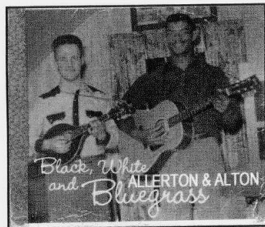


**ALLERTON & ALTON**  
**BLACK, WHITE AND BLUEGRASS**

Bear Family Records  
BCD 16559 AH



# REVIEWS

**BLUEGRASS  
UNLIMITED**  
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Just when you think you know everything there is to know about early bluegrass, along comes a CD like *Black, White And Bluegrass* and a duo like Allerton and Alton. So what, you may be asking? Well, check this out: not only were they from Maine, but Alton Myers, the guitar player, was African-American while Allerton Hawkes, the mandolinist, was white. They were, as far as we know, country music's first interracial duet.

Al and Alton met around 1947 in a record store where both teens were pouring over the records of string band music. In a short time, the boys had moved from listening to playing and soon found themselves performing on radio and at local venues. On the air, of course, no one could tell that Alton was African-American. And while there were some clubs that refused to book them, these were few and far between. The two stayed together for three or four years until both men were called up for the Korean War where Alton's Army experience exposed him to a degree of racism that he'd never known. He came back a changed man and the act never got back off the ground.

These 27 cuts, drawn mostly from radio programs, show that Allerton and Alton were a solid duo with tight harmonies. They cover everyone from the Carter Family ("Keep On The Sunny Side") to the Blue Sky Boys ("Kentucky") to Flatt & Scruggs ("Somehow Tonight"), and the Monroe Brothers ("Drifting Too Far From The Shore"). Al's mandolin playing is particularly strong on "Twelfth Street Rag" and "Orange Blossom Special," on which he rocks out like an early Frank Wakefield.

Quality-wise, a few of the bonus cuts have a bit of distortion and echo, but this small flaw is easily overlooked in an overall topnotch package that includes extensive, well-written liner notes. A worthy addition to your collection for the history and the music. (Bear Family Records, P.O. Box 1154, D-27727 Hambergen, Germany, [www.bear-family.de](http://www.bear-family.de).)MHH