Big Joe Williams - Blues Classics (1996)

1. Tailor Made Baby - 1:49 2. Prison Bound Blues - 3:19 3. Dark Road Blues - 2:23 4. Delta Blues - 3:54 5. Lord Have Mercy - 1:47 play 6. Don't Your House Look Lonesome - 2:45 7. Deal'em On Down - 2:34 8. Snitchin' Blues - 3:07 9. Lonesome Train Blues - 5:04 10. No More Whiskey - 2:19 play 11. Liza Jane Blues - 1:59 12. Somebody's Been Borrowin' That Heavy Stuffo' Mine - 2:53 13. Jesus Gonna Make Up My Dyin'Bed - 1:28 14. Texas Blues - 2:48 15. When I Lay My Burden Down - 1:30
Personnel: Big Joe Williams - Guitars, Dobro, Vocals Lydia Carter - Vocals tr.12,13,15 Cooper Terry - Harmonica tr.14

This is fields recordings taped by German blues researcher - Axel Kustner. The unique percussive Delta blues of Big Joe Williams is captured from sessions recorded in 1973, 1977, 1978, and 1980. The 15 tracks feature Williams on dobro, six-string guitar, and his patented nine-string guitar. While the majority of the disc is mainly Big Joe Williams solos, it also includes Lydia Carter contributing vocals on 'Somebody's Been Borrowin' That Heavy Stuff o' Mine,' 'Jesus Gonna Make up My Dyin' Bed,' and 'When I Lay My Burden Down,' and Cooper Terry's harmonica on 'Texas Blues. All tracks were recorded in Crawford, MS, except 'Don't Your House Look Lonesome' and 'Texas Blues,' which were recorded in Berlin.~~ by Al Campbell.
---Al Campbell

Big Joe Williams may have been the most cantankerous human being who ever walked the earth with guitar in hand. At the same time, he was an incredible blues musician: a gifted songwriter, a powerhouse vocalist, and an exceptional idiosyncratic guitarist. Despite his deserved reputation as a fighter (documented in Michael Bloomfield's bizarre booklet Me and Big Joe), artists who knew him well treated him as a respected elder statesman. Even so, they

may not have chosen to play with him, because -- as with other older Delta artists -- if you played with him you played by his rules.

As protégé David "Honeyboy" Edwards described him, Williams in his early Delta days was a walking musician who played work camps, jukes, store porches, streets, and alleys from New Orleans to Chicago. He recorded through five decades for Vocalion, Okeh, Paramount, Bluebird, Prestige, Delmark, and many others. As a youngster, I met him in Delmark owner Bob Koester's store, the Jazz Record Mart. At the time, Big Joe was living there when not on his constant travels. According to Charlie Musselwhite, he and Big Joe kicked off the blues revival in Chicago in the '60s.

When I saw him playing at Mike Bloomfield's "blues night" at the Fickle Pickle, Williams was playing an electric nine-string guitar through a small ramshackle amp with a pie plate nailed to it and a beer can dangling against that. When he played, everything rattled but Big Joe himself. The total effect of this incredible apparatus produced the most buzzing, sizzling, African-sounding music I have ever heard.

Anyone who wants to learn Delta blues must one day come to grips with the idea that the guitar is a drum as well as a melody-producing instrument. A continuous, African-derived musical tradition emphasizing percussive techniques on stringed instruments from the banjo to the guitar can be heard in the music of Delta stalwarts Charley Patton, Fred McDowell, and Bukka White. Each employed decidedly percussive techniques, beating on his box, knocking on the neck, snapping the strings, or adding buzzing or sizzling effects to augment the instrument's percussive potential. However, Big Joe Williams, more than any other major recording artist, embodied the concept of guitar-as-drum, bashing out an incredible series of riffs on his G-tuned nine-string for over 60 years. --- Barry Lee Pearson

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