BROWNIE MCGHEE

The Folkways Years, 1945-1959

16. **Can't Help Myself**
Brownie McGhee, guitar and vocal; Sonny Terry, vocal and harmonica; Gene Moore, drums (Folkways 2327, November 1957).
The interplay between Brownie's voice and Sonny's harmonica is one of the highpoints in this buoyant performance. Moore's drums provide a "kick" that gives this the sound of a commercial Rhythm and Blues single rather than a Folkways album. Note the irony dripping from McGhee's voice when he sings "Do you want me, baby, to be like Jesse James (x2)/To kill some man and rob some passenger train?"

17. **Pallet on the Floor**
Brownie McGhee, guitar and vocal (Folkways 2422, 1959).
This is another of the many secular songs that Brownie learned during the 1920s and 1930s. The roughly 15-bar sequence is similar in structure to the blues, but it lacks the strict A-A-B rhyme scheme. Many of the early recorded rural Black singers, such as Mississippi John Hurt and Willie Brown, knew similar songs.

** Previously unreleased*

Acknowledgements:
Special thanks to Neil Slaven for supplying previously unpublished discographical information and to Jeff Place and Lori Taylor, archivists of the Office of Folklife Programs for material from the Folkways archives.

Credits
Selected and annotated by Kip Lornell
Cover photograph by David Gahr
Cover design by Carol Hardy
Remastered by Alan Yoshida at The Mastering Lab, Hollywood, Cal.
Reissue coordination by Anthony Seeger and Matt Walters with the assistance of Christopher Jerde
Archival assistance by Jeff Place and Lori Taylor

Smithsonian Folkways

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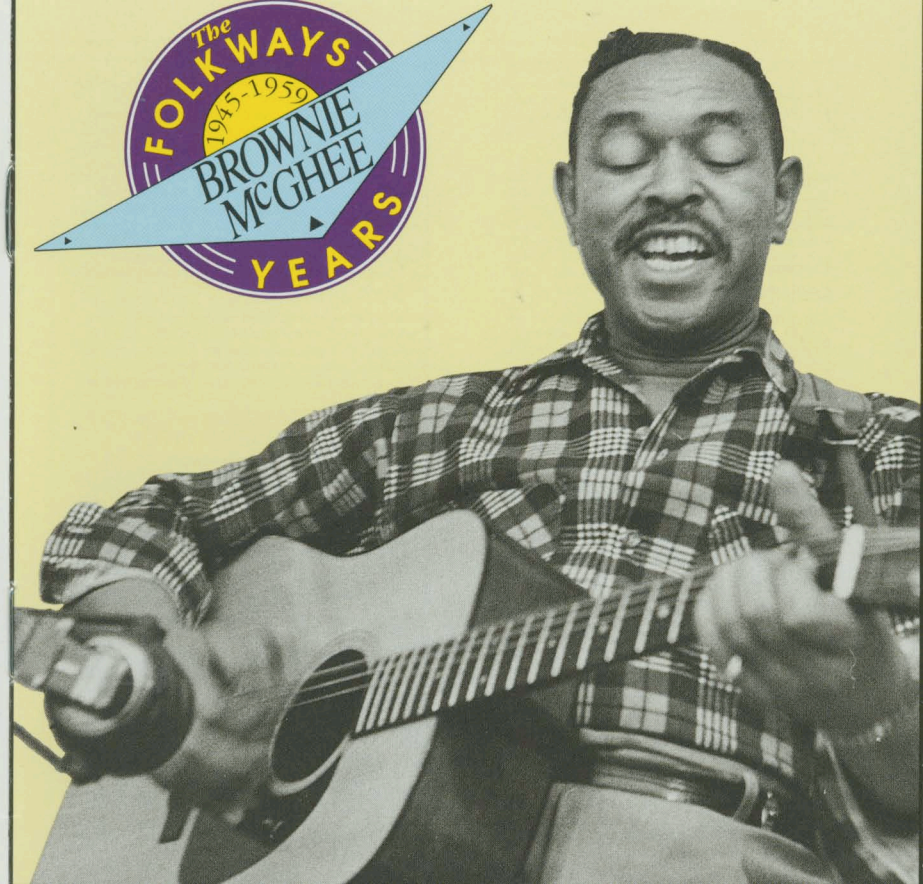

