

Classic Appalachian Blues (2010)

Written by bluesever

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1 Sticks McGhee – *My Baby's Gone* 3:45 2 Big Chief Ellis With Cephas And Wiggins – *Louise Blues* 5:14 3 Doc Watson – *Sitting On Top Of The World* 2:58 4 John Jackson – *Railroad Bill* 3:34 5 Bill Williams – *Don't Let Your Deal Go Down* 2:15 6 Pink Anderson – *You Don't Know My Mind* 2:36 7 J.C. Burris – *Blues Around My Bed* 2:54 8 Gary Davis – *Hesitation Blues* 3:15 9 Brownie McGhee – *Pawn Shop Blues* 3:01 10 Archie Edwards – *The Road Is Rough And Rocky* 3:23 11 Martin, Bogan And Armstrong – *Hoodoo Blues* 5:13 12 Lesley Riddle – *Red River Blues* 2:04 13 Peg Leg Sam Jackson – *Walking Cane* 2:31 14 Etta Baker – *One Dime Blues* 3:43 15 Roscoe Holcomb – *Mississippi Heavy Water Blues* 2:13 16 Josh White – *Outskirts Of Town* 3:03 17 Baby Tate – *See What You Done Done* 2:32 18 Marvin And Turner Foddrell – *I Got A Woman* 2:50 19 John Tinsley – *Girl Dressed In Green* 1:56 20 E.C. Ball – *Blues In The Morning* 3:37 21 Sticks McGhee – *Wine Blues (Drinkin' Wine Spo-Dee-Oh-Dee)* 3:43 Recordings made by Folkways Records and at the Smithsonian Festival of American Folklife 1971-1982

While the Delta blues style may receive the lion's share of critical and academic acclaim, the dirty little secret of the blues world is that "Appalachian" blues – a category including Piedmont blues, ragtime, string bands, and medicine show performers – has enjoyed a widespread popularity over the past few decades.

Perhaps this is due to the basic dynamic of the music. Delta blues evolved for a solo artist or duo performing in loud, crowded juke-joints, enjoying a brief high-water point during the folk-blues boom of the early 1960s. Appalachian-styled blues came out of a communal music-making tradition that adapted better to the festival stages of the 1970s and onward. Just a theory, and one that doesn't really matter 'cause regardless of its popularity, the Appalachian style still gets short-shrift from serious blues purists.

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The release of the Classic Appalachian Blues compilation won't do much to change the music's status, but it could and should turn a few blues fans onto an entertaining and exciting style of the music. Released by the good folks at Smithsonian Folkways, who dug deep into the archives of Moses Asch's legendary Folkways Records label for many of these tunes, Classic Appalachian Blues was rounded out with a number of thrilling live performances taken from the Smithsonian's Festival of American Folklife, which was held from 1971 through 1982.

Classic Appalachian Blues represents a veritable "who's who" of East Coast bluesmen, from familiar names like Brownie McGhee and Josh White, to lesser-known but no less deserving artists like Sticks McGhee (Brownie's brother), Pink Anderson, and Peg Leg Jackson. Classic Appalachian Blues opens with Stick McGhee's "My Baby's Gone," an up-tempo rocker from 1958 that features some fine shuffling fretwork by McGhee and freight-train harp riffs courtesy of Sonny Terry and J.C. Burris.

The barrelhouse sound of "Louise Blues" is created by "Chief" Wilbert Ellis and his rollicking piano-play, this spirited live 1976 performance including an early appearance by guitarist John Cephas and harp player Phil Wiggins as part of Ellis's Barrelhouse Rockers band. The duo would later enjoy fame as the Piedmont blues duo Cephas & Wiggins, but their contributions here are priceless, their instrumental prowess enhancing Ellis's plaintive vocals and tinkling keys. Although Doc Watson is better known as a folk-country performer, his laid-back, sublime reading of the Mississippi Sheiks' great "Sitting On Top Of The World," featuring some elegant finger-picked guitar, shows that Watson also brought a bit of blues to his diverse repertoire.

---Reverend Keith A. Gordon, About.com Guide

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