

Etta Baker – Railroad Bill (1999)

Written by bluesever

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1 Carolina Breakdown 2 Railroad Bill 3 I Get The Blues When It Rains 4 Careless Love 5 Don't Let Your Deal Go Down 6 Sunny Tennessee 7 Mint Julep 8 Browns Boogie 9 Lonesome Road Blues 10 Goodbye Booze 11 Nobody's Business 12 One-Dime Blues 13 Going Down The Road Feeling Bad 14 Candyman 15 Miss A Little Miss 16 Baby Let Me Lay It On You 17 Chilly Winds 18 John Henry 19 Cripple Creek Guitar – Etta Baker Guitar [2nd Guitar] – Timothy Duffy (tracks: 18)

The "premier woman Piedmont blues guitar instrumentalist" is a wordy but accurate description of 87-year-old Etta Baker of Morganton, NC. One of the last pickers who was around when the music was first being recorded, Baker's 83 years of practice is manifested in these wonderful recordings of traditional folk ballads. One highlight follows another, and although "Brown's Boogie" trips up the album's gentle flow, the rest is front-porch perfect. This is music you never get tired of listening to. Newcomers to guitar should buy this album, both to marvel at the intricate technique and to amuse themselves with how frustratingly difficult it can be. ---Jim Smith, AllMusic Review

Railroad Bill was the folk hero of the turpentine workers in the Red Hills of Alabama. These 'woods-riders' bleed the trees on great slash-pine plantations, collect the resin, and manufacture turpentine in crude stills. Living in camps far out in the piney woods, turpentiners were often held to their poorly paid jobs by a system of peonage. Thus the legend of Railroad Bill was born and his ballad traveled out of Alabama into the mountains, becoming a guitar-picker's showpiece.

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Baker, of Morganton, N.C. was born in 1913 and has been playing guitar since the age of four. She is the premiere Piedmont blues guitar instrumentalist. Her only contemporary was the late Elizabeth Cotton of Carrboro, N.C.

Music Maker master mind Tim Duffy sits in on second guitar on the track "John Henry." Otherwise, the rest of the CD's 18 inspiring cuts are comprised of Baker performing solo in or outside her home along with the sounds of Mother Nature live in the background. Some real tasty Piedmont blues here folks that should not be overlooked. ---Matt Alcott, mnblues.com

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