SMITHSONIAN/FOLKWAYS CD SF 40034 AAD

BROWNIE MCGHEE

The Folkways Years, 1945-1959

1. **Daisy** 3:22
(Brownie McGhee/Bob-Dan Music Inc. BMI)
2. **Rising Sun** 2:40
(Brownie McGhee/Stormking Music Inc. BMI)
3. **Careless Love** 3:13
4. **Cholly Blues** 5:04
5.* **Just a Dream** 4:21
6. **Pawn Shop Blues** 3:01
(Brownie McGhee/Pru Music Inc. BMI)
7. **Hangman's Blues** 4:33
8. **Living With the Blues** 2:52
(Brownie and Ruth McGhee/Screen Gems EMI Music Inc. BMI)
9. **'Fore Day Creep** 4:10
10. **Me and Sonny** 2:47
11. **Raise a Ruckus Tonight** 2:49
12. **Betty and Dupree** 3:59
(Brownie McGhee/Preston Stevens Music [PRS], BMI)
13. **Long Gone** 3:13
14. **Grievin' Hearted Blues** 3:53
15. **I'm Gonna Tell God How You Treat Me** 2:32
16. **Can't Help Myself** 3:17
(Brownie McGhee/Stormking Music, Inc. BMI)
17. **Pallet on the Floor** 3:09

* *Previously unreleased*

0 9307-40034-2 8

Few blues musicians have possessed the combination of skill, personality and influence that enabled this guitar master to prosper as a performer and a recording artist. Countless blues guitarists and enthusiasts came under Brownie's spell and found something genuine and inspiring in his music. These performances, culled from his Folkways recordings, reveal the artistry and passion which Brownie McGhee brought to the blues.

Descriptive notes enclosed.

Credits
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Smithsonian Folkways
Smithsonian/Folkways Recordings
Office of Folklife Programs
955 L'Enfant Plaza, Suite 2600
Smithsonian Institution
Washington DC 20560

Smithsonian/Folkways SF 40034

Brownie McGhee *The Folkways Years 1945-1959*

Compiled and annotated by Kip Lornell

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* *Previously unreleased*

This anthology is a selection from among Brownie McGhee's recordings that highlights his large repertory and his guitar style. Many more of his recordings are available on Folkways cassettes. As with the rest of the Folkways catalogue, all of Brownie McGhee's Folkways recordings are available by mail order from the Smithsonian Institution. They have been recorded from the master tapes onto high quality audio cassettes, which are packaged with the original LP documentation. For a complete Folkways catalogue telephone 202/287-3262, fax 202/287-3699, or send for The Whole Folkways Catalogue, Smithsonian/Folkways Recordings, Office of Folklife Programs, 955 l'Enfant Plaza Suite 2600, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C. 20560. Folkways albums by Brownie McGhee include:

Folkways 2030 ***Brownie McGhee Blues*** (cassette)
Folkways 2421 ***Traditional Blues Volume 1*** (cassette)
Folkways 2422 ***Traditional Blues Volume 2*** (cassette)
Folkways 3557 ***Brownie McGhee Sings the Blues*** (cassette)
Folkways 32028 ***Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee, Get On Board*** (cassette)

Smithsonian/Folkways ***40011 Brownie McGhee and Sonny Terry*** (a reissue of Folkways 2327) on CD, LP, and cassette.

Blues on Smithsonian/Folkways Reissues

Many blues recordings by superb artists are available on audio cassette and are listed in the "Whole Folkways Catalogue." Some of these have been carefully remastered, annotated, and re-issued on CD and cassette on the Smithsonian/Folkways label. These are commercially distributed to record stores and mail order houses. Among them are:

SF 40001 ***Woody Guthrie and Leadbelly, Folkways, The Original Vision***
SF 40009 ***Elizabeth Cotten, Freight Train and Other North Carolina Songs and Tunes***
SF 40010 ***Leadbelly Sings Folk Songs***
SF 40011 ***Brownie McGhee and Sonny Terry Sing Blues***
SF 40019 ***Lightnin' Hopkins***
SF 40023 ***Big Bill Broonzy Sings Folk Songs***
SF 40033 ***Sonny Terry, The Folkways Years 1944-1963***
SF 40035 ***Reverend Gary Davis, Pure Religion and Bad Company***

