

Memphis Willie B. – Hard Working Man Blues (1995)

Written by bluesever

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1 Lonesome Home Blues 3:21 2 L & N Blues 3:31 3 Hard Working Man Blues 3:24 4 Dying Mother Blues 3:38 5 Honey Maker Blues 3:07 6 P 38 Blues 3:27 7 Funny Caper Blues 3:10 8 Good Potatoes 2:17 9 I Have Found Somebody New 2:17 10 Uncle Sam Blues 3:37 11 Wine Drinking Woman 3:34 12 Car Machine Blues 3:18 Memphis Willie B. - Vocals, Guitar, Harmonica

Willie Borum, better known under his recording sobriquet of Memphis Willie B., was a mainstay of the Memphis blues and jug band circuit. Adept at both harmonica and guitar, Borum could add pep to any combination he worked in, as well as leaving a striking impression as a solo artist.

He was born in 1911 in Shelby County, Tennessee. He took to the guitar early in his childhood, being principally taught by his father and Memphis medicine show star Jim Jackson. By his late teens, he was working with Jack Kelly's Jug Busters, working for tips on the street with the occasional house party and country supper rounding out his meager paycheck. This didn't last long, as Borum joined up with the Memphis Jug Band, one of two professional outfits in existence at that time. The group frequently worked what later became W.C. Handy Park in Memphis, with touring stretching all the way down to New Orleans during the Mardi Gras. Sometime in the '30s he learned to play harmonica, being taught by no less a master than Noah Lewis, the best harp blower in Memphis and mainstay of Gus Cannon's Jug Stompers.

As his style began to move further away from a strict jug band approach, Willie B. began working on and off with various traveling Delta bluesmen, performing at various functions with Rice Miller, Willie Brown, Garfield Akers, and Robert Johnson. He finally got to make some records in New York under his own name in 1934 for Vocalion, but quickly moved back into playing juke joints and gambling houses with Son Joe, Joe Hill Louis, and Will Shade until

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around 1943, when he became a member of the U.S. Army.

It was a much different world he returned to and after a brief fling at trying to pick up where he left off, Borum soon cashed in his chips and started looking for a day job. That would have been the end of the story, except in 1961 -- with the folk and blues revival in full hootenanny steam -- Borum was tracked down and recorded an absolutely marvelous session at the Sun studios for Prestige's Bluesville label. It turned into a little bit of a career upswing for the next few years; Willie B. started working the festival and coffeehouse circuit with old Memphis buddies Gus Cannon and Furry Lewis. But then just as quickly, he dropped out of the music scene and eventually out of sight altogether. Willie B. reportedly died in Memphis during the early '70s. ---Cub Koda, Rovi

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