

Doug Bright, Heritage Music Review, November 2008:

“All too often, especially in this age of relentless musical homogenization, urban bluegrass bands tend to be painfully easy to identify. Despite their polished vocal harmonies and slick instrumental chops, the twangy, heartfelt simplicity that defined the music in the early 1950's is virtually absent. Nevertheless, one all-star bluegrass band from Latte Land stands in refreshingly sharp contrast, demonstrating a high standard of musicianship without losing the music's deep-rooted hillbilly soul. In witty recognition of this fact, the band calls itself The Downtown Mountain Boys . . . this disc fairly crackles with energy from beginning to end. BIG DARLIN', named for a Paul Elliott instrumental that serves as the final track, offers a satisfying mix of the old and the new delivered with a brand of creativity that's deeply rooted in tradition. . . It opens with Nancy Riccio's "Back In The Black", a fast-paced attention-grabber that captures the desperation of living from paycheck to paycheck in tough economic times. Another up tempo Riccio number on this album involves desperation of a different kind, but in this drama the name of the lady being desperately sought is Carol Ann, not Susan. Both are characterized by solid three-part harmony and crisp, snappily choreographed solos from banjoist Dave Keenan, mandolinist Tom Moran, and fiddler Paul Elliott. From the Gibson Brothers, a popular bluegrass band from upstate New York, comes "I Gotta Get Back To You", which features guitarist Don Share in a tight vocal duet with Keenan. The twin fiddle-mandolin work from Elliott and Moran, sometimes in unison and sometimes harmonized, adds a fascinating dimension.

As this album eloquently demonstrates, the most astonishing thing about the Downtown Mountain Boys is the deeply rooted traditionalism of their original material. Terry Enyeart's "My Holy Beacon" is the quintessential bluegrass gospel song, sounding as if it could just as easily have been written during the music's formative years. Dave Keenan's "Bug Tussle" has the bluesy, down-home feel of an old-time fiddle-and-banjo tune, but its brisk tempo and heads-up instrumental work would render it exciting in any age. Though somewhat crookedly metered and quirkily chorded, Paul Elliott's "Big Darlin'" possesses a similarly bluesy old-time quality, and the band comes up with fascinating instrumental duet passages that climax with yet another dazzling demonstration of fiddle-mandolin harmony from Elliott and Moran.

Whether they're performing a Flatt and Scruggs classic like "Till The End of The World Rolls Round", a swinging vintage honky-tonker like "Smooth Sailin", or a hot new original, the Downtown Mountain Boys are a true-blue bluegrass band. Their snappy, tradition-based instrumental work is fully matched by solid, country-flavored vocals from Terry Enyeart, Don Share, and Dave Keenan.”