

FROM ORIGINAL ANALOG MASTER



Brownie McGHEE



Southern Train

STORYVILLE

Some stop short and others keep going, but a chorus of blues is usually twelve bars long, and it's become so familiar that the astonishing variety of approaches possible within this seemingly limited framework is often merely taken for granted. Consider Son House, playing driving, repeated bottleneck guitar patterns beneath vocal steeped in the field holler, the mournful majesty of Bessie Smith supported by the more stately blues of '20s jazz musicians, and the brash tones of the city echoed by B.B. King's electric guitar. Consider too the music of Walter McGhee, characterised by easy, flowing guitar and the warmest voice in the blues, instantly recognisable. It's a voice astonishingly rich in texture, although he can give it a cutting edge when the material demands it, and its expressive tonal qualities have even improved over the years, as these 1971 performances show.

Brownie was born in Tennessee in 1914, and was active in his home state until the late thirties when he moved to North Carolina with the express intention of becoming a recording artist. He'd heard of J.B. Long, an enterprising chain-store manager, who'd progressed from stocking blues 78s to actually setting up sessions himself, and whose hottest property among local musicians was Blind Boy Fuller. By the time McGhee hit the Carolinas, Fuller was ailing, and he died in 1941. Long desperate to keep tight hold on a successful formula, at first released Brownie's records under the pseudonym 'Blind Boy Fuller No 2', even though he was well aware of the singer's individual potential. The very first side to be released was in fact *The Death of Blind Boy Fuller*, which Brownie recreates here.

This album is, in fact, particularly rich in examples of how Brownie can bring his originality to bear on traditional material and the compositions of other bluesmen, *Howdy Blues* is a variant of *Good Morning Blues*, and here the Brownie McGhee lilt has replaced the near ferocity of the famous versions by Leadbelly. Mean Old Frisco is performed here

as *Southern Train*, in an interpretation more relaxed than the usual train blues, but still evocative of its subject. On both of these and the tender reading of Leroy Carr's *In the Evening*, Brownie receives the most sensitive support from Sonny Terry's harmonica. Big Bill Broonzy's *Key to the Highway* provides Brownie with a chance to prove that he can fashion a completely new guitar part for a well-worn piece, but perhaps the best guitar playing of the date is on *Can't Sleep at Night*, a tremendously fluent and swinging performance; although Brownie might miss out a bar now and again if the mood takes him, his chord vocabulary is wide, he makes all the changes, and his style is among the most melodically appealing in all blues. And, typical of his confidential story-teller's approach, he adds new words arising out of his immediate circumstances to the standard choruses of *Key to the Highway*:

'I might get my breakfast here in Denmark,
Might get my dinner in New Orleans -
I'm the highway walkingest man the world has ever seen'.

A reflective and moving *Sporting Life Blues* makes a satisfying end to an intimate and very accomplished recital; over many successful years, Brownie McGhee's performances have been so honed and polished that he more often sings not as a release from care but from a conscious artist's desire to communicate, but he always tells the truth, and hearing him at his best, as he is on this album, is like having a conversation with a friend.

Ron Brown
Jazz Journal

BROWNIE McGHEE SOUTHERN TRAIN

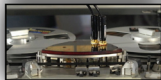
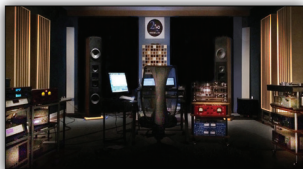
- 1 SOUTHERN TRAIN 5:04
McGhee
- 2 I CAN'T SLEEP AT NIGHT 2:47
McGhee
- 3 KEY TO THE HIGHWAY 5:21
Bill Broonzy
- 4 IN THE EVENING 4:10
Leroy Carr
- 5 WE HAVE NO FRIENDS 4:07
McGhee
- 6 SPORTING LIFE BLUES 3:42
McGhee
- 7 DEATH OF BLIND BOY FULLER 2:38
McGhee
- 8 MY LAST SUIT 3:52
McGhee
- 9 HOWDY BLUES 4:43
McGhee
- 10 WORRIED LIFE BLUES 4:01
McGhee

Brownie McGhee (vocals guitar)
Sonny Terry (harmonica) track 6
Svend-Erik Norregard (drums) tracks 1 & 9

Recorded in Copenhagen Nov 13 & 14, 1971
Supervised by: Karl Emil Knudsen
Liner Notes: Ron Brown
2XHD MASTERING: RENÉ LAFLAMME
2XHD EXECUTIVE PRODUCER: ANDRÉ PERRY
Album cover & Insert Artwork: André Perry
Graphics: Sylvie Labelle



THE 2xHD FUSION MASTERING SYSTEM



In the constant evolution of its proprietary mastering process, 2xHD has progressed to a new phase called 2xHD FUSION, integrating the finest analog, with state-of-the-art digital technology.

The mastering chain consists of a selection of high-end vacuum tube equipment. For the recordings on this album, the original ¼" 15 ips CCIR master tapes with Dolby 301 were played on a Nagra-T tape recorder, modified with high-end tube playback electronics, wired with OCC silver cable from the playback head direct to a Nick Doshi tube head preamplifier. The Nagra T, with its four direct drive motors, two pinch rollers and a tape tension head, has one of the best transports ever made. A custom-built carbon fiber head block and a head damping electronic system permit 2xHD FUSION to obtain a better resolution and 3D imaging.

The resulting signal is then transferred into high resolution formats by recording it in DSD 11.2 MHz using a Merging Technologies' Horus A to D converter. All analog and digital cables that are used are state of the art. The 2xHD FUSION mastering system is powered by a super capacitor power supply, using a new technology that lowers the digital noise found in the lowest level of the spectrum. A vacuum tube NAGRA HDdac (DSD) is used as a reference digital playback converter in order to A and B with the original analog master tape, permitting the fusion of the warmth of analog with the refinement of digital.

2xHD was created by producer/studio owner André Perry and audiophile sound engineer René Laflamme.

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