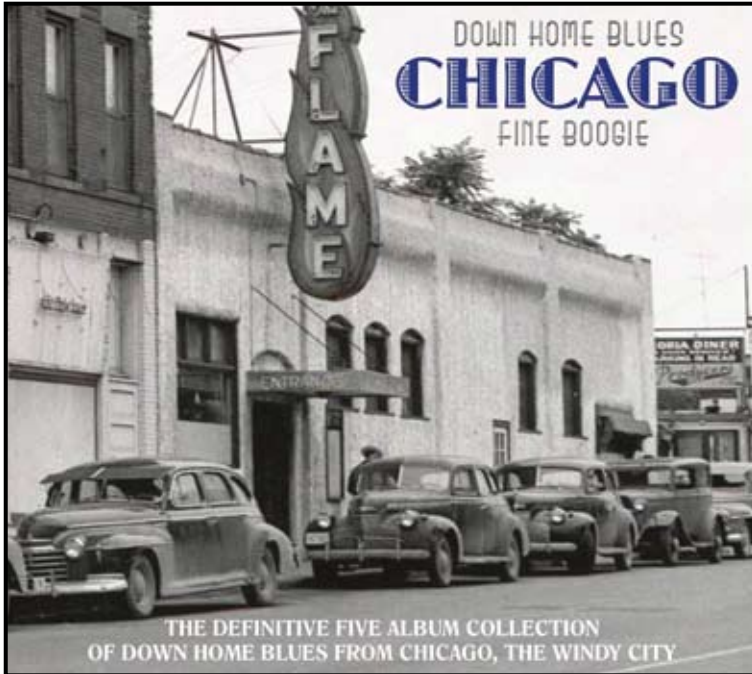


Downhome Chicago – Fine Boogie Five CD Box Set Preview

By Pete Moody



Fifty years ago adverts began appearing in *Blues Unlimited* offering blues record collectors long playing vinyl albums. These were specialist issues on 'blues sounding' labels such as Advent, Highway 51 and Down With The Game.

So I pitched into the melee with my own Sunflower label – to offer some down home blues from the 1930s-1940s.

But the top of the range label for me – and for many other blues fans – was the PWB label. The Post War Blues series of five long players from Mike Rowe, consisting of regional sets of the finest down home blues sounds from Chicago, Memphis, Texas, Detroit and The East Coast. Each album, still today, is a classic. Then and now, these early specialist label releases hold pride in place within many blues record collections – just see the price of a copy of one on sale or auction today!

In the 1990s I pinched Mike Rowe's theme, and created a series of box sets and double CD sets for release on the Boulevard Vintage label - the Down Home Blues Classics of Chicago, Memphis, Texas, and the East

Coast complete with superb sleeve notes for each – two from Paul Vernon, Neil Slaven, Paul Garon and Les Fancourt, who had compiled the first boxed four CD introductory issue.

The last in the series was California and the West Coast – an album compiled and essayed completely by Mike Rowe.

Soon after, the shutters came down. In the early 2000s the CD sales market was in a bad way, which led to the ending of the series.

Mike and I had begun to think of compiling a down home Detroit set for Boulevard Vintage – it was not to be – so we had tucked the idea away for ten years.

The Detroit set eventually came out last year on Wienerworld Records, a three CD set 'Down Home Blues From Detroit – Detroit Special', to critical acclaim and superb sales which led the Wienerworld label boss to ask us "What's up next then lads?"

Well, it's a five CD box set of down home blues from Chicago, which is now in production.

The set will feature 134 tracks from the mid 1940s and mid 1950s – none of them duplicate the tracks on the four CD Chicago set from Boulevard Vintage, or the tracks on the Boulevard Vintage Chicago disc in the first box set introducing that series.

Furthermore, we have steered clear of duplicating tracks on current 'single artiste' releases from other labels such as Jimmy Reed, Jimmy Rogers and J. B. Lenoir.

Plus we have included alternate takes and unissued songs which those releases do not have. There will be some rare and sought after tracks alongside many classic recordings that are missing from current releases.

So to whet your appetite – included are sides by Henry Gray, Big Boy Spires, Blue Smitty, Billy Boy Arnold (including sides from the Cool label), Floyd Jones, Snooky and Moody, John Brim and Leroy Foster – to mention just some of the 41 artists in the box. Plus, there are rare sides by Mildred White (with Tampa Red) on RCA, Gray Haired Bill (unissued acetate), James McCain and Birmingham Junior on Ebony.

Mike Rowe has written the booklet, over eighty pages, with a full sessionography on the 41 artistes. There are lots of photographs, including many rarities not published before, many 78rpm label shots and more..

Somehow I cannot believe that in the 1960s, when Mike and I were introducing our small labels to the then fast-growing blues collectors we would be looking ahead fifty years to see us both still compiling albums like this one. Called 'Downhome Blues From Chicago – Fine Boogie', the box set will be released soon on Wienerworld.

Label shots: courtesy Pete Moody and Mike Rowe.

