
NEW STAGE THEATRE PRESENTS



A Study Guide for Students, Educators and Music Lovers!

This study guide is intended to prepare you for your visit to see New Stage Theatre's production of Stephen Jeffery's *I Just Stopped By To See The Man*. It contains information that will deepen your understanding and appreciation of the production, delta blues music and the Mississippi Blues Trail. We've also included questions and activities for you to explore before and after our performance. Thank you for your support of the arts! We look forward to seeing you at New Stage!

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I JUST STOPPED BY TO SEE THE MAN BY STEPHEN JEFFREYS

Set in the heart of the Mississippi Delta, Jesse Davidson, last of the Delta blues singers, died fourteen years ago. But legends continue to surround him - like the story about him selling his soul to the devil so that he could play guitar. And the story that he isn't dead at all. When an English rock band hits town, their leader comes looking for truth and triggers a confrontation of mythic proportions. Will Jesse continue his life in seclusion or will he be tempted to take the stage once again? This striking play is the story of one man's passion for his art and the sacrifices of fame and fortune. Who really has the right to sing the blues?

ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT

Stephen Jeffreys was best known as a British playwright and playwriting teacher. He wrote original plays, films and play adaptations and also worked as translator. Jeffreys was born in London and first attracted critical attention with his play ***Like Dolls or Angels*** (1977), which won Jeffreys the *Sunday Times* Playwriting Award at the National Student Drama Festival. He helped to set up the touring company, Pocket Theatre Cumbria. The play ***Carmen*** 1936 won him an Edinburgh Festival Fringe First in 1984 and ran at the Tricycle Theatre in London. Jeffreys' comedy ***Valued Friends*** played two sell-out runs at Hampstead Theatre in 1989 and 1990 and won him the Evening Standard and Critics' Circle awards for Most Promising Playwright. He has adapted several stories including Richard Brome's ***A Jovial Crew*** for the Royal Shakespeare Company and Charles Dickens' novel ***Hard Times*** for the Pocket Theatre. In 1994, ***The Libertine***, Jeffreys' raunchy play about the Earl of Rochester, was staged at the Royal Court Theatre, the Steppenwolf in Chicago and was turned into a film starring Johnny Depp.



"I believe playin' the blues cost me everything that was good in my life. And now, I don't have nothing. 'Cept two things: my daughter and The Lord. And I ain't singin' no blues again for fear I lose them." - Jesse

MEET THE CAST



MARK G. HENDERSON (Jesse) has been seen in several of New Stage's Eudora Welty New Play Series play readings, however, this is his mainstage debut. He is originally from Canton, and currently resides in Jackson. He has a BA from Jackson State University, an MA from Michigan State University, and a Ph.D. from The University of Southern Mississippi. Henderson has been a member of the speech/ theatre faculty at Jackson State University for the past 27 years, where he has served as department chair, director of theatre, and theatre arts faculty fellow. Henderson spends most of his time writing, directing, and producing theatre for MADDRAMA Performance Troupe, a group of JSU students, founded by Henderson, and who perform locally and nationally. Henderson's students affectionately refer to him as the "Star Maker," due in part to the fact that you can find students he has mentored on local, regional, and Broadway stages, as well as the big screen. His life's motto is: "God doesn't always choose the qualified; but He always qualifies the chosen." Henderson would like to dedicate his performance to his past, present and future students, for they are and will forever be the wind beneath my wings."



DESHAUN WHITE (Della) is a Washington DC native and a Brooklyn, N.Y. transplant on a journey to figure out what it means to be an "artist" in this day and age. On her journey she has had the pleasure of guest starring on shows such as **Law and Order SVU**, HBO's **The Deuce**, and opposite Edward Norton in the film **Motherless Brooklyn**. While her focus has been mostly on television and film over the years, now, her desire has been to get back to her love of the theatre and she is SO excited to be in Mississippi at New Stage for what will be her second regional theater credit. White has also directed episodes of various web series that have found homes on streaming platforms, produced and directed three short films that have found their way into prestigious film festivals, and produced a one woman show performed to a sold-out crowd entitled: **Reflections of A Dream Deferred**. She would like to acknowledge: all of the folks over at Stella Adler, including her classmates, for teaching her to love the theatre again; her 12 plants for giving her something to take care of other than herself; and her family - Andrea, Glenn, Violet, Destiny, and Desiree for their love and support always. www.DeShawnWhite.com @DeShawn.Andrea.White



AUSTIN HOHNKE (Karl) is thrilled to be back at New Stage after playing Carl Perkins in Million Dollar Quartet here in 2017. Other credits include Carl in Million Dollar Quartet (National Tour), Kenickie in Grease (Casa Mañana), David in Ring of Fire (Seven Angels), Nick Bottom in A Midsummer Night's Dream (Merely Players), and Richard Hannay in The 39 Steps (Merely Players). An NYU/Tisch School of the Arts graduate, Hohnke can be found online at austinhohnke.com or Instagram @coldasshohnke.

