwaways here) would have to include "Up and Down the Mountain", "Going Home", "If it Hadn't Been for Love", "Like a Train Needs a Track" and "Cloudy Days". Many of these deserve some serious air play, especially "Going Home", "Things in Life", and "If it Hadn't Been For Love". This is a great CD. Strong musicians, great vocals, great material, great arrangements, and well and tastefully executed. What a pleasure to review.

