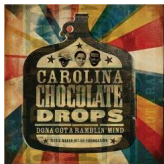


Carolina Chocolate Drops - Dona Got A Ramblin' Mind (2007)

Written by bluesever

Tuesday, 15 April 2014 16:00 - Last Updated Sunday, 27 April 2014 20:35

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1. *Starry Crown* - 2:57 2. *Dona Got a Ramblin' Mind* - 2:47 3. *Rickett's Hornpipe* - 2:34 4. *Ol' Corn Likker* - 4:10 5. *Little Sadie* - 3:36 6. *Little Margaret* - 2:06 7. *Dixie* - 1:41 8. *Black Annie* - 3:15 9. *Tom Dula* - 3:29 10. *Georgie Buck* - 3:01 11. *Old Cat Died* - 2:29 12. *Another Man Done Gone* - 2:15 13. *Black-Eyed Daisy* - 3:58 14. *Short Life of Trouble* - 2:47 15. *Sally Ann* - 3:19 16. *Sourwood Mountain* - 3:21 Rhiannon Giddens - fiddle, banjo Dom Flemons - guitar, jug, harmonica, percussion, banjo Justin Robinson – fiddle + Sule Greg Wilson – percussion

To say that Carolina Chocolate Drops are an anomaly in the 21st century would be a huge understatement. Here are three twenty-something African-Americans playing a brand of acoustic, banjo- and fiddle-driven string band music that is nearly extinct today, and in fact peaked in the pre-WWII era. Although a number of Southern-bred black string bands gained popularity during the first half of the 20th century -- this band's name pays tribute to one of them, the Tennessee Chocolate Drops -- the style is generally associated with Caucasian musicians from the Appalachians, not with African-Americans from the North Carolina Piedmont style, so the emergence of a new group reactivating the tradition is truly a phenomenon. So is the music. This is no novelty; the Carolina Chocolate Drops are serious scholars of this sound and are adept at re-creating it. Two of the members, Rhiannon Giddens (fiddle, banjo) and Justin Robinson (fiddle), are from the Carolinas, and the third, Dom Flemons (guitar, jug, harmonica, percussion, banjo), is an Arizona native. All had established solo careers when they met in 2005 at a North Carolina event called the Black Banjo Gathering. Soon thereafter, coached by octogenarian fiddler Joe Thompson and inspired by Piedmont antecedents such as Dink Roberts and Elizabeth Cotten, they began developing their own take on the traditional black string band sound, not so much updating it as giving it new life. The 14 uncredited (read: traditional) songs on the record touch on ancient blues and country, but to align what the CCD do with either of those branches would be an error. Songs like "Ol' Corn Likker" and "Black-Eyed Daisy" evoke a time and place far removed not only from the present but from contemporary notions of what those genres signify. When the trio plays "Dixie," you're listening not to a patriotic rebel anthem but a yearning, mournful moan. And the purity of Giddens' solo a cappella vocal on "Little Margaret" belongs to an era when music was not something to be sold

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but something from the soul. The Carolina Chocolate Drops have stated that they are on a mission to keep this tradition alive, and that they do. But they do so not from the staid position of lecturers on ethnomusicology or as strident sociopolitical posturers but as musicians truly in love with this disappearing slice of Americana, more specifically a little known slice of black Americana. That they do it with zeal as well as respect, and that they have the talent to back up their knowledge, is why it works on its own merits, not merely as a historical study. --- Jeff Tamarkin, Rovi

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