Fats Domino circa 1959. From the B&R Archive.

Way back in the mists of time – in B&R 85 (published in January 1994 to be exact), Tony Watson, in a special feature on the original Fats Domino Bear Family CD box set of imperial recordings (‘Out Of New Orleans’), wrote that this was: ‘the set that R&B and rock’n’roll fans had been waiting for’. In the feature he pointed out that Imperial had sped up some of the tracks and strangely Bear Family had chosen to leave them at the speed they were issued, rather than the speed they were recorded at, and said that he would have the legality of hearing the tracks as they were recorded. Well Tony’s wish has now come true! Tony closed by saying that the box set was, admittedly, not cheap, but was well worth saving up for.

Bear Family, having sold out (and deleted) the original box set, rather than take the ‘easy way out’ (their words) and just reuse the original box, decided to produce a new Fats Domino box set. It took a few years and thousands of hours to get there, but ’I’ve Been Around – The Complete Imperial and ABC Recording’ is now available – with twelve discs (plus a DVD) and with no new Imperial rarities, alternate takes, un-edited and un-edited sides, backing tracks and the tracks which were sped up are made available for the first time at the correct speed along with the released sped up tracks.

Twenty seven songs were originally sped up as singles. When Imperial had success with the new sped up versions they began to speed up Fats’ other recordings, using them as ‘filler’ on his LPs. And it took, as Bear Family says: ‘a lot of sleuth work and engineering to speed up Fats’ older recordings, using them as ‘filler’ on his LPs. And it took, as Bear Family says: ‘a lot of sleuth work and engineering to speed up Fats’ older recordings, using them as ‘filler’ on his LPs. And it took, as Bear Family says: ‘a lot of sleuth work and engineering to speed up Fats’ older recordings, using them as ‘filler’ on his LPs.

According to the B&R Archive, the placard for the box set reads: ‘Produced by Hank Davis and Scott Parker, Bear Family has licensed A track by track account of the new box set would take forever (but don’t worry – Rick Coleman has updated his original lengthy chapter on on Fats’ Releases 1950 to 2006. Plus of course an alphabetical track listing, details of what is in the book, full credits and a track by track commentary by the producers. Now the big question. If I have the 1994 box set – do I need this? Answer is most certainly a resounding yes: for the book, the brilliant writing and illuminating, the rarified DVD and for the box set’s sheer quality, even for Bear Family box sets has set a whole new standard. I doubt if they can get better than this – but then again we are talking about Bear Family! I can only concur with Tony Watson’s advice from 1994. Save up and get it."

From the B&R Archive.