BROWNIE McGHEE
SINGS THE BLUES

FOLKWAYS RECORDS FG 3557

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BLUES
by
Brownie McGhee

SIDE I, Band 1: POOR BOY

Poor boy, a long way from home (3)
Please don't mistreat me, please don't do me wrong.

Broke and hungry, ragged and dirty too (3)
Just want to know, can I go home with you.

Good old boy, just been treated wrong (2)
Good old boy, ain't been treated right,
freezing ground was my bed last night.

Big bell ringing, little bell's tone,
I'm a lonely, lonely, and a long, long ways from home.

This here grave yard, a mighty lonely place
Six feet in the ground, throw dirt in your face.

Dig my grave with a silver spade, (2)
Baby, see that my grave's dug with a silver spade,
And let me down with a golden chain.

Well, I ain't good looking, got no curly hair, (3)
Well, then, me and my God will take me anywhere.

What makes you baby, hold your head so high,
Tell me baby, what makes you hold your head so high,
Tell me baby, why you hold your head so high,
Well, the way you hold it, that's the way you'll die.

SIDE I, Band 2: MEMORIES OF MY TRIP

This is the way that a song is born. And while I was on my trip, in England, I happened to write down a few words, and I called it "Memories of My Trip". I had such a wonderful time, I wanted to jot this down, and so, I'd better sing it for you.

In Germany, I saw Berlin; In London, I saw Big Ben,

SIDE I, Band 3: WALKING BLUES

Well, fellas, I don't feel too good, and I don't feel too bad. But it's really a sad story. I've been walking for the last thirty days or more. I know eventually gonna catch up with me. I want to tell you really something true. Let me sing you a couple of choruses.

Paper boy hollering extra, have you heard the news?
Lord, I just shot the girl I love, Brownie's got them walking blues,
And I keep on walking, trying to walk my blues away,
Well, it's I'm so glad, trouble won't last always.
She used to be my sweet milk, but she soured on me,
Now we can't keep the butter, she ain't sweet like she used to be,
And I keep on walking, etc.
There's grounds in my coffee, boll weevils all in my meal,
I've got the tacks in my left shoes, keep sticking me in my heel,
And I keep on walking, trying to walk my blues away,
I know the sun's gonna shine, in my back door some day.
Nobody cares about me, I ain't even got a friend,
Lord, I lost my mother, when will my troubles end,
I keep on walking, etc.
Blues in the morning, blues in the afternoon,
There's weary when it's midnight, why do you come so soon?
And I keep on walking, etc.

SIDE I, Band 4: HARD FEELING

Yes, I'll say it, and when a man can't scold a woman that's a mighty hard feeling, and it's very unfortunate about a man when he's away,
And here goes a little song, "Ain't That a Hard Feeling When you're Down and Out".

Well, when I was in prison, trying to do my time,
I come back home, find my baby crying.

Ain't that a hard feeling, (3)
when you're down and doing bad.

Well, my shirts in the laundry, my pants in the presser shop,
I ain't got no place to stay, Lord, I'm sleeping in an old vacant lot.

I only had two friends, in the world since I was born,
They were my mother and father, now my mother's dead and gone.

My friends, when they meet me on the street,
I ask them for a dime,
They say, I cannot see you, but I'll see you some other time.

Well, my sisters and my brothers, say I'm a drunkard and ain't no good,
They help everybody in town, and all around the neighborhood.

(Hard, hard feeling).

SIDE I, Band 5: A HARD ROAD TO TRAVEL

(SPOKEN)
What did he say, boy? Huh. Where is she? That's the way you feel. Hard road to travel, especially when you're all alone.

Well, I ain't going down, that big road by myself,
Well, if I can't take you with me, I'm gonna take somebody else.
We're long and dreary, Lord, and the road is mighty rough,
Seems like the harder and further I travel, things get mighty rough.

Well, I'd rather be walking, I don't appreciate no ride,
Because the one that I love and want, she's not here by my side.

That's why I ain't going down that big road all by myself,
Well, if you don't come and go with me, baby,
I'm gonna take somebody else.
Oh, baby, won't you please come and go with me.
Well, if you'll just come and go with me my little girl,
I'll be as good as good can be.