WHERE DID THE BLUES COME FROM?

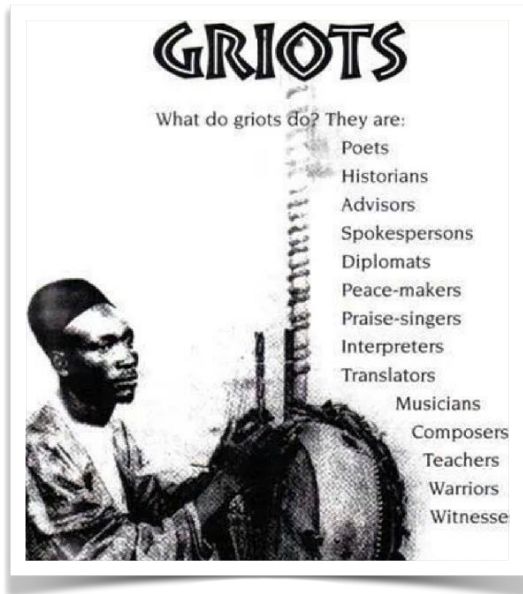
Where did the blues come from? African Americans residing in the southern United States around the 1890s or early 1900s are widely accepted as the original creators of the blues. Although it's commonly thought that blues—is associated with the lament of enslaved African Americans—the music actually developed decades after the the emancipation proclamation. That said, we can still see how the difficult working and social conditions of sharecropping, Jim Crow segregation faced by African Americans at the time, shaped the nature of the blues.



As an African American music, the blues can ultimately be traced back to African traditions. Between the early 1600s and early 1800s over 600,000 Africans were forcibly brought to what is now the United States through the slave trade. Most were of the enslaved came from West Africa, which contained a wide diversity of cultures and languages. Upon arriving in North America enslaved Africans were often separated from others who spoke their same language. This was done in order to prevent rebellion, and for the same reason the enslaved were discouraged from playing drums. Drums were central to the original African cultures, but their usage was largely banned in the United States during much of the slavery era. This was due to slave owners' concerns that enslaved Africans might use drums to communicate with one another in order to organize and incite rebellion. Drums were in fact associated with a noted rebellion in South Carolina in the 1730s. In the absence of being able to play standard drums, the enslaved were able to carry on the rhythmic traditions of their homelands through creative means. They improvised by creating percussive instruments out of common items such as sticks or bones, household goods such as spoons and washboards, as well as their own bodies. The style of creating rhythms by lightly hitting parts of your body was called “slapping juba” and, later, “hamboning.” One popular rhythm was the “Bo Diddley Beat.” The one major exception to the ban against drumming was in New Orleans, which had been ruled by the Spanish and French until the Louisiana Purchase of 1803. There, the enslaved and black freedmen gathered on Sundays at Congo Square— located next to the French Quarter—for dances that were accompanied by African-style drumming. Today Louis Armstrong Park, named after the great New Orleans jazz trumpet player, occupies the original site of Congo Square.

The use of the word “blues” to refer to a sad or melancholy emotion apparently stems from the term “blue devils,” which first appeared in the English language in the 1700s. It later became common to speak of “having the blues” to refer to a feeling of sadness. Bluesman John Lee Hooker, from Lambert, Mississippi, explained that, “The blues was here, when the world got here. When Adam and Eve come from the garden. The blues was in them since they got together, man and woman.” Although the feeling addressed by the blues does likely go back to the beginning of humankind, the musical form of “the blues” apparently emerged around 1900.

WHERE DID THE BLUES COME FROM?



Griots: In a number of West African societies the griot was a musician who was often hired by wealthy people to sing songs that praised them. The griot also served the role of a historian, preserving stories that often went back hundreds of years. The blues artist is sometimes compared with the griot in the sense that they also comment on social life through their songs.

Discussion Question: In today's society, who would you consider a modern day Griot? Why?

