BIG BILL'S BLUES
BIG BILL BROONZY

SIDE ONE

1. **BIG BILL BLUES** (Broonzy). MCA Music, a div. of MCA, Inc., 1928. Recorded Chicago, February 13, 1939. IC 3280-1. Vocalion 04581. (3:02)
Big Bill Broonzy: guitar and vocal, probably Black Bob, piano; unknown bass.

2. **YOU DID ME WRONG (BLUE BABY)** (Broonzy). MCA Music, a div. of MCA, Inc., 1963. Recorded Chicago, January 31, 1937. IC 1911-3. Vocalion 3008. (2:50)
Big Bill Broonzy: guitar and vocal; unknown guitar and bass.

3. **TRAVELING LITTLE WOMAN** (Broonzy). MCA Music, a div. of MCA, Inc., 1936. Recorded Chicago, March 30, 1938. IC 2100-1. Vocalion 04200.
Big Bill Broonzy: guitar and vocal; probably Punch Miller, trumpet; Arthur Williams, piano; unknown drums.

4. **BULL CORN BLUES** (Broonzy). MCA Music, a div. of MCA, Inc., 1939. Recorded New York, March 20, 1932. 21767-B. Vocalion 12570.
Big Bill Broonzy: guitar and vocal.

5. **SOUTHERN FLOOD BLUES** (Broonzy). MCA Music, a div. of MCA, Inc., 1936. Recorded Chicago, January 28, 1937. IC 1799-2. Vocalion 3000. (3:16)
Personnel same as Side 1, Band 1.

6. **NEW SHAKE 'EM ON DOWN** (Willie). MCA Music, a div. of MCA, Inc., 1936. Recorded Chicago, May 5, 1936. IC 2105-2. Vocalion 04145.
Big Bill Broonzy: guitar and vocal; probably Arthur Williams, piano; George Barnes, guitar.

7. **MIGHT TIME IS THE RIGHT TIME** (Carr). MCA Music, a div. of MCA, Inc., 1936. Recorded Chicago, May 5, 1936. IC 2106-1. Vocalion 04145. (3:40)
Personnel same as Side 1, Band 6, except Bartolin Kroeckling, bass, added.

8. **TROUBLE AND LYING WOMAN** (Broonzy). MCA Music, a div. of MCA, Inc., 1936. Recorded Chicago, September 16, 1936. IC 2107-1. Vocalion 3000. (2:25)
Personnel same as Side 1, Band 6, except Bartolin Kroeckling and unknown bass added.

SIDE TWO

1. **BABY I GONE GOT MINE** (Broonzy). MCA Music, a div. of MCA, Inc., 1940. Recorded Chicago, February 9, 1939. IC 2994-1. Vocalion 04708. (2:35)
Big Bill Broonzy: guitar and vocal; probably Arthur Williams, piano; Frank Williams, drums.

2. **JUST A DREAM** (Broonzy). MCA Music, a div. of MCA, Inc., 1936. Recorded Chicago, February 9, 1939. IC 2999-1. Vocalion 04708. (2:49)
Personnel same as Side 2, Band 1.

3. **OH YES** (Broonzy). MCA Music, a div. of MCA, Inc., 1936. Recorded Chicago, September 16, 1935. 2012 rev. Vocalion 03280.
Personnel same as Side 1, Band 1, except piano omitted.

4. **MEDICINE MAN BLUES** (Broonzy). MCA Music, a div. of MCA, Inc., 1939. Recorded Chicago, June 16, 1936. 1967. 2080-A. Okeh 05708. (2:57)
Big Bill Broonzy: guitar and vocal; probably Black John Davis, piano; Washboard Sam, washboard.

5. **LOOKING UP AT DOWN** (Broonzy). MCA Music, a div. of MCA, Inc., 1936. Recorded Chicago, June 16, 1936. 1967. 2081-A. Okeh 05708. (2:57)
Personnel same as Side 2, Band 4.