Ask for these Smithsonian/Folkways titles at your local record store or order by phone from Roundup Records 1-800-443-4727

Brownie McGhee, Blues Singer
Notes by Kip Lornell

This compilation of 18 songs selected from the six LP albums Brownie McGhee recorded for Folkways Records and from a previously unreleased acetate illustrates the remarkable musicianship of this major figure in the history of the blues. The performances here are among his very best. In addition to musical excellence, these tracks display McGhee's versatile repertoire. The older blues-ballads, such as "Careless Love" and "Betty and Dupree," sound just as convincing and heartfelt as the autobiographical "Me and Sonny." To complement the reissues, two previously unknown selections from the extensive Smithsonian/Folkways Archives are released here for the first time.

Brownie McGhee is an important figure in the history of blues, a style that developed in the Deep South around the turn of the twentieth century. In fact, McGhee's name is synonymous with the blues because during his more than fifty-year professional sojourn he was closely associated with some of the best performers: Big Bill Broonzy, Blind Reverend Gary Davis, Leadbelly, and Blind Boy Fuller. Although his name is often linked with his long-time partner, Sonny Terry, McGhee also enjoyed a lengthy career apart from the years with his harmonica-playing partner.

Brownie McGhee's Folkways recordings came at a critical period in his career. His strong base of support within the African American community was slowly eroding as the older styles of blues began to lose their popular appeal in favor of urban forms. McGhee's releases on New York City-based labels such as Alert, Harlem, and Old-Town were aimed at an African American audience, and they began to diminish in number in 1953. So when Moses Asch, founder of Folkways Records, suggested that Brownie record some long-playing records for the Folkways label, McGhee quite eagerly agreed. This renewed an association that began in 1947 when McGhee recorded three singles for Asch's Disc label and lasted until Brownie moved from New York City to Oakland, California, in the early 1960s.

Asch introduced McGhee to an almost entirely new audience of white people interested in folk music and blues. McGhee was positioned to become part of the slowly evolving "folk music revival" expressed in the establishment of the Newport Folk Festival, the popularity of the Kingston Trio, and the research that eventually revived the careers of such "lost" rural blues artists as Mississippi John Hurt, Furry Lewis, and Frank Edwards. In keeping with his policy of letting artists define their own repertoire, Asch encouraged McGhee to continue performing in the two-finger picked guitar style that he developed during the 1930s. Because he wished to continue working as a professional musician, Brownie McGhee was always looking for ways to expand his audience. By the late 1950s he had become a fixture on the coffeehouse and festival circuit. Recordings such as those on this anthology first exposed many younger white folk music enthusiasts to the blues.

In addition to representing Brownie McGhee's strong Folkways catalogue, this compilation particularly emphasizes his impressive guitar technique and his feeling for reshaping blues lyrics. McGhee's final three albums for Folkways are especially interesting because they are solo efforts that mine his older and more traditional repertoire. By 1959 Brownie had been a blues professional for more than two decades, amassing a large storehouse of both traditional songs and original compositions based on older forms. "Grievin' Hearted Blues" and "Please Don't Dog Your Woman" are examples of this process.

The solo performances in this collection are balanced by those that include other accompanists. Sonny Terry is the most enduring and important of Brownie's musical partners and he appears in several selections. In addition to providing instrumental support, Terry also sang with Brownie, as on "Heart in Sorrow." The only significant aspects of McGhee's style missing here are his rhythm 'n' blues performances. For ten years, beginning in the middle 1940s, McGhee frequently performed with a small band, often consisting of bass, drums, piano, and some reed players. Most of his commercial singles from this decade feature such a line-up, but the Asch recordings represent a different period in McGhee's career—one that reflected his new-found audience and his producer's own musical sensibilities.

McGhee's own life story is fascinating in itself. It deserves a recounting, both for its own inherent interest as well as the experiences and recollections that reflect the lives of many of his contemporaries. Like the majority of his musical friends, McGhee's life began not in the streets of New York City, but rather in rural Tennessee.

A long-time resident of Oakland, California, Walter "Brownie" McGhee retains strong musical ties to the blues and country dance music of the southeastern states. As a native of Knoxville, Tennessee (born November 30, 1915), McGhee grew up in a family that supported his interests in a musical environment that helped to shape his later career. Brownie may be best known as a guitarist, but he also plays the banjo and piano. The keyboard, in fact, was his first instrument and he accompanied Buddy Moss on the piano during the 1943 Okeh recording session. How Brownie became associated with Buddy Moss in Burlington, North Carolina, reveals some interesting facts about his own background and that of other itinerant southeastern blues artists.