Oral tradition: In African societies oral traditions—consisting of knowledge that wasn't necessarily written down—were preserved not only among the griots, but also among all ordinary people. While books might preserve knowledge about religion or science, everyday sorts of knowledge, values and cultural traditions, including music, were passed along from person to person across generations. Enslaved people who were brought to the United States from Africa had their physical possessions taken away from them, and they were often separated from their friends and family. They were nevertheless able to maintain many of the oral traditions that they had in their heads, though, and used this knowledge in adjusting to a new land and culture. The African Americans who first created the blues in the late 1800s/early 1900s inherited many of these traditions. Although the blues are often not stories in the traditional sense (having a beginning, end, and a clear moral), the songs of the blues artists did describe the African American experience (and the human experience more generally). In this sense blues artists, like the griots, could be viewed as oral historians, particularly when their songs were recorded and could be heard by later generations.

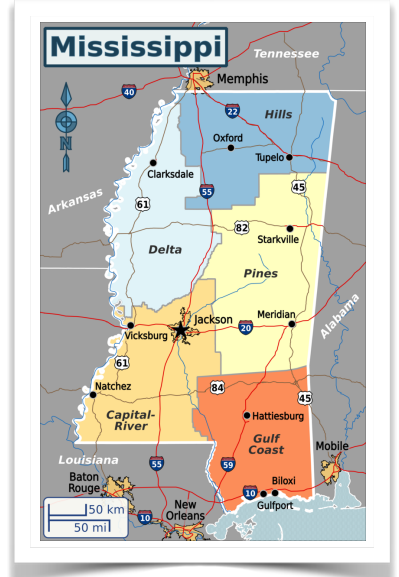


Call and response: is a musical pattern in which a line or musical phrase is initially sung or played by a leader, who is then answered with a similar line or musical phrase by a group. In the blues the "response" role is often fulfilled by an instrument.

MISSISSIPPI DELTA BLUES BY TIA GIOIA

Mississippi Delta blues, also known as Delta blues, regional style of early 20th-century American folk music, centred in the Delta region of northwestern Mississippi. The pioneers of the style played a key role in developing the market for traditional blues recordings in the 1920s and '30s, while the subsequent generation of Delta-born guitarists contributed to the rise of Chicago blues, electric blues, and the folk blues revival in the post-World War II years.

Robert Johnson, born in Hazelhurst, Mississippi, in 1911, was the most important Delta musician of the era, although his recorded legacy is limited to 29 songs—the output of sessions held in Dallas and San Antonio, Texas, during the last few years of his life. Drawing on the work of earlier Mississippi blues artists, notably Son House and Skip James, as well as on techniques learned from various recordings, Johnson crafted a polished, fluid guitar style that was widely emulated by later blues and rock musicians. Only his “Terraplane Blues” sold well during his lifetime, but in later decades, many musicians recorded Johnson’s other compositions, such as “Sweet Home Chicago,” “Love in Vain,” “I Believe I’ll Dust My Broom,” and “Come On in My Kitchen.” Robert Johnson, *The Complete Recordings*, released by Columbia in 1990, became a surprise crossover hit, ultimately selling more than a million copies and earning a Grammy Award for best historical album.



In the years following World War II, traditional blues fell out of favour with the public. The Delta musicians, however, continued to exert a strong influence on the music world, although often from new home bases outside the region. Muddy Waters and Howlin’ Wolf both left Mississippi and played a key role in defining the emerging Chicago style of blues. These two artists also helped establish Chess Records as one of the leading independent labels in the United States with hits such as Muddy Waters’s “(I’m Your) Hoochie Coochie Man” (1954), “Mannish Boy” (1955), and “Got My Mojo Working” (1957) and Howlin’ Wolf’s “Moanin’ at Midnight” (1951), “Evil” (1954), and “Smokestack Lightnin’ ” (1956). In its new setting, the solo performance approach of the Delta was replaced by a high-energy ensemble style that featured electric guitar, anticipating both the sound and the instrumentation of 1960s rock music.

