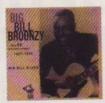
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Key to the Highway

Words and music by Big Bill Broonzy and Charles Segar



Among the pantheon of great blues guitarists, few could measure up to Big Bill Broonzy (1893 [some sources claim 1898]–1958) for musical skill, longevity, and influence on both his contemporaries and future generations of guitarists. Born William Lee Conley Broonzy, he had a huge repertoire of songs and recorded throughout his career, from the late 1920s to

the mid-1950s. He was also one of the few guitarists, along with Muddy Waters and Robert Johnson, to bridge the gap between Delta- and Chicago-style blues. Taught by his uncle to play fiddle on a homemade instrument, Broonzy was performing at social functions and church by the age of ten. He later moved to Chicago where he turned his attention to the guitar and was signed by Paramount Records in 1927. Often accompanied by guitarist Frank Brasswell, early Broonzy recordings included

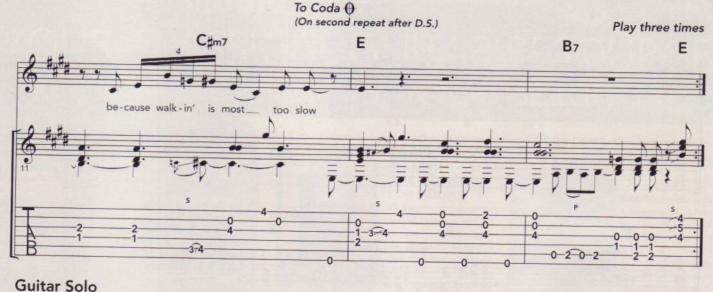
"Pig Meat Strut," "Saturday Night Rub," "Stove Pipe Stomp," and many more.

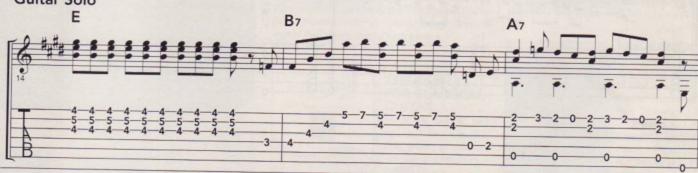
"Key to the Highway" was first recorded by Broonzy in 1941 in Chicago. The song has since become a blues standard and has been recorded by numerous artists, including Eric Clapton, the Band, and B.B. King. "Key to the Highway" uses an eight-bar blues form, but Broonzy usually extended the IV (A) chord by a half or full measure.

The song has many elements typical of Broonzy's playing in the key of E, like the E and E7 chord shapes in measures 3, 5, 14, 20, and 23, which resemble open-position D and D7 chords. He also occasionally uses a partial first-finger barre over the top four strings—this shape can be used for the B7 chord in measures 1, 6, and 15, as well as the A7 chords in measures 2, 16, and 17.

—PETE MADSEN

















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