In his early years, Brownie McGhee was a wandering performer. He entertained workers at the rough, segregated coal field camps around Bluefield, West Virginia, during the middle of the Depression. McGhee recalls "I went through there, I was hitch-hiking, I got there and I met some friends and they invited me into Commerce, West Virginia. I went down there and stayed almost a year. . . I went from camp to camp, but what I remember they didn't pay-off in money; they paid off in script. And if you played around the commissary—if you kept a crowd around, they'd give you money for your script. I was around places like Keystone. See, they had a Black sheriff up there and those were days they carried pistols like a western city!" (All quotations from Brownie McGhee are taken from an interview with the author in Oakland, California on October 14, 1989).

By 1938 Brownie left the mountains and rambled to Winston-Salem, North Carolina, where he spent a few months playing on the streets. By now an experienced man of the blues, McGhee knew how to find a cheap but safe place to live and the right places to find biscuits, ham, gravy, and eggs. He soon learned where to play when the R.J. Reynolds employees came out of the factories with their weekly cash paychecks in hand. Many of them wanted to hear the latest blues songs by Blind Boy Fuller, whose records they heard on "piccolos" (juke boxes). After several serious altercations with Chief-of-Police Feather regarding a "Tennessee nigger" playing on the streets, McGhee and his new-found harp playing friend, Jordan Webb, headed east. They followed Highway 70 for about fifty miles and ended up in Burlington because they heard that the man who managed Blind Boy Fuller lived in town.

Even though Webb and McGhee soon learned that Fuller himself lived another thirty miles down the road in Durham, they quickly found J.B. Long. Being something of a talent scout, Long wanted to hear the duo perform, especially Brownie's original composition "Me and My Dog Blues." Long, whom McGhee grew to respect as a manager and as a friend, immediately took McGhee under his wing suggesting that they might want to make phonograph records. Brownie viewed records as an easy way to increase his name recognition and thus his value as a street musician. But he also wanted to meet Blind Boy Fuller, an impulse that he regrets to this day. When they were introduced some weeks after McGhee's arrival in Piedmont, North Carolina, Fuller observed "'McGhee you haven't made any records, you seem to be an upstart. But keep it up.' [Fuller] didn't say 'Keep on man.' That's what I wanted to hear."

Because of Fuller's arrogant attitude, the two musicians remained cordial but not close. McGhee's relationship with Long, however, continued unabated. Long launched McGhee's recording career, helped negotiate his contracts, and suggested various ways to improve his lot. Moss approached Long about recording after he left Georgia following an unfortunate encounter with the police. His recording career had faltered and Buddy was looking for a new start. It was through Long that McGhee and Moss became acquainted. Brownie and Sonny Terry also became "partnered" through Long's benign intervention in 1941 when he sought someone to accompany the blind harmonica player to Washington, D.C. for a recording session at the Library of Congress.

Eventually McGhee moved to New York City where he enjoyed a dual career as a blues singer for the black community and a southern blues champion for the white intelligentsia that was just discovering "folk music." From the middle 1940s until about 1960, he played in the black clubs both as a solo blues performer and as a pioneer of the emerging rhythm & blues style. He formed such notable groups as the Mighty House Rockers and the Three B's to play at the tough clubs. Eventually he also arranged many record sessions for the numerous independent record companies that had sprung up in and around New York City—Atlantic, Savoy, Sittin' in With, Harlem, and others. McGhee became fairly well known within his own community as an entertainer who used colorful recording pseudonyms like Spider Sam and Tennessee Gabriel.

McGhee also became an integral member of the New York City folk music scene, which has also been characterized as the "urban folk revival." This period marked a time when music lovers in northern cities began to discover their roots, most often in the form of southern rural traditions—string bands and blues in particular. The best-known members of the urban folk revival had varied backgrounds. Pete Seeger, for instance, came from a highly educated family with strong ties to both "classical" and traditional music. On the other hand, Woody Guthrie emerged from the southwestern United States with his musical identity already established by his years as an itinerant performer and his left-wing ideology. All of them embraced and admired the songs of the southern-born musicians—Josh White, Huddie Ledbetter, Sonny Terry, and Brownie McGhee.