B.B. King, born in 1925 in Indianola, Mississippi, also contributed to this mainstreaming of the Delta blues legacy and stood out as one of the most influential electric guitarists of his generation. He created an expansive guitar style that mixed blues with elements of jazz, rhythm and blues, and other popular-music idioms. By contrast, John Lee Hooker, born in 1917 in Clarksdale, Mississippi, retained the most overtly traditional approach of the Delta players. He achieved crossover success during the postwar period, using solo guitar with voice—the approach typical of earlier Delta players—for his hit record “Boogie Chillen” in 1948. Hooker did, however, incorporate elements of rock and soul music into his later releases, notably “I’m in the Mood” (1951), “Boom Boom” (1962), and “The Healer” (1989). Meanwhile, resurgent interest in the earlier Delta tradition during the 1960s led to unexpected career revivals for Son House, Skip James, Bukka White, and others. In many instances, these artists found larger audiences and greater commercial success in their final years than they ever did as young men. The most striking sign of the enduring importance of the Delta tradition, however, came via the work of prominent rock artists of the period. The Rolling Stones, the Beatles, and Bob Dylan were among those who, in creating their own music, tapped the legacy of early blues musicians and ultimately inspired many of their fans to seek out the work of the leading exponents of the Delta tradition.

The AAB Format consists of an introductory line, which is repeated once, and a concluding line.

For example:

I’m going to leave baby, ain’t going to say goodbye.

I’m going to leave baby, ain’t going to say goodbye.

But I’ll write you and tell you the reason why.

ACTIVITY: Write your own blues song using the AAB format. Your song can be as long or short as you like, but you must be able to justify your artistic choices. Share your song with a small group and discuss the way you came up with your lyrics.

DISCUSSION: Do you think that the blues have influenced singers and bands today? What connections do you see between the blues and rock? The blues and rap? The blues and country? Why do you think artists today use the blues as an influence? Discuss these questions with your classmates.

TYPES OF BLUES MUSIC

Blues music is a well-rounded art form with various types of blues branching off of the original Delta blues.

ACTIVITY: Research other types of blues music. Do you see any of these types of blues in the music that you listen to today? What musicians have taken the original Delta Blues and transformed it to their own type of music?

CHICAGO BLUES was developed in the late 1940s and early 1950s. It amplifies the Delta Blues by putting it into a small-band context. Adding drums, bass, piano and sometimes the saxophone to the basic string band and harmonica aggregation, the genre created the now standard blues band lineup. The form is flexible to accommodate singers, guitarists, pianists and harmonica players as the featured performer in front of the standard instrumentation.

COUNTRY BLUES is a catch-all term that defines the first high point of guitar-driven blues which embraces solo, duo and string band performers. The term also provides a general heading for all the multiple regional styles and variations of the form. While early Piano Blues and Classic Female Blues often fall into this genre, Country-Blues is primarily a genre filled with acoustic guitarists, embracing a multiplicity of techniques from elaborate finger picking to slide playing.

MODERN ELECTRIC BLUES is an eclectic mixture embracing both the old and the new. Some forms of it copies the older styles of urban blues-primarily offshoots of the electric Chicago band style-right down to playing the music itself on vintage instruments and amplifiers from the period being replicated. It is the most forward looking of all blues styles, embracing rock beats and enlivening the form with funk rhythms and chord progressions that expand beyond the standard three that usually comprises most blues forms.

TEXAS BLUES encompasses a number of style variations. Its earliest life occurred in the mid 1920s, featuring rich acoustic guitar work as an extension of the vocals rather than a strict accompaniment to it. It embraces both the songster and country-blues traditions, with its lyrics relying less on affairs of the heart than in other forms. It brings forth a fully electric style that features jazzy, single-string soloing over predominantly horn-driven backing.



“A traveling musician was a vulnerable man. The law, jealous husbands, drunks. He needed some force on his side, build up a little mystique. Satan makes a neat body guard.”

-Della-

LEGENDARY BLUES ARTIST



Howlin' Wolf, born Chester Arthur Burnett in West Point, Mississippi, was an American singer-songwriter and musician. A important figure in Chicago blues scene, he was one of the most original and imaginative musicians of the 20th Century. Known for a very strong roaring voice and a striking physical presence, several of his tremendously influential recordings have defined the blues and blues rock genres. awarded an honorary doctor of arts degree from Chicago's Columbia College in June of 1972; it read: "Premiere man of American Music, you have sung and made songs of hard-time blues and mighty joys that cry to make the world fair." Howlin' Wolf--along with Muddy Waters--revolutionized urban blues in Chicago after World War II. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QS33LNHXpXM>

Robert Johnson was born on May 8, 1911, in Hazlehurst, Mississippi. A singer and guitarist, Johnson is considered to be one of the greatest blues performers of all time. The acclaim for Johnson's work is based on the 29 songs that he wrote and recorded in Dallas and San Antonio from 1936 to 1937. These include "I Believe I'll Dust My Broom" and "Sweet Home Chicago," which has become a blues standard. One of the first inductees into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, Robert Johnson's influence spanned multiple generations and genres. A brilliant guitarist and masterful storyteller, Johnson's songs – and the intrigue surrounding his short life and death – have made for a unique legacy in musical history. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tV5B1GeOqRI>



