



**HISTORY OF THE BLUES IN  
THREE PARTS**

**PART 3 – 1960s THROUGH PRESENT**

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# Memphis Blues

- Memphis blues is a style created from the 1910s to the 1930s by musicians in the Memphis area, such as Frank Stokes, Sleepy John Estes, Furry Lewis and Memphis Minnie. The style was popular in vaudeville and medicine shows and was associated with Beale Street, the main entertainment area in Memphis.
- Memphis is home to the Blues Foundation which sponsors Blues Societies all over the world and holds the International Blues Competition annually, using all of Beale Street
- Over 100 bands, solo, and youth artists are involved
- Memphis is home to the Gibson Guitar Factory, Sun Recording Studios, The Rock 'n Soul Museum, Memphis Music Hall of Fame

# Blues 1960s – Present

- R&B Rhythm and Blues was very influenced by blues in the 60s and blended with elements of gospel music and soul music contributing to the Motown Sound. Call and answer is also a big part of the Motown Sound.
- Texas Blues –although it began in the 30s, Texas Blues saw a comeback with bands such as ZZ Top, the Fabulous Thunderbirds, Johnny Winter and Stevie Ray Vaughan. Modern Texas Blues incorporates a great deal of influence from Rock ‘n Roll.
- Chicago Blues also had a heyday in the 60s with artists such as the Paul Butterfield Blues Band, Buddy Guy, Lonnie Brooks and his two sons – Ronnie Baker and Wayne, Matt “Guitar” Murphy, Otis Spann, Koko Taylor, Junior Wells and many others.
- Blues Rock started to be significant in the 60s with British Invasion bands such as Led Zeppelin, Cream, Aerosmith, the Animals, and continues to this day with artists like Joe Bonamassa, Eric Gales, Government Mule, the Tedeschi-Trucks band and many others.
- Southern Rock was brought to prominence with the success of the Allman Brothers, the Marshall Tucker Band, Lynyrd Skynyrd among others. It is a very popular style that includes blues influences.

# Significant Artists – The Kings

- Many people refer to B.B. King as the “King of the Blues”. The album “Live in the Cook County Jail” is thought by many to be the best Live Blues album of all time. It was recorded in 1970. His guitar style was extremely influential. He was one of the first black blues artists to break through to white rock ‘n roll audiences. He spent most of his life touring in the U.S. and eventually worldwide.
- Freddie King was a blues guitarist whose style of electric guitar was also extremely influential. Instrumentals such as “Hideaway”, “The Stumble”, and “Sidetracked” are staples for most blues guitarists. Freddie King was also known for his hit song “Have You Ever Loved a Woman”
- Albert King – Albert was large, approximately 6’4” with huge hands. He played his guitar well-defined and upside down. His well defined style incorporated huge bends and the minor pentatonic scale as heard in his hit song “Born Under a Bad Sign.. Other significant songs include “As the Years go Passing By” and “Crosscut Saw”.
- The Kings were not related. Albert’s real last name was Nelson. He changed it to King and claimed to be B.B.’s brother for a time as he thought it could help his career.

# Newport Jazz Festival in the 60's a turning point

- The Newport Jazz Festival began including American Blues Artists in the 60's such as Skip James, Muddy Waters, Memphis Slim, Willie Dixon
- Bob Dylan was booed for playing an electric set there on July 25<sup>th</sup>, 1965. He was backed by members of the Paul Butterfield Blues Band – Mike Bloomfield, Al Kooper, Jerome Arnold and Sam Lay.
- Towards the end of the sixties the Festival was featuring artists such as Sly and the Family Stone, John Mayall, and others. Albert King played at the Festival in 1970

# British Invasion

- Prior to the invasion, Skiffle music was very popular in 1950s England. Notable artists included Lonnie Donnegan, Van Morrison
- The invasion began in the mid sixties. The Beatles and Rolling Stones led the way covering American Blues Tunes on their early albums
- John Mayall led some of the best British Blues bands of the era. His album with Eric Clapton, known as the “Beano” Album is considered a seminal blues record, which continues to influence blues players to this day,
- Other “invading artists” included Led Zeppelin, who also covered American Blues Tunes
- Several Rock ‘n Roll artists such as Herman’s Hermits, Eric Burdon and the Animals, the Zombies and many others also were popular in this period

# Blues 1960s – Present

## Significant Contributors

- Besides the Kings, many other artists made significant contributions to the development of the Blues. These artists included, but are by no means limited to, in no particular order
- Taj Mahal, Buddy Guy, Johnny Winter, Gatemouth Brown, Robert Cray, Eric Clapton, Jeff Beck, Ruth Brown, Koko Taylor, Bonnie Raitt, Etta James, John Mayall, The Blues Brothers
- Current artists – Buddy Guy just stopped touring, Bonnie Raitt is still going strong. The class of the 2020's include Gary Clark, Jr., Robben Ford, Matt Schofield, Beth Hart, Joe Bonnamassa, Susan Tedeschi and Derek Trucks, Warren Haynes, Ana Popovic, Ally Venable and countless others

# Summation

- Blues is a truly American form of music. Rooted in Fields Hollers of the Deep South, Gospel Music of the 1800s, the Blues spread through the Great Migration. Different locations developed different styles.
- Blues is also a major contributor to other music styles such as Jazz, Rhythm and Blues, Folk Music, Country, Pop, etc.
- This presentation was sponsored by the Smoky Mountain Blues Society ([www.smokymountainblues.org](http://www.smokymountainblues.org))
- It was presented by Doug Harris and Robert Higginbotham, both local music teachers and founding members of the Smoky Mountain Blues Society