McGhee at first doubted that he would find a substantial white audience: "'What you want me in New York for? I been there to make records.' But they said that people would love [my] music. . . and that people were starving to death in New York for what I do." As a result of this popularity and support, the music was altered to fit the circumstances. Instead of playing juke joints and after-hour clubs, blues oriented folk singers found a new way of doing business. Brownie McGhee recalls that after a while "Josh wasn't doing blues. He was doing folk and running around with Libby Holeman, wearing a low-cut shirt and opening for her in big white clubs. I found out they were seeing money. Quite naturally I put Josh in a whole 'nother category, say he's gone white!"

By the late 1940s the man who had earlier recorded tough blues such as "High Brown Cheater," "Black and Evil Blues," "Bed Springs Blues," and "Tweet Tweet Mama Blues" now sang "Eve's Apple Tree" and "I Lay A-Dreamin'" in folk clubs around New York City. Brownie McGhee, the pragmatic street musician, was happy to accommodate this new audience, up to a point. His comments on this issue reveal a deeper sense of spiritual crisis. "I put it together my way. I'll go white in my way, too, if I can get some money. Psychologically, deep down inside of me, it didn't do anything to me." Certainly this new-found appreciation for his music led Brownie into previous unbooked venues: the Village Vanguard, the Blue Angel, and eventually club dates in Canada and Europe.

Brownie McGhee and Sonny Terry, though not close personal friends, came to be so closely identified that it became impossible to separate them for long. Although McGhee often appeared with Big Chief Ellis, Leadbelly, and others, it was Sonny Terry who remained his closest musical compatriot. Both men were caught up in the urban folk revival, resulting in a series of recordings and live performances that swept across several decades. It was as a duo that they first gained the attention of Moses Asch, founder of Folkways Records. But over the years Asch was wise enough to have Terry and McGhee record separately as well as together. He knew that they retained strong individual identities apart from their long-standing partnership.

Partially because Moses Asch permitted them such leeway, Brownie retains fond, often humorous memories of him. "Moe Asch was my A-1 man. I met him through Lead[belly] and was soon recording. He gave everyone ten bucks. . . and I was proud of that ten bucks. When he was on 46th Street I would stop in to see Moe, ask him if I could have five or ten bucks. He said 'I think I can.' But I didn't think that he was putting that money down. I got to make a few records for him and he asked 'Don't you want to clear your sheet with me? All that money I've been giving you all along. Why don't you make an album?' Then it flashed in my mind that I been getting a lot of five and ten dollar bills from Moe. I thought, well that's alright. And he set up the date." His association with Moe Asch highlighted Brownie's obvious talents as a composer and traditional bluesman. But his role was not limited to the blues, for the urban folk scene called for musical versatility. The early Folkways catalogue and Archives contain examples of Brownie playing in other than a strictly blues setting, such as his appearances with Woody Guthrie.

Once Asch became more interested in long playing records in the early 1950s, much of McGhee's output appeared on this format. Sometimes he appeared as a co-leader with Sonny Terry or in an informal format featuring another veteran, Big Bill Broonzy. Just before moving away from New York City, late in 1958 and early 1959, Brownie recorded three fine solo albums for Asch. Most of these are blues performances, many of them using very traditional themes: "Poor Boy," "Jelly Roll Baker," "Long Gone," or "Fore Day Creep." Shortly thereafter McGhee decided to resettle on the West Coast and never recorded for Folkways again.

Since moving to Oakland, McGhee has continued to perform, though not as often as before. Most of his children live nearby and the Bay Area has been home for more than thirty years now. McGhee prefers the gentler climate, and his reputation as a highly-respected senior American bluesman is sufficient that he can do all of the television work, touring, and recording that he wants.

Selected Bibliography

Bruce Bastin. ***Red River Blues: The Blues Tradition in the Southeastern States*** (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986).

Happy Traum. ***The Guitar Styles of Brownie McGhee*** (New York: Oak Publications, 1971).

