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Asheville bluegrass band wins prestigious competition

Asheville-based bluegrass band Town Mountain took home top prize last weekend in the band competition at the 33rd annual RockyGrass Festival in Lyons, Colorado. The contest pitted twelve bands from across the United States, vying for a first prize of cash, instrument supplies, and an invitation to perform a full set at next year's RockyGrass.

Town Mountain members describe the band as a "straight ahead" traditional bluegrass band, with tunes ranging from classic George Jones ballads to standard and original bluegrass numbers. The five members of Town Mountain are Robert Greer, guitar and lead vocals; Jed Willis, mandolin; John Garris, fiddle and vocals; Jesse Langlais, banjo and vocals; and Barrett Smith, stand-up bass and vocals.

RockyGrass is one of the elite traditional bluegrass festivals in the world. This year's RockyGrass was held July 29-31, 2005, along the banks of the St. Vrain River in Lyons, Colorado. Performers included Doc Watson, the Del McCoury band, Ricky Skaggs, Allison Krause and Union Station, Peter Rowan and Tony Rice. Previous winners of the RockyGrass band competition include the Steep Canyon Rangers, Yonder Mountain String Band and Hit and Run Bluegrass.

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Town Mountain @ El Burrito Saturday, October 22 Elizabeth Renedo

Each July, the country's best and brightest traditional musicians get together in Lyons, Colorado for the Rockygrass Bluegrass Festival where they develop their skills and compete for some of the most prestigious titles in bluegrass music. In recent years, the Rockygrass band competition has developed a reputation for being a springboard, propelling the most deserving and talented young bands (Yonder Mountain String Band, Steep Canyon Rangers, among others) into the national limelight. 2005 winners, Town Mountain, are no exception to this rule. They will be bringing their blistering hot brand of bluegrass and country music to Columbia Saturday night, performing out back at El Burrito.

Based in Asheville, NC, Town Mountain produces some of the finest "original bluegrass and roots country" being made today. The lineup consists of musicians who have racked up numerous individual honors in addition to those they have earned together. Robert Greer, the splendidly booming voice of Town Mountain, was named Western North Carolina vocalist of the year in 2003. Much decorated fiddle player, Josh Goforth was even starred as Fiddlin' Will in the 2000 Sundance Festival-featured movie "Songcatcher." Rounding out the band are Jed Willis on mandolin, Jesse Langlais on banjo and Columbia native Barrett Smith on bass.