1. EMPTY BED BLUES
2. ALEXANDER'S RAGTIME BAND
3. PREACHIN' THE BLUES
4. KEEP IT TO YOURSELF
5. TROMBONE CHOLLY
6. AT THE CHRISTMAS BALL
7. KITCHEN MAN
8. YOU'VE GOT TO GIVE ME SOME
9. HE'S GOT ME GOIN'
10. THINKING BLUES
11. DEVIL'S GONNA GIT YOU
12. SEND ME TO THE 'LECTRIC CHAIR
13. BABY DOLL
14. TAKE ME FOR A BUGGY RIDE
15. YOUNG WOMAN'S BLUES
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Bessie Smith was dubbed “The Empress of The Blues” by her contemporaries, a measure of the esteem in which she was held. In popular appeal she was equalled only by the great Ma Rainey. But from the viewpoint of posterity Bessie has a great advantage over her friend and former teacher – the superb technical quality of the 78 rpm recordings she made between 1925 and 1933. A selection of her greatest performances from this period are heard here for the first time in digital stereo – revealing the full power, warmth and sensitivity of her consummate artistry.
A full account of Bessie Smith's tempestuous life and tragic death is to be found in Chris Albertson's biography, "Bessie" (Barrie & Jenkins, London). In this album | have been concerned with providing a portrait of the contrasting facets of her artistry. Therefore the recordings are not presented in chronological order, as is the usual custom.

Of greatest value, perhaps, are the classic, narrative blues and we begin with "Empty Bed Blues" which, originally filled two ten inch sides. It was her most extended 78 rpm recording. Other superb narratives are included, notably the macabre "Send Me To The 'Lectric Chair." In the next category are the vaudeville showstoppers — epitomised by "Alexander's Ragtime Band." In more intimate vein is "Preachin' The Blues." With James P. Johnson — piano.

Bessie, herself, wrote some of her most powerful and effective material. "Thinking Blues" and "Baby Doll" give a good account of the range of her expression. And as for "Young Woman's Blues" — it not only presents a summation of much of her experience of life, but also may be seen as a chilling prophesy of her death following a motor accident on the 26th September 1937, when she was only 42 years of age. The epitaph on her gravestone reads:

THE GREATEST BLUES SINGER IN THE WORLD WILL NEVER STOP SINGING

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4. KEEP IT TO YOURSELF (Collis) 150131-3 New York 27/3/1927 3'00" With Louis Bacon – trumpet; Charlie Green – trombone; Garvin Bushell – clarinet and alto sax; and Clarence Williams – piano.

5. TROMBONE CHOLLY (Brooks) 143575-3 New York 3/3/1927 3'10" With her "Blue Boys": Joe Smith – cornet; Charlie Green – trombone; and Fletcher Henderson – piano.


7. KITCHEN MAN (Razaf – Bellenda) 148467-4 New York 8/5/1929 2'57" With Clarence Williams – piano; and Eddie Lang – guitar.

8. YOU'VE GOT TO GIVE ME SOME (S. Williams) 148466-2 New York 8/5/1929 2'44" With Clarence Williams – piano; and Eddie Lang – guitar.


10. THINKING BLUES (Smith) 145626-2 New York 9/2/1929 3'06" With Demas Dean – trumpet; Charlie Green – trombone; Garvin Bushell – clarinet and alto sax; and Clarence Williams – piano.


12. SEND ME TO THE 'LECTRIC CHAIR (Brooks) 143576-2 New York 3/3/1927 3'20"
With her "Blue Boys:" Joe Smith — cornet; Charlie Green — trombone; and Fletcher Henderson — piano.

13. BABY DOLL (Smith)
142147-2 New York 4/5/1926 3'00"
With Joe Smith — cornet; and Fletcher Henderson — piano.

14. TAKE ME FOR A BUGGY RIDE (Wilson)
152579-2 New York 24/11/1933 2'36"
With "Buck and His Band:" Frank Newton — trumpet; Jack Teagarden — trombone; Chu Berry — tenor sax; Buck Washington — piano; Bobby Johnson — guitar; and Billy Taylor — bass.

15. YOUNG WOMAN'S BLUES (Smith)
142878-3 New York 26/10/1926 3'07"
With her "Blue Boys:" Joe Smith — cornet; Buster Bailey — clarinet; and Fletcher Henderson — piano.


Robert Parker is an Australian Sound Engineer and Broadcaster. Over the last thirty years he has developed a unique system for extracting high quality stereo sound from early mono 78 rpm records. He has been collecting records since the age of around twelve — and has now amassed one of the finest Vintage Jazz collections in the country. It has formed the basis for his BBC Radio 2 series JAZZ CLASSICS IN STEREO — and the accompanying series of LP albums JAZZ CLASSICS IN DIGITAL STEREO — released by BBC Records and distributed by EMI.

PUBLISHING DETAILS
1. EMPTY BED BLUES (MCA) 2. ALEXANDER'S RAGTIME BAND (Feldman & Co.) 3. PREACHIN' THE BLUES (Anglo-Pic Music) 4. KEEP IT TO YOURSELF (Feldman & Co.) 5. Trombone Cholly (Belwin Mills Music) 6. AT THE CHRISTMAS BALL (Cop.Con.) 7. KITCHENMAN (Feldman & Co.) 8. YOU'VE GOT TO GIVE ME SOME (Cop.Con.) 9. HE'S GOT ME GOING (Chappell Music Co.) 10. THINKING BLUES (Anglo-Pic Music) 11. DEVIL'S GONNA GET YOU (Cop.Con.) 12. SEND ME TO THE ELECTRIC CHAIR (Belwin Mills) 13. BABY DOLL (Anglo-Pic Music) 14. TAKE ME FOR A BUGGY RIDE (Anglo-Pic Music) 15. YOUNG WOMAN'S BLUES (Anglo-Pic Music)
GREAT ORIGINAL PERFORMANCES 1925-1933

TRANSFERS BY ROBERT PARKER, USING THE SONY PCM F1 DIGITAL PROCESSOR FROM 78RPM ORIGINALS.

SEE BOOKLET FOR DETAILS.