Selected Discography:

Document 541 ***The Remaining Titles*** (LP)
Folkways 2030 ***Brownie McGhee Blues***
Folkways 2327 ***Brownie McGhee and Sonny Terry*** (Reissued in 1989 as SF 40011 on CD, LP and cassette)
Folkways 2421 ***Traditional Blues Volume 1***
Folkways 2422 ***Traditional Blues Volume 2***
Folkways 3557 ***Brownie McGhee Sings the Blues***
Folkways 32028 ***Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee, Get On Board***
Savoy 1204 ***Jumpin' the Blues*** (Cass, LP)
Storyville 4032 ***Best of*** (LP)
Tomato 2696104 ***Rainy Day*** **(Cass, CD)**

Note: While some of these recordings are not available, all of the Folkways titles may be ordered by mail (see box on page one).

About the Compiler

Kip Lornell received his Ph.D. in Ethnomusicology from Memphis State University. In addition to teaching at the University of Virginia and the College of William and Mary, he was for many years associated with the Blue Ridge Institute of Ferrum College and has been a postdoctoral fellow at the Smithsonian Institution. His publications include Happy in the Service of the Lord (University of Illinois, 1986) and Virginia Blues, Country and Gospel Records 1902-1943: An Annotated Discography (University Press of Kentucky, 1989).

Selections:

1. **Daisy**
Brownie McGhee, vocal and guitar [Folkways 3817, May 7, 1957].
Recorded live in the studio of a radio station in Chicago, this song is a truly spontaneous version of one that McGhee regularly played in the early 1940s. Writer and radio commentator Studs Terkel had Brownie McGhee, Sonny Terry, and Big Bill Broonzy in the studio for his radio program, excerpts of which were reissued a Folkways recording, "I'm Calling Daisy," in fact, was McGhee's first recording for Okeh in 1940.

2. **Rising Sun**
Brownie McGhee, vocal and guitar; Sonny Terry harmonica; Coyal McMahan maracas (Folkways 32028, 1955).
This is an interesting version of what is most often called "Red River Blues," which is well known by many blues performers from Virginia south to Georgia. It is an eight-bar song that consists of "floating" verses that are related to one another by a general theme—in this case transportation and physical movement. Sonny Terry's short, pungent phrases provide a wonderful contrast to McGhee's forceful voice.

3. **Careless Love**
Brownie McGhee, vocal and guitar (Folkways 2030, 1955).
Although McGhee's guitar work is heavily influenced by the Gary Davis and Blind Boy Fuller school of blues playing, this is a very personal version of one of the most widely performed ballads. It has been a favorite of Black and White musicians throughout the United States, particularly in the Carolinas. McGhee once remarked that he first heard this song in Tennessee when he was growing up in the early 1920s.

4. **Cholly Blues**
Brownie McGhee, vocal and guitar (Folkways 2421, 1959).
Brownie McGhee reached way back for this song. This is a very traditional blues that draws not only from the oral tradition and Brownie's own experiences, but from older recordings such as Blind Lemon Jefferson's "Broke and Hungry" (Paramount 12443). With the exception of some minor problems with the next-to-last solo, this also features one of McGhee's slicker guitar arrangements, with some very fine double-time runs during the solos.

5.* **Just a Dream**
Brownie McGhee, vocal and guitar; (possibly) Wilbert "Big Chief" Ellis, piano (previously unissued recording).
Brownie McGhee acknowledged that he learned this tune from "my friend, Big Bill [Broonzy]," who first recorded it in the middle 1940s. Obviously taken from a live radio broadcast or concert performance, this selection was found on an unmarked acetate in the Folkways Archive at the Smithsonian Institution. Unfortunately, the piano is under recorded and McGhee occasionally turns away from the microphone, but these problems hardly detract from this wry, worldly-wise performance.

6. **Pawnshop Blues**
Brownie McGhee, guitar and vocal (Folkways 2030, 1955).
Although they never cared much for one another, Blind Boy Fuller and Brownie McGhee sometimes worked together in North Carolina in the late 1930s. This song is Brownie's version of Fuller's "Three Ball Blues" which Fuller recorded shortly before his death in 1940. The reference to "three balls" will no doubt confuse younger readers who have never seen a pawn broker's traditional trade sign that utilizes that motif. In this cut McGhee is using an electric guitar, a technological development that Moses Asch rarely allowed in his studios.

