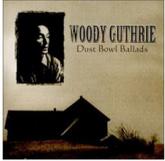


Woody Guthrie □ – Dust Bowl Ballads (2000)

Written by bluesever

Monday, 05 June 2017 15:12 -

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1 *The Great Dust Storm (Dust Storm Disaster)* 2 *Talking Dust Bowl Blues* 3 *Pretty Boy Floyd* 4 *Dusty Old Dust (So Long It's Been Good To Know Yuh)* 5 *Dust Bowl Blues* 6 *Blowin' Down The Road (I Ain't Gonna To Be Treated This Way)* 7 *Tom Joad (Part 1)* 8 *Tom Joad (Part 2)* 9 *Do Re Mi* 10 *Dust Bowl Refugee* 11 *I Ain't Got No Home* 12 *Vigilante Man* 13 *Dust Can't Kill Me* 14 *Dust Pneumonia Blues* 15 *Talkin' Dust Bowl Blues (Alternate Take)* Woody Guthrie - Vocals, Guitar, Harmonica Recorded in New York, New York, on April 26 & May 3, 1940. Originally released in 1964.

Sixty years after the recordings were first released, Woody Guthrie's odes to the Dust Bowl are presented in their third different configuration. RCA Victor Records, the only major label for which Guthrie ever recorded, issued two three-disc 78 rpm albums, *Dust Bowl Ballads, Vol. 1* and *Dust Bowl Ballads, Vol. 2*, in July 1940, containing a total of 11 songs. ("Tom Joad" was spread across two sides of a 78 due to its length.) Twenty-four years later, with the folk revival at its height, RCA reissued the material on a single 12" LP in a new sequence and with two previously unreleased tracks, "Pretty Boy Floyd" and "Dust Bowl Blues," added. Thirty-six years on, the Buddha reissue division of BMG, which owns RCA, shuffles the running order again and adds another track, this one an alternate take of "Talking Dust Bowl Blues." But whether available on 78s, LP, or CD, *Dust Bowl Ballads* constitutes a consistent concept album that roughly follows the outlines of John Steinbeck's 1939 novel *The Grapes of Wrath*. (Indeed, "Tom Joad" is nothing less than the plot of the book set to music.) The story begins, as "The Great Dust Storm (Dust Storm Disaster)" has it, "On the fourteenth day of April of 1935," when a giant dust storm hits the Great Plains, transforming the landscape. Shortly after, the farmers pack up their families and head west, where they have been promised there is work aplenty picking fruit in the lush valleys of California. The trip is eventful, as "Talking Dust Bowl Blues" humorously shows, but the arrival is disappointing, as the Okies discover California is less than welcoming to those who don't bring along some "do[ough] re mi." Guthrie's songs go back and forth across this tale of woe, sometimes focusing on the horrors of the dust storm, sometimes on human villains, with deputy sheriffs and vigilantes providing particular trouble. In "Pretty Boy Floyd," he treats an ancillary subject, as the famous outlaw is valorized as a misunderstood Robin Hood. Guthrie treats his subject alternately with dry wit and defiance, and listeners in

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1940 would have been conscious of the deliberate contrast with Jimmie Rodgers, whose music is evoked even as he is being mocked in "Dust Pneumonia Blues." Sixty years later, listeners may hear these songs through the music Guthrie influenced, particularly the folk tunes of Bob Dylan. Either way, this is powerful music, rendered simply and directly. It was devastatingly effective when first released, and it helped define all the folk music that followed it. ---William Ruhlmann, AllMusic Review

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