

The Rough Guide To Unsung Heroes Of Country Blues (Vol.2) [2015]

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1 –Kansas Joe *Bothering That Thing* 2 –Ed Bell *She's A Fool Thing* 3 –Kid Cole *Niagra Fall Blues* 4 –Papa Charlie Jackson *The Cat's Got The Measles* 5 –George Torey *Lonesome Man Blues* 6 –Memphis Jug Band *This Will Bring You Back* 7 –Kid Bailey *Mississippi Bottom Blues* 8 –Buddy Boy Hawkins *Snatch It And Grab It* 9 –Sylvester Weaver *Guitar Rag* 10 –Bobby Grant *Lonesome Atlanta Blues* 11 –William (Bill) Moore *Ragtime Millionaire* 12 –Jaybird Coleman *Man Trouble Blues* 13 –Jelly Jaw Short *Grand Daddy Blues* 14 –Blind Joe Taggart *Religion Is Something Within You* 15 –Willie Baker *Rag Baby* 16 –Jim Jackson *Hey Mama - It's Nice Like That - Part 2* 17 –Ramblin' Thomas *Poor Boy Blues* 18 –Pillie Bolling *Shake Me Like A Dog* 19 –Mattie Delaney *Down The Big Road Blues* 20 –Ishman Bracey *Woman Woman Blues* 21 –Willie Walker *Dupree Blues* 22 –Charley Lincoln *Mama Don't Rush Me* 23 –Billy Bird *Alabama Blues - Part 1* 24 –Little Hat Jones *Bye Bye Baby Blues*

This second volume digs that bit deeper into the early days of recorded country blues and sheds light on other mysterious figures, many of whose contribution to the blues is easily overlooked. None more so than Sylvester Weaver who was the first artist to record a blues instrumental and whose featured 'Guitar Rag' shows off his slide-guitar brilliance which was much imitated by other players. Likewise Ramblin' Thomas from Louisiana was famed for his bottleneck guitar playing and truly makes his guitar weep on his homesick lament 'Poor Boy Blues'.

By carefully selecting artists from across the different sub-genres this collection serves as a refreshing and alternative overview of country blues. The East Coast is well represented, being a real hotbed for guitar virtuosos. One such master was Willie Walker who was once described by Josh White as the best guitarist he had ever heard, even better than Blind Blake. Fellow East Coast bluesmen include the singing barber William Moore who, when not cutting hair, found time to cut several classic sides for Paramount, and Charley Lincoln, the brother of Barbecue Bob. The influence of these brother's open-tuned, banjo-like guitar style can clearly be heard in

the playing of the mysterious Willie Baker.

The laid back blues of the East Coast is a far cry from the raw intensity and emotion of the Delta Blues. Both Kid Bailey and Ishman Bracey were part of a circle of blues greats that included Tommy Johnson and Son House. One of the great blues mysteries is whether Kid Bailey was in actual fact the incredibly influential Willie Brown in disguise. The Delta blues diva Mattie Delaney's variant of Tommy Johnson's 'Big Road Blues' shows how she possessed one of the most remarkable voices in country blues. Aside from her two solitary recordings nothing more is really known of her life, which is a similar story to others on this compilation such as Bobby Grant and George Torey, both exceptionally gifted players who faded into total obscurity.

Although not related Papa Charlie Jackson and Jim Jackson both bridged the gap between the blues and the earlier songster traditions. Armed with huge repertoires of songs from different genres they performed in minstrel and medicine shows and knew how to play something for any occasion. The sublime harmonica player Jaybird Coleman was another who worked the minstrel shows and proved that country blues wasn't just about the guitar. The same can be said of the Memphis Jug Band who were made up of all manner of instruments and provided a training ground for musicians including Memphis Minnie, who coincidentally accompanies her first husband Kansas Joe on the classic opener 'Bothering That Thing'.

Blind Joe Taggart was one of the first guitar evangelists to record the gospel form of country blues, but also recorded "devil's" music under other pseudonyms. Ed Bell eventually turned his back on the blues for religion, and is joined in the track listing by his friend Pillie Bolling who's raggy 'Shake It Like A Dog' is a real hidden gem. Many early country bluesmen had ragtime influenced songs in their repertoires not least Buddy Boy Hawkins whose sophisticated guitar playing can be heard to the full on 'Snatch It And Grab It'.

Most of these artists are just a small footnote in the story of the blues, however their songs have in common a timeless quality and passion to rival that of any of their more famous peers, beautifully demonstrated by Little Hat Jones who's signature tune 'Bye Bye Baby Blues' winds things down to a perfect conclusion. ---worldmusic.net

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