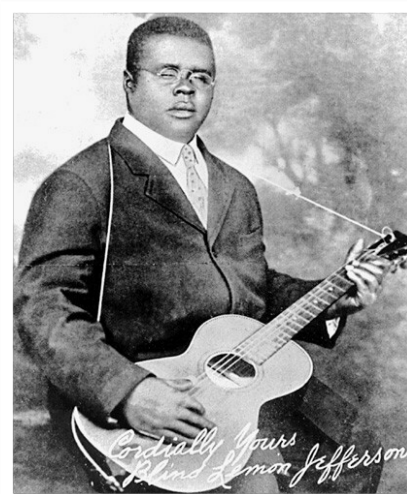
Edward James "Son" House was born on March 21, 1902 in Lyon, MS. An American delta blues singer and guitarist plumbs the emotional depth of the blues perhaps more than any other Delta blues artist. A preacher at times, a barrel-housing bluesman at others, House was fiercely torn between the sacred teachings of the church and the secular lure of the blues life. House, who lived in the Robinsonville-Lake Cormorant area in the 1930s and early '40s, was a major influence on both Robert Johnson and Muddy Waters. Son House is regarded as one of the preeminent blues artists, but during his early career in the Delta, his renown was largely confined to local juke joint audiences. He later attained international prominence during the 1960s "blues revival" through passionate, trance-like performances that highlighted his aggressive guitar style. He would occasionally rise from his chair to sing spirited a cappella gospel songs.

LEGENDARY BLUES ARTIST



Nehemiah "Skip" James was an American Delta blues singer, guitarist, pianist and songwriter. His guitar playing is noted for its dark, minor-key sound, played in an open D-minor tuning with an intricate fingerpicking technique. Born: June 9, 1902, near Bentonia, MS, The haunting quality of James's music earned him a reputation as one of the great early Mississippi bluesmen. As a youth learned to play both guitar and piano. At his 1931 session for Paramount he recorded eighteen songs, including the dark-themed "Devil Got My Woman" and "Hard Time Killing Floor Blues." He later became a minister, but returned to performing blues during the 1960s "blues revival." The somber quality of much of his music and his insistence on artistic integrity over entertainment value limited his popular appeal. James died in Philadelphia on October 3, 1969. He was inducted into the Blues Hall of Fame in 1992.

Blind Lemon Jefferson, byname of Lemon Jefferson, (born September 1893, Couchman, Texas, U.S.—died c. December 1929, Chicago, Illinois), American country blues singer, guitarist, and songwriter, one of the earliest folk-blues singers to achieve popular success. Blind from birth and the youngest of seven children, Jefferson became an itinerant entertainer in his teens, learning a repertoire of prison songs, blues, moans, spirituals, and dance numbers. He worked in the streets and in brothels, saloons, and parties in Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Virginia. In the 1920s he went to Chicago. Since the late 1950s, numerous recordings by Jefferson have been reissued, generating new interest in his music and extending his influence. Jefferson was among the inaugural class inducted into the Blues Hall of Fame in 1980.



Huddie Ledbetter, better known as "Lead Belly," was born in the late 1880s in northwest Louisiana. Lead Belly was a folk-blues singer, songwriter and guitarist whose ability to perform a vast repertoire of songs and notoriously violent life made him a legend. He began learning how to play musical instruments as a youth and eventually focused on the guitar. At age 16, he headed out across the Deep South, settling in Shreveport, Louisiana, for two years, where he supported himself as a musician. Around 1912, now living in Dallas with his new wife, Ledbetter met Blind Lemon Jefferson, an accomplished street musician, and the pair began playing together. It was at this point that Ledbetter concentrated on what would become his signature instrument: the 12-string guitar. Lead Belly was imprisoned in Texas for murder in 1918. According to tradition, he won his early release in 1925 by singing a song for the governor of Texas. Lead Belly was imprisoned again, for attempted murder, in 1930. There, he was "discovered" by folklorists John Lomax and Alan Lomax, who were collecting songs for the Library of Congress. Subsequently, he published 48 songs. His recordings reveal his mastery of a great variety of song styles and his prodigious memory; his repertoire included more than 500 songs. His rhythmic guitar playing and unique vocal accentuations make his body of work both instructive and compelling. Lead Belly was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1988 and the Louisiana Music Hall of Fame in 2008.