SIDE I, Band 6: YOU DON'T KNOW MY MIND

You don't know, you don't know, you don't know my mind, Lord, Lordy,
You don't know, you don't know my mind,
Well, when you see me laughing, laughing just to keep from crying. (repeat)

Well I asked my baby, if she stand to see me cry,
She said yes, if you can stand to see me die,
You don't know, etc.

I'm going to the racetrack, see my pony run,
If I win, any money, I'm gonna bring my baby some.
You don't know, etc.

(I think you understand now).

SIDE I, Band 7: BROWNIE'S BLUES

This little dedication to my father. My mother, she's dead and gone. My father is past sixty-five now, and I happened to jot these words down.
I hope they'll always be remembered and never forgotten. It's called "Brownie's Blues".

Well, my father's getting old, and his hair's turning white like snow (2)
My mother's dead and gone, I'm doing the best I can, you know.

It's a hard pill to swallow, when that talk going around, (2)
After the woman I made so happy, she's after every man in town.

I can't even get a favor, from a friend I know in town, (2)
Lord, I even go to the welfare store, and they'll turn old Brownie down.

I can always tell, when the girl I love is loving someone else,
I can always tell when my baby's loving someone else,
She gets mad with me, sleeps every night by herself,

Uh, Lord, I can't go on like this, (2)
I'd give anything in the world, just to be where my baby is.

I'm going to change my ways of living, nobody else is gonna treat me wrong (2)
You know money's gonna be my only lover,
I'll take the highway to be my home
SIDE II, Band 1: FACE IN THE CROWD

Standing on the corner, people rush by me,
Shy ones and sly ones, the humble and the proud,
How long, must I go on looking, looking for your face in the crowd.

Walking through the city, the crowded old city,
Thousands of faces, the quiet, the proud,
How long, how long will it take you, to find my face in the crowd.

People all around me, feel so all alone, just like a motherless child,
A long ways from home,

If there is a true love, how will I find it,
Glowing like diamonds, all wrapped in a shroud,
How long will it take you, just to find my face in the crowd.

(repeat chorus and last verse)

SIDE II, Band 2: BLUES SINGER'S PRAYER

(laughs) This is known as the Blues Singer's Prayer. I usually play this...or pray this...when I'm by myself, but I'd always rather play it when there's somebody near me.

Please please, don't you worry, while out of your town,
Oh, yes, God knows, while I'm out of your town.
Cause the love, the love I have for you darling, can't be turned around,
Oh, yes, God knows, can't be turned around.

Please, I pray don't mistreat, because I'm young and wild,
Oh, Lord, I say, because I'm young and wild.
Because I want, I want you to remember, I'm my mama's baby child,
Oh, yes, I'm my mama's baby child. (Sing to me, guitar)

I'm gonna write, gonna write a letter, gonna mail it in the air,
Oh, yes, God knows, gonna mail it in the air.
To let my friends, my friends all know, that Brownie's got a love somewhere,
Oh, yes, God knows, Brownie's got a woman somewhere. (Yes, I have)
And I know, and I know my baby, she's got to love me some,
Um, yes, God knows, she's got to love me some. (How do you know it?)
She throws her arms, arms all around me, like a circle round the sun,
Um, yes, God knows, like a circle around the sun.

SIDE II, Band 3: I AIN'T GONNA SCOLD YOU

There's a birth to everything, and there's the living, and there's the life, and there's the joy, and there's a cause... But I wrote this little number. It's from realistic life. It's something that actually happened to me, and I said it and I meant it, because everybody knew about it. And the title of this tune is "Ain't Gonna Scold You, Because Everybody Knows".

My baby, she don't love me, she don't even care, I loved you and you hurt me, you wouldn't play fair and square,
I ain't gonna scold you, because everybody knows, I once loved you and you hurt me, but I would never love no more.

My friends, they all told me, and I thought it, thought it was a joke, They said, Brownie, there is fire, where you see a lot of smoke.

But I ain't gonna scold you, cause I don't care where you go, etc.

I saw you last night darling, you was out with my friend they call old Jim,
And he wasn't treating you baby, fair but you were treating him.
Well, I bought you, bought you nice dresses, so you could look good, look good everywhere,
I let you live in the beauty parlor, so you could have nice curly hair.
Tell me, tell me baby, hellfire, tell me the truth,
Didn't I see you last night, talking in that old telephone booth.
(No, no, I won't do that)

SIDE II, Band 4: A CHEATER CAN'T WIN

Usually in a man's life he always wants to sing, or talk about the things that he's done, or the things that he's doing. Yeah, I used to gamble a little bit, but I wasn't such a good gambler after I met fellows better than me. So I happened to write down a few words about a 'Cheater Can't Win'.

