

## Esther Bigeou, Lillyn Brown, Alberta Brown and Ada Brown - The Complete Recorded Works (1996)



01. *Memphis Blues* 02. *St-Louis Blues* 03. *Stingaree Blues (A Down Home Blues)* [play](#)  
04. *Nervous Blues* 05. *If That's What You Want Here It Is* 06. *Aggravatin' Papa (Don't You Try to Two-Time Me)* 07. *Four O'Clock Blues* 08. *I'm Through with You (As I Can Be)* 09. *Beale Street Mama* 10. *Outside of That, He's All Right with Me* 11. *Gulf Coast Blues* 12. *Beale Street Blues*

[play](#)

13. *Hesitating Blues* 14. *That Twa-Twa Tune* 15. *Panama Limited Blues* 16. *You Ain't Treatin' Me Right* 17. *West Indies Blues* 18. *If That's What You Want Here It Is* 19. *Ever Lovin' Blues* 20. *Bad Land Blues* 21. *Jazz Me Blues* 22. *Panama Limited Blues* 23. *Tia Juana Man* 24. *Lonely Blues* 25. *How Long*

[play](#)

Esther Bigeou (1-17) Lillyn Brown (18-21) Ada Brown (22-23) Alberta Brown (24-25) Alto Saxophone – Albert Nicholas (tracks: 22), Louis Warnick (tracks: 17), Unknown Artist (tracks: 1, 2, 6, 7) Banjo – Charles Bocage (tracks: 17), Johnny St. Cyr (tracks: 23), Unknown Artist (tracks: 6, 7) Brass Bass – Charles Ysaguirre (tracks: 17), Unknown Artist (tracks: 1 to 7) Brass Bass [Prob.] – Chink Martin (tracks: 24, 25) Clarinet – Albert Nicholas (tracks: 23), Lorenzo Tio Jr. (tracks: 17), Unknown Artist (tracks: 1, 2, 6, 7) Clarinet [Prob.] – Sidney Arodin (tracks: 24, 25) Clarinet, Alto Saxophone – Garvin Bushell (tracks: 18 to 21) Cornet – Ed Cox (3) (tracks: 18 to 21), George Mitchell (3) (tracks: 22, 23), Peter Bocage (tracks: 17), Unknown Artist (tracks: 1 to 7) Cornet [Prob.] – Abbie Brunies (tracks: 24, 25) Drums – Louis Cottrell (tracks: 17), Lutice Perkins (tracks: 18 to 21), Unknown Artist (tracks: 1, 2, 6, 7) Orchestra – Piron's New Orleans Orchestra (tracks: 17), Rickett's Stars (tracks: 6, 7) Piano – Clarence Williams (tracks: 8, 9, 14 to 16), Luis Russell (tracks: 22, 23), Steve Lewis (7) (tracks: 17), Unknown Artist (tracks: 1 to 5), Unknown Artist (tracks: 18 to 21) Piano [Poss.] – Clarence Williams (tracks: 10 to 13) Piano [Presumably] – Bob Ricketts (tracks: 6, 7) Piano [Prob.] – Red Long (tracks: 24, 25) Speech – Unknown Artist (tracks: 22) Tenor Saxophone – Barney Bigard (tracks: 22), Unknown Artist (tracks: 4, 5) Trombone – John Lindsay (tracks: 17), Unknown Artist (tracks: 1 to 7) Trombone [Either/Or] – Bud Aiken (tracks: 18 to 21), Herb Flemming (tracks: 18 to 21) Violin – Johnny Mullins (5) (tracks: 18 to 21), Unknown Artist (tracks: 3) Violin, Leader – Armand J. Piron (tracks: 17) Tracks 1, 2: New York City, c. 5 October 1921 Track 3: New York City, c. 5 November 1921 Tracks 4, 5: New York City, c. 15 November 1921 Tracks 6, 7: New York City, c. early March 1923 Tracks 8, 9: New York City,

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c. 15 March 1923 Tracks 10, 11: New York City, c. 20 March 1923 Tracks 12, 13: New York City, c. 28 March 1923 Track 14: New York City, c. 2 December 1923 Tracks 15, 16: New York City, c. 13 December 1923 Track 17: New York City, c. 14 December 1923 Tracks 18, 19: New York City, c. 29 March 1921 Tracks 20, 21: New York City, c. 9 May 1921 Tracks 22, 23: Chicago, 10 March 1926 Tracks 24, 25: New Orleans, La., 25 April 1928

In order to fully appreciate the only known recordings by long lost New Orleans chanteuse Esther Bigeou (c.1895-c.1936), you'll need to forget all about conventional standards for jazz and blues singing. Esther Bigeou was a full-time touring vaudeville actress who cut her first gramophone recordings during the autumn of 1921 and made her last appearance on record in December of 1923. Her method of presentation was radically different from what came to be expected from female vocalists later on in the decade. Using her voice to accentuate the content of the lyrics rather than the tonal nuances of the songs, this woman muscled her way through each performance, singing with feeling but without polish, backed by almost entirely anonymous vaudeville pit bands.