WHAT'S THE DEAL WITH ROBERT JOHNSON AND THE DEVIL?

In the 1920s, God-fearing black folks living in the Deep South, were convinced that the blues was "the devil's music." Blues music lured away good men and women to the juke joints, where they would dance and drink and share unholy affections. Of all the myths surrounding Robert Johnson's life, the most famous one is a claim that the artist sold his soul to the Devil in order to become a famous blues artist.

In "Cross Road Blues," Johnson sings an age-old tale about a man's choice between good and evil: "I went to the crossroad, fell down on my knees/Asked the Lord above 'Have mercy, now save poor Bob, if you please.' There is a longstanding Delta legend of a bluesman who waited by the side of a deserted crossroads one night for Satan to come and tune his guitar. It's a story made more relevant when coupled with Johnson's frequent references to the Devil, including in the song "Me And The Devil Blues," in which he sings, "Me and the Devil, was walkin' side by side." Other songs like "Preachin' Blues (Up Jumped The Devil)" and "Hell Hound on My Trail" help mythologize the artist's supposed deal with Satan.

But Johnson certainly was not the only blues artist who sang about the Devil. Skip James, Tampa Red, Lonnie Johnson, Joe Williams, and Peetie Wheatstraw, to name a few, all sang of Satan – the latter artist even nicknamed himself "The Devil's Son-in-Law" after one of his 1931 recordings. While Johnson's incredible improvements on the guitar, as detailed by Son House, were certainly miraculous, a 2008 story in *Living Blues Magazine* offers a more viable explanation. In that two-year period, when Johnson first travelled the Delta, he met guitarist Ike Zimmerman, who took the young artist under his tutelage. According to blues scholar Bruce Conforth, Johnson spent the better part of a year living with Zimmerman, and studying his craft.

How has Robert Johnson's music impacted modern music, who did he influence, and what is his legacy?

In 1961, Columbia released *King of the Delta Blues Singers*, a compilation of Johnson's music. The album made its way into the hands of American folk artists, including Bob Dylan, and soon became an immensely popular title among artists in Britain's emerging rock scene, inspiring the likes of **Fleetwood Mac**, The Rolling Stones, and Led Zeppelin. Countless artists (including almost everyone mentioned in this story) have covered Johnson's songs, while many of rock's greatest guitarists, including Clapton and **Jimi Hendrix**, have cited Johnson as an influence. Johnson's work also helped usher in the electrified, mid-century style of Chicago blues, played by the likes of **Muddy Waters**, **Willie Dixon**, and **Chuck Berry**.

Johnson's legacy and his immense contributions to popular music have been recognized by a broad range of institutions, including the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, the US Postal Service, the Library of Congress, and the Recording Academy, which bestowed a posthumous Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award upon Johnson in 2006.

THE MISSISSIPPI BLUES TRAIL



The Mississippi Blues Trail markers tell stories through words and images of bluesmen and women and how the places where they lived and the times in which they existed—and continue to exist—influenced their music. The sites run the gamut from city streets to cotton fields, train depots to cemeteries, and clubs to churches. We have a lot to share, and it's just down the Mississippi Blues Trail.

THE MISSISSIPPI BLUES TRAIL



Mississippi John Hurt was born on July 3, 1893. Best known as a world-renowned master of the acoustic guitar John Hurt, an important figure in the 1960s folk blues revival, spent most of his life doing farm work around Avalon in Carroll County and performing for parties and local gatherings. Hurt (1893-1966) only began to earn a living from music after he left Mississippi in 1963 to play at folk festivals, colleges, and coffeehouses. His first recordings, 78 rpm discs released in 1928-29, are regarded as classics of the blues genre. Hurt's delicate vocals, inventive fingerpicking on guitar, and warm personality endeared him to generations of music fans. performing at Carnegie Hall and the Newport Folk Festival and recording several albums (including some 90 songs for the Library of Congress) before he died in 1966. Mississippi John Hurt was inducted into the Blues Hall of Fame in 1988.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The Mississippi Blues Trail

<https://msbluestrail.org/>

The Delta Museum

<https://www.deltabluesmuseum.org/>

10 Must-See Spots on the Mississippi Blues Trail

<https://msfarmcountry.com/travel/10-must-see-spots-on-the-mississippi-blues-trail/>

The B.B. King Museum

<https://bbkingmuseum.org/>

The Grammy Museum Mississippi

<https://www.grammymuseumms.org/>