Well, I used to be a dealer, and I was also a cheater too,... (2)

Lord, I found out the winner's got the best hands, what else could I do.
I placed the aces on the bottom, and then I walked those cards around,

Well, I took kings in my hands, I was the loser when the deal went down,
Stealing will not pay, Lord, and a cheater cannot win.
Stealing will not pay, and a cheater cannot win, (2)
You may think you are the winner, in this life you are the loser in the end.
(Sing to me, guitar)

Cheating was a habit, but winning was all I craved, (2)

Lord, I tried to play fair, I found out I was a cheating slave.
Cheating will not pay, and a cheater cannot win,
Stealing will not pay, and a cheater cannot win,
You may think you are the winner, but you are the loser in the end.

SIDE II, Band 5: BIG WIDE WORLD

I don't have to worry about what I eat and drink, neither the clothes I wear,
Love is a burden, nobody wants to share.
Not in this big wide world, Lord that's all I'm thinking of,
Love's greatest gift to mankind, suffering for the need of love.
(second & succeeding chorus, Mother natures greatest etc.)
Well, the dears they have places, squirrels go from tree to tree,  
I'm out in this big wide world, nobody cares for me,  
Out in the big, etc.

Well, the dears they got mates, squirrels go from tree to tree,  
The hummingbirds sing sweet songs, I'm lonely as a man can be,  
Out here in this big, etc.

Well, I never dreamed in my life, man could be treated so unkind,  
All these fruit trees around me, and ain't nary one of them mine,  
Out here in this big, etc. (Yes, yes)

Well, you know I went to Little Rock, so tall and so fair,  
Fell down on my knees and I began to say this prayer,  
Lord, out here in this, etc.

Well, you know the good book says do unto others,  
as you'd have them to do unto you,  
But turn that same page over, it means do the same thing too,  
Out in this, etc.

SIDE II, Band 6: HOW LONG

This is a number I've always liked, and it seems like the people likes it too. And I've been playing it around on concerts, here, and there and everywhere. It's by an old friend of mine. And it's called How Long.

How long, baby, how long, has that evening train been gone,  
How long, how long, baby how long.  
Well, if I could roller, well like a mountain jack,  
Go up on the mountain, call my baby back,  
For how long, how long, baby how long,  
I can hear a whistle, can't see no train,  
Deep down in my heart, there's an aching pain,  
For how long, how long, baby how long,  
Going to the pawn shop, put my watch in pawn,  
Don't want it to tell me, baby, that you've been gone,  
For how long, how long, baby how long,  
I can see that green grass, growing on a hill,  
I ain't seen no green grass, on a dollar bill,  
For how long, how long, baby how long.  
Well, a ten dollar bill looks like a window shade to me,  
A twenty dollar bill baby, something I don't never see.  
For how long, how long, baby, how long,  
I ain't got no money, nor ticket on the train,  
But I would ride the blinds, baby, to be with you again,  
For how long, how long, baby, how long.  
(How long, now?)

SIDE II, Band 7: GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

This is a number that I hope that you know, and you that don't know, will try to consider. The death of a good friend of mine that has not been too long, and I'll just try to do a few words. It's none other than Big Bill Broonzy. He's gone but Not Forgotten. And I want to do a little chant for Bill and his friends, from Arkansas to Chicago, from the Dominion of Canada to the Gulf of Mexico.

Well, he's gone but not forgotten, Big Bill, he's gone away  
(2)  
Well, he heard a voice calling, and he knew he could not stay,  
Well, he's gone but not forgotten, I'm gonna tell you the reason why,  
(2)  
Well, Big Bill is gone, but his songs will never die.  
Big Bill's got a million friends, North, East, South and West  
(2)  
Well, you know it's hard to tell, hard to tell, which place he was loved the best.  
The last letter I got from Big Bill, friends I was in London town  
(2)  
He said Browny, I'm from the hospital, but my eyesight is failing now.  
Well, I never will forget the day, he said it's alright to sing my songs  
(2)  
Bill, I never will forget, I'll always try to carry your business on.  
(How do you play it, boy?)  
Farewell, so long, farewell old pal of mine,  
I'll have to end, end my song, cause I'm almost crying now.