The mysterious sounds of these alternately sleepy or bouncy ensembles belong entirely to their day and can never be re-created by postmodern musicians. Esther Bigeou handled a number of W.C. Handy compositions but her recordings will be best appreciated as precious vaudevillian relics. Nine of her performances have intimate piano accompaniments by Clarence Williams, allowing the listener to savor her honest and unpretentious style. Her all-time best recording was to be her last. Splendidly backed by Armand J. Piron's New Orleans Orchestra, Esther Bigeou delivered a spirited rendition of the rousing "West Indies Blues," quit making records, went back on the road, retired in 1935, and passed away in New Orleans around 1936.

This fascinating Document compilation also pays tribute to three entertainers who shared the surname "Brown." Tracks 18 through 21 comprise the only known recordings of Afro-Iroquois-American vaudevillian and male impersonator Lillyn Brown (1895-1969). Backed by her Jazzbo Syncopators (also known as the Syncopated Syncopators), Brown carries on in high-flown vaudeville style, emitting whoops and hollers while the Syncopators (containing reedman Garvin Bushell) diligently hold the ground in a manner perfectly appropriate for Afro-American entertainment during the spring of 1921.

Ada Brown's career began in Kansas City but took her as far away as Paris and Berlin. Her inclusion on this compilation adds a welcome shot of feisty, full-throated blues shouting, comparable in some ways to the music of Bessie Smith. Ada Brown may be heard on certain

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Bennie Moten records, and in a famous duet with Fats Waller during the 1943 motion picture *Stormy Weather*. Almost nothing is known about Alberta Brown. She is said to have originated in Dallas, TX, and made only one two-sided record in New Orleans on April 25, 1928. Her accompanists are believed to have been cornetist Abbie Brunies, clarinetist Sidney Arodin, pianist Red Long, and tuba man Chink Martin. This woman was a real blues singer -- her delivery is passionate and soulful, relaxed and ruminative. ---arwulf arwulf

Esther Bigeou (c. 1895 – c. 1936) was an American vaudeville and blues singer. Billed as "The Girl with the Million Dollar Smile", she was one of the classic female blues singers popular in the 1920s.

She was born in New Orleans, Louisiana. Her extended family featured several musicians; drummer Paul Barbarin was her cousin. In 1917 Esther Bigeou appeared as a singer, dancer, and recitalist in the Broadway Rastus Revue at the Standard Theater in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, the Lafayette Theater in New York City, and the Orpheum Theater in Baltimore, Maryland. She recorded for the Okeh label in 1921 and 1923, and toured the TOBA vaudeville circuit with the Billy King Company in 1923. During 1923–1925 and 1927–1930, she toured as a single act throughout the American South, Midwest, and Northeast.

Blues writer Chris Smith says that Esther Bigeou was "a singer at the pop end of African-American entertainment", and that she "seems to have retired, aged only 35, to settle in New Orleans, where reports indicate that she died circa 1936".

Lillyn Brown was a veteran of minstrel shows, vaudeville and musical theatre. She was half Erie Iroquois Indian and was sometimes billed as the "Indian Princess", other times "The Youngest Interlocutor in the World", because she had a song and dance act where she was a male impersonator. The Emerson records were released under Brown's name.

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Ada Brown (May 1, 1890, - March 31, 1950) was an American blues singer. She is best known for her recordings of "Ill Natural Blues", "Break O' Day Blues", and "Evil Mama Blues.

Ada Scott Brown was born and raised in Kansas City, Kansas; her cousin James Scott was a ragtime composer and pianist. Her early career was spent primarily on stage in musical theater and vaudeville. She recorded with Bennie Moten in 1926; the side "Evil Mama Blues" is possibly the earliest recording of Kansas City jazz. Aside from her time with Moten, she did several tours alongside bandleaders such as George E. Lee.

Brown was a founding member of the Negro Actors Guild of America in 1936, and worked at the London Palladium and in Broadway in the late 1930s. She sang with Fats Waller in the film Stormy Weather in 1943, and followed it with appearances in Harlem to Hollywood, accompanied by Harry Swannagan. The ASV/Living Era compilation album, Ladies Sing the Blues included two "raunchy" tracks from Brown ("Break O'Day Blues" and "Evil Mama Blues.")

She died of kidney disease in March 1950 in Kansas City, at the age of 59.

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