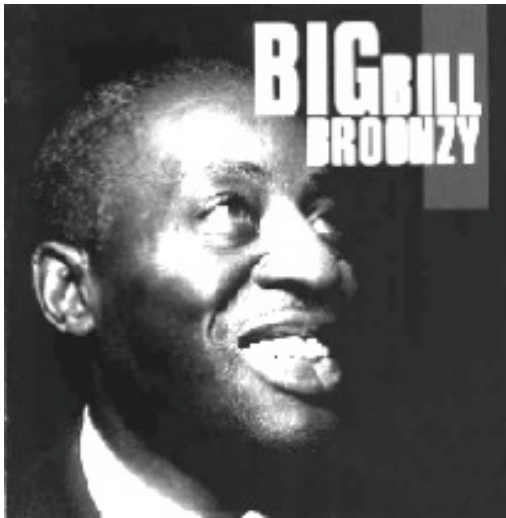


126 Key To The Highway

by "Big Bill" Broonzy

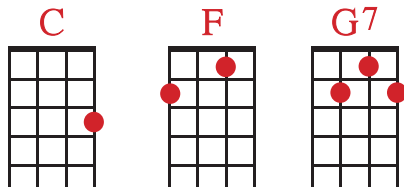


Born
William Lee Conley Broonzy
June 26, 1893
Scott, MS.
Died
August 15, 1958
Chicago, IL.

Broonzy's body of work—including his enduring originals "Key to the Highway" and "Black, Brown and White"—ranks him among Muddy Waters, B.B. King and Robert Johnson in terms of influence.

A storyteller as much as a lonesome singer, Broonzy was among the first performers to marry rough rural blues (like Johnson's brand of Mississippi Delta moaning) with upscale jazzy city blues (like Charles Brown's cocktail piano crooning). He began his career as a violinist (a skill he learned from an uncle) and learned from mentor Papa Charlie Jackson how to adapt those skills to the guitar. As his obvious talent gradually turned him into a star, he moved to Chicago and started hooking up with Memphis Slim, Brownie McGhee, John Lee "Sonny Boy" Williamson and Big Maceo; he also recorded for many different labels, including Columbia, Okeh and Bluebird. Most refused to put out "Black, Brown and White"—a powerful attack on racism with the memorable tell-it-like-it-is chorus, "Get back," after Broonzy wrote it in 1949; two years later, in France, writer-critic Hugues Panassie and record company officials helped him get it in circulation.

Broonzy's pockets of regional popularity coagulated into an adoring national audience after he played John Hammond's From Spirituals to Swing concert (as a replacement for Robert Johnson, who had just died) at New York City's Carnegie Hall in 1938. Regular Chicago and southern gigs followed until the 1950s, when Broonzy—along with peers Leadbelly, Josh White and Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee—became an avatar of the folk movement. While touring and recording in Europe throughout the 1950s, he wrote a fascinating biography, Big Bill Blues, with Danish writer Yannick Bruynoghe.



Ukulele Club of Santa Cruz June 2004
as suggested by Jayme Kelly Curtis

C G7
I got the key to the highway,
C F
Lord I'm out and bound to go
C G7
I'm gonna leave here running;
C > G7
Walking's much too slow
C G7
I'm going back to the border
C F
Where I'm better known
C G7
You know you ain't done nothing,
C > G7
But drove me from home
C G7
When the moon peeks o'er the mountains
C F
I'll be on my way
C G7
I'm gonna roam this old highway
C > G7
Until the break of day
C G7
Oh give me one, one more kiss darlin'
C F
Just before I go,
C G7
'Cause when I leave you know I won't be
C
Back no more