

## Carolina Chocolate Drops - Heritage (2008)

Written by bluesever

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1 *Another Man Done Gone* 2:13 2 *Wayward Gal* 3:33 3 *Don't Get Trouble In Your Mind* 2:59 4 *Black Eye Blues* 3:20 5 *Georgie Buck* 2:49 6 *Earl King* 3:39 7 *Jack O'Diamonds* 2:47 8 *Short Life Of Trouble* 3:04 9 *Po' Lazarus* 3:21 10 *Rickett's Hornpipe* 2:49 11 *Cornbread And Butter Beans* 3:29 12 *Bye-Bye Policeman* 2:18 13 *Real Old Mountain Dew* 3:22 14 *Sittin' On Top Of The World* 3:28 15 *Banjo Dreams / Jalidong* 5:14 16 *Gambia* 1:20  
Dom Flemons - 4-String Banjo, Clappers, Drums (Snare), Jug, Percussion, Vocals  
Rhiannon Giddens - 5-string Banjo, Fiddle, Quotation Author, Vocals  
Lalenja Harrington - Vocals  
Justin Robinson - 5-string Banjo, Body Percussion, Clappers, Fiddle, Quotation Author, Vocals  
Sule Greg Wilson - 5-string Banjo, Brushes, Cymbals, Frame Drum, Quotation Author, Vocals

Heritage isn't exactly a proper album; it's more of a compilation of various songs, both in studio and live from concerts, from the well from which the Carolina Chocolate Drops dip to showcase their love for and homage to early American roots music. They are well-educated across the board on styles of music long forgotten by many, and so, in that right, there's a certain charm to the listening experience, almost as if the music is spinning on a Victorola. That knowledge carries over into the liner notes, where group member Dom Flemons gives a brief description of the history of each song on the disc. It's a nice touch that allows the listening audience to get further acquainted with the history of these songs, given that many of them are at least 75 years old. Musically, the styles run the gamut, including an a cappella Rhiannon Giddens in "Po' Lazarus" that sounds like a Baptist revival in its presentation before you realize it's the dirge of an escaped convict. Originally made popular by Vera Hall, who was given a reintroduction to pop culture in 1999 with Moby's "Trouble so Hard," Giddens' operatically trained voice is up to the task with her quivering vibrato.

Elsewhere, "Don't Get Trouble in Your Mind" is one of the most fun songs in the Carolina Chocolate Drops' canon. This version is from a festival in St. Louis circa 2006 and translates live as well as it does in the studio version on a later release (Genuine Negro Jig) in their

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catalog. "Jack Of Diamonds," with its knee-slap percussion, and "Short Life of Trouble" are two waltzes that bridge one side of the album to the other. Given their expertise on early American music, it's fitting that the embedded bonus video interview is filmed in what looks to be a library. They're true students of the game, and sew another patch into the woven tapestry of music. Heritage delves into the cultures of bluegrass and African American string bands with results that mostly that this type of music is still alive due because of its emphasis on storytelling and keen musicianship. The Carolina Chocolate Drops have these in spades, and despite the fact that nearly all the material is not original, they breathe life into the recordings, proving they're a band to be reckoned with in roots music. ---Eric Luecking, Rovi

There's nothing new in American musicians getting together with banjos and fiddles to revive the string-band songs or blues of the 1920s and 30s - but they almost always tend to be white folk revivalists. But Carolina Chocolate Drops are different: they are a young black trio who have studied the history of the old string bands, black and white alike, and are determined to keep the tradition going. Their playing and singing show that this is a band worth checking out. Many of their songs are standards, from the prison lament Another Man Done Gone to the Mississippi Sheiks' good-time favourite from the 30s, Sitting on Top of the World, and even the Irish-Appalachian fiddle workout, Real Old Mountain Dew. They throw in just one west African song, to show their range. The result is a cheerfully enthusiastic set, dressed up with some fine unaccompanied singing. There is excellent banjo and fiddle work from Rhiannon Giddens and Justin Robinson, who sound equally good when they swap instruments. --- Robin Denselow, theguardian.com

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