

# 'Tough Enough'

## Pete Moody gives *B&R* a sneak preview of the third box set of down home blues rarities from Wienerworld



**F**ollowing on from their critically-acclaimed box sets of Detroit and Chicago Down Home Blues ('Detroit Special' from 2016, and last year's 'Fine Boogie') Wienerworld's third box set and four-CD treasure trove will include more post-war down home blues - this time from New York, Cincinnati, and the North Eastern States.

"There will be 110 tracks, from 37 different artists, all of which - as the title of the set indicates - are 'tough' down home sides from the blues scene which established itself in the region soon after the second world war," says Pete, who is the compiler and coordinator of this series - having also produced the excellent regional compilations of down home blues issued by Boulevard Vintage in its series of box sets between 2004 and 2007 (with some re-pressings in 2015).

"What we have here is post war country blues, updating itself within an urban setting and hardening itself. The advent of amplification and the use of microphones were important ingredients. There are elements of Piedmont country blues playing in some of the recordings on this new set - where the style had gravitated into New York City via the bluesmen who had travelled up from the Piedmont region - but there is an aggressive edge which fills most of these discs.

"There are single solo artists who were lucky enough to get one sublime record release, such as Hank Kilroy's 'Awful Shame'. Others had more than one release, including duos such as Jesse And Buzzy, who cut 'Without Your Love'; trios and combos, including Robert Henry on 'Miss Anna B', up to tight small groups, with Cousin Leroy on 'Waiting At The Station' and Bob Gaddy's 'Paper Lady'.

As with the Chicago set, Pete's policy is to steer clear of duplication with the Boulevard Vintage 'Down Home Classics New York' set, and tracks on the New York disc in that label's first four CD box set which introduced that series; this set also avoids sides available and compiled elsewhere.

Pete told *B&R*: "From a starting point of 1943 we will go up to the golden days of the early 1960s, when down home blues was released on seven-inch vinyl discs, taking in newer markets. Most of the tracks here are in the 'out-of-reach' bracket, even for many of today's serious blues 45rpm collectors - in truth, they are just bloody scarce!

"Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee are well known for their recordings in the folk blues genre of the late 1950s and early 1960s, the music that made them famous is nothing like the music that is included here on tracks like Sonny's 'Black Horse Blues' and Brownie McGhee's 'My Bulldog Blues!' Their tracks here are pure down home sides that took them to the pinnacle of this music within the 1940s

New York blues scene. Champion Jack Dupree makes up the trio of best known names and all three can be found elsewhere on the four discs - as sidemen to many of the other artists recordings included here, such as Wilbert 'Big Chief' Ellis, Allen 'Tarheel Slim' Bunn, Alonzo Scales and Bob Camp's group."

Of the lesser known artists, Pete says: "Some names readers will know, but there are plenty that they may not, such as Morris Bailey and The Thomas Boys on 'Tell Me Why'; The Bees on 'Tough Enough', Little Boyd's 'Don't Leave Me Baby'; Emright with his sister Mattie on 'That Minute There With You', Guitar Crusher (Sid Selby) on 'Cuddle Up'; Otis Hinton's 'Emmaline'; Lick, Slick And Slide's 'I Love My Baby' and Mojo Watson's 'All Alone'.

"This is the type of down home blues that could be heard in down town clubs and bars, or in country juke joints that back then were still all over the country, sited near highway crossings and railroad intersections. These were totally different settings from where blues' bigger brother, rhythm and blues, played to a wider audience."

Commenting on the box set production, Pete tells us that it will contain a booklet of over seventy pages penned by Chris Bentley. As Pete says: "Chris is one of the most knowledgeable people around on the history of the music in the region. His 13,000-word work will be accompanied by many never seen or un-published photographs - including Tarheel Slim, Alonzo Scales and Big Chief Ellis, plus plenty of 78rpm and 45rpm label shots and a full sessionography."

'Tough Enough' looks like it will be another 'must have' box set and is scheduled for release this September. Catalogue number WNRCD 5104.

*Label shots courtesy of Chris Bentley, Dave Williams, Mike Rowe and Pete Moody.*