7. **Hangman's Blues**
Brownie McGhee, guitar and vocal (Folkways 2421, 1959).
This is a highly original song, which may stem from some true life event. The text of "Hangman's Blues" is more focused than most blues, for it revolves entirely around a criminal's trial, incarceration, and hanging. It "leaps and lingers" like a broadside ballad, leaving out information that would make the narrative more complete. In this respect it is like other Black American blues-ballads such as John Henry" that move from one dramatic incident to another.

8. **Living with the Blues**
Brownie McGhee, vocal and guitar; Sonny Terry, vocal and harmonica (Folkways 2432, July 11/12 1959).
This is a standard piece in Brownie McGhee's repertory. It was apparently written in the late 1950s, for McGhee recorded "Living With the Blues" regularly beginning around the time of the Newport Folk Festival when this version was recorded. Close attention to Sonny Terry's performance shows that he is in fine form. He uses a number of creative devices, such as trills, and bending some notes as much as a half-tone to sustain interest.

9. **'Fore Day Creep**
Brownie McGhee, vocal and guitar (Folkways 2421, 1959).
The title of this song refers to a person sneaking around before the break of day, a "fore day creep" in the language of the blues. The themes are sexual prowess coupled with the possibility of infidelity and a lack of trust between men and women. The well-executed bass runs on this selection clearly reflect McGhee's roots as a bluesman in North Carolina and Tennessee in the late 1930s and 1940s.

10. **Me and Sonny**
Brownie McGhee, guitar and vocal (Folkways 2030, 1955).
Despite the line in this affectionate tribute "Just me and old Sonny, we'll never have no falling out," the personal relationship between Terry and McGhee deteriorated long before the harmonica player's death in 1986. The pair continued to perform together throughout the 1970s and into the 1980s in spite of disagreements between them. This 1955 album is notable because it is one of the earliest Folkways releases featuring an electrified instrument.

11. **Raise a Ruckus Tonight**
Brownie McGhee, vocal and guitar; Coyal McMahan, maracas and vocal; Sonny Terry, harmonica and vocal (Folkways 32028, 1955).
This is a joyful excursion that recalls the medicine shows that McGhee and Terry frequently saw in their Carolina days. It presents a true collaboration among the three musicians. McMahan's deep voice supports the proceedings, while Terry also frequently joins in on the chorus. The song itself clearly harkens back to the 19th century minstrel shows, and "Raise a Ruckus Tonight" often appears in the field collections of early African American folk traditions.

12. **Betty and Dupree**
Brownie McGhee, guitar and vocal (Folkways 2030, 1955).
This thoughtful ballad appears to be from black oral tradition and the references to "the Atlanta jail" suggest a Georgia setting. The song is probably about the plight of Frank Dupree, who robbed an Atlanta jewelry store in 1921 and was the last man to be hanged in Georgia, on September 1, 1922. "Dupree Blues," as it is sometimes called, was first recorded by a South Carolinian from Greenville, Blind Willie Walker. The song's emotionality is heightened by Brownie's husky, restrained, vocals.

13. **Long Gone**
Brownie McGhee, guitar and vocal (Folkways 2421, 1959).
This is one of a large number of African-American songs about prison breaks and escapees on the run. "Long Gone" is related to the cycle of songs "Long Gone from Bowling Green." This performance may owe some of its poetic power to the influence of the "beat" poets, such as Alan Ginsberg, whom McGhee may have heard in Greenwich Village, New York. McGhee builds the entire song around lines such as "He's long gone...like a turkey through the corn" form which he constructs a tale of the desire for freedom.

14. **Grievin' Hearted Blues**
Brownie McGhee, guitar and vocal (Folkways 2422, 1959).
This is another 12-bar blues whose heartfelt performance employs many "floating" verses. McGhee's verses about loss and trains touch upon two of the most celebrated blues themes. His single string guitar work is especially noteworthy, and his formidable technique is particularly evident during the first guitar solo.

15. **I'm Gonna Tell God How You Treat Me**
Brownie McGhee, guitar and vocal (Folkways 3817, May 7, 1957).
As this song amply demonstrates, McGhee is clearly comfortable with religious material. He recorded sacred songs as early as 1941. Although he stresses the blues as his principal musical interest, McGhee has continued to perform sacred songs in his stage programs. This song is also known as "I'm Gonna Cross the River of Jordan" and closes with an impressive single-string guitar embellishment.