6. **WHEN I WEEN SPRINGING** (Broonzy). Duchess Music Corp., 1945. Recorded Chicago, May 2, 1940. IC 3749-1. Okeh 06300. (2:50)
Personnel same as Side 2, Band 4, except probably Memphis Slim, piano, replaces Davis.

7. **ALL MY WORRIES** (Broonzy). Duchess Music Corp., 1945. Recorded Chicago, July 15, 1940. IC 3800-1. Okeh 06427. (2:37)
Personnel same as Side 1, Band 6, except Bartolin Kroeckling, bass, added.

8. **NIGHT WATCHMAN BLUES** (Broonzy). MCA Music, a div. of MCA, Inc., Recorded Chicago, December 3, 1940. IC 4000-1. Okeh 6705. (2:46)
Big Bill Broonzy: guitar and vocal; probably Horace Malcolm, piano; Washboard Sam, washboard.

Produced by Frank Driggs
Engineer: Larry Noyes

BIG BILL'S BLUES
BIG BILL BROONZY

In the vast field of Negro folk blues there have been few further figures who have exerted the powerful shaping influences that emanated from Big Bill Broonzy during his lifetime. Broonzy was possessed of a great many varied talents: he was a magnificent guitarist, both as soloist and accompanist; a singer of all types of songs falling within the Negro experience—spirituals, blues, work songs, folk material; a superb storyteller, etc. He was additionally an unfortunately talented composer, and his organizing influence and veritable genius in recording sessions will undoubtedly bear closer examination and analysis in years to come. Highly regarded by all of his associates, in fact by all individuals having even a cursory interest in his art form, his performances were always composed of the highest musical and creative standards. His attitudes toward his contemporary artists of equal or lesser stature are well known. Broonzy was always the first to offer aid or assistance to need any way, whether it was to compose a song for an individual, to give him (or her, in the case of his protégée, the fabulous Sonny Boy singer-guitarist, Memphis Minnie) musical instruction, to afford his services as accompanying musician or perhaps to merely bolster the confidence of an aspiring, struggling artist. Big Bill Broonzy has been dead for several years now but it is a doubtless conclusion that he will never be forgotten by his friends, his associates or by the many individuals who merely learn of this man as a recording artist and most legendary musical figure.

Big Bill was born William Lee Conley Broonzy in Scott, Mississippi. His birth date is uncertain as was quite usual with many others of his generation. Bill himself gave it as about 1893. His sister claimed that June 26, 1898 was the correct date. At any rate, Big Bill was one of a vast brood of seventeen children born of parents who first saw the light of day in slavery. He appears to have acquired a great deal of his musical skill, and numerous songs, from one of his sires. His formative years were spent in Arkansas, and the bulk of that time was spent in the not too unusual occupation of sharecropping. A fiddle of the homemade, cigar-box variety was his first instrument, and he also played mandolin in his early years, to the tender age of fourteen he was regularly playing and performing at "house-rent parties." Such parties, for segregated Negro-white audiences, were extremely common and popular throughout the south and have been the subject of much discussion and recollection by many Negro artists down through the years. As a young man he served in the Army during the First World War, and shortly after his return he left Arkansas for Chicago in 1920, where he fell heavily into the blues scene of the Windy City. It was quite a scene too, what with the plethora of transplanted southern blues figures which included Papa Charlie Jackson (Bill's guitar mentor), Tampa Red, Lonnie Johnson and a multitude of others. The popularity of house rent parties was at its zenith at this time. The basic purpose of such undertakings being the raising of rent for a particular individual, accompanied by a cacophony of music and good times, it was a usual occurrence to have Bill, along with such people as Tampa Red, Big Maceo, Sonny Boy Williamson, Washboard Sam (his alleged "half-brother"), and numerous others at such a gathering. During this time, Bill's influence was felt by virtually all who came into contact with him. He was the major participant in hundreds of recording sessions. In many sessions he was the major performer, and at other times he was the organizing force behind the session of another individual and took part as an assisting artist. Nevertheless, whatever his status was each time, his ever-abiding influence was always felt, and his most individual stamp and qualities are obvious in recordings much too numerous to mention. Respected as an outstanding guitarist, his talent for writing songs was no less impressive. A prolific composer, he was responsible for perhaps more than 300 compositions during his lifetime, including the blues standard Key to the Highway, generally credited to smooth boogie pianist and singer Jerry Collins. As stated above, his musical composing influence and genius was felt by a great many artists, and the stories are legion concerning Big Bill's assistance to many struggling people.

