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Bessie Smith

BLUES

Empress Of The Blues

The first major blues and jazz singer on record and one of the most powerful of all time, Bessie Smith rightly earned the title of "The Empress of the Blues." Even on her first records in 1923, her passionate voice overcame the primitive recording quality of the day and still communicates easily to today's listeners (which is not true of any other singer from that early period). At a time when the blues were in and most vocalists (particularly vaudevillians) were being dubbed "blues singers," Bessie Smith simply had no competition.

Bessie was a success wherever she performed and earned her billing as the "Empress of the Blues". For all her successes elsewhere, however, her real empire was in the South, where she played theatres on the Theatre Owners' Booking Association circuit, packing in the crowds for every show. Whenever she released a record it sold huge numbers.

Bessie's recordings range from uproarious vaudeville songs to slow blues; to the former she brought a reflection of her own frequently bawdy lifestyle, while the latter are invariably filled with deeply felt emotions. All are delivered in a rich contralto matched by a majestic delivery. Every one of her recordings is worthy of attention, but especially important to an understanding of the blues and Smith's paramount position in its history are those made with Armstrong and Smith. Even in such magnificent company, however, it is the singer who holds the attention. She was always in complete control and will always be remembered for being "The Empress of the Blues".

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Bessie Smith

Empress
Of The Blues

The all-time greatest
female blues singer
Featuring 18 Classic recordings

—Legendary
Masterpiece Series—

Classic Recordings

- 1 Alexanders Ragtime Band
- 2 New Orleans Hop Scop Blues
- 3 Nobody Knows You When Your Down and Out
- 4 Take Me For A Buggy Ride
- 5 Cold Hand Blues
- 6 One And Two Blues
- 7 Careless Love Blues
- 8 A Good Man Is Hard To Find
- 9 St Louis Blues
- 10 Do Your Duty
- 11 Down Hearted Blues
- 12 Empty Bed Blues
- 13 Gimme A Pigfoot
- 14 Nobody's Blues But Mine
- 15 Yellow Dog Blues
- 16 Squeeze Me
- 17 Send Me To The Electric Chair
- 18 Them's' Graveyard Words

Classic Recordings