In 1929 he took part in the now legendary "Spirituals to Swing" concerts at Carnegie Hall. He was a tremendous hit, termed by some "unforgettable," and it appears that the potentially memorable nature of the famous audiences engendered him to perform as strongly as he would have had the event been a "house-rent party." His critical reception was uniformly excellent and his exceptional talent was observed and realized by many listeners for the first time. It was a memorable occasion in Broonzy's life, as it must have been to those in attendance. In the 1940's he was continually active in and around his adopted hometown of Chicago, with record dates and personal appearances. In the 1950's 1960's and 1970's he made two trips to Europe for concerts, where he encountered a reception not usually afforded to some sort of a demigod. It appears that the people overseas were far more familiar with, and appreciative of, Bill's several and varied musical talents. (This European attitude toward American music still persists today.) In addition, his humorous monologues, chatterbox and general gregariousness made a distinct and lasting impression upon all who came into contact with him.

During his lifetime Big Bill, despite his unbearable musical abilities, was unable to depend totally upon his music making to sustain himself. He was and still is the case with all his music musical talents, the return his his efforts was by no means commensurate with his artistry. This undeserved plight required him, at various times, to become a Pullman porter, auction gang labourer, cook, dance-conjure, janitor, Southern street guitar, floor mopper and boozing section a not unusual history for individuals performing in Bill's particular genre. By some standards Bill may have been considered a rather fortunate artist because he was such a frequent visitor to recording studios. But despite this fact, it is all too obvious that his wonderful talent and abilities were not enough by our standards to enable him to be a full-time music maker.

In 1957 Bill became extremely ill and had to undergo a serious operation for cancer, and the result was rather nightmarish. Pain, playing its usual hand, decreed that Bill should no longer be capable of singing, depriving him of that which had been his life's blood. Following his operation he continued playing guitar for as long as he was physically able. His health rapidly deteriorating during this period of time. His death came on August 14, 1958, and his obituary and tributes appeared in a wide variety of newspapers and publications throughout the world. All of this served only to further proclaim the greatness of this man. In the book "Big Bill Blues" (Oak Press, revised edition) he prematurely wrote his own obituary: "When you write about me, please don't say I'm a great musician. Don't say I'm a musician or guitar player—just write Big Bill was a well-known blues singer and player and has recorded 200 blues songs from 1929 up till 1952. He was a happy man when he was drunk and playing with women. he was liked by all the blues singers. Rest in peace Big Bill!"

Very little need be said about the recordings in this collection. They are typically characteristic of the many small blues groups active in northside Chicago during the 1930's and 40's. A kind of happy interplay of country city blues and jazz, all making for emerging, easy listening and all including Big Bill Broonzy.

— LAWRENCE COHN

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CBS
REALM
JAZZ
SERIES
BIG BILL'S BLUES
BIG BILL BROONZY
Side 1
MONO
M 52648
(EE 22017)
52648 A*
33⅓
1. BIG BILL BLUES (W. Broonzy)
2. YOU DO ME ANY OLD WAY (W. Broonzy)
3. TRUCKING LITTLE WOMAN (W. Broonzy)
4. BULL COW BLUES (W. Broonzy)
5. SOUTHERN FLOOD BLUES (W. Broonzy)
6. NEW SHAKE 'EM ON DOWN (B. White)
7. NIGHT TIME IS THE RIGHT TIME (L. Carr)
8. TROUBLE AND LYING WOMAN (W. Broonzy)
Vocal: Big Bill
Produced by Frank Driggs
Leeds Music Ltd.
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