

A HISTORY OF BLUES

WELCOME

This is the accompanying booklet to the award-winning 'History of Blues' series performed as part of the Adelaide Festival Fringe by Cal Williams Jr & Kory Horwood & special guests. Explore the birth place of the blues & learn about the early defining voices & musicians who created the backbone of modern music.

12 BAR BLUES

The 12 Bar Blues is a standard repeatable chord progression that is designed to provide a common musical language for all musicians to jam on. Blues music is built upon this iconic musical foundation and is the backbone of all great blues songs.

SLIDE GUITAR & THE MISSISSIPPI TRAIN STATION

The first recorded example of the slide guitar being played in America is by father of the blues W.C Handy (1873-1958). Handy was standing at a railway station in Tutwiler, Mississippi in 1903 and heard an unusual sound coming from the end of the platform. When Handy went to explore this sound he found an African American man playing the guitar by running his knife blade over the strings and creating the unique slide guitar sound.

LA NOTA DEL DIABLO

La Nota Del Diablo is a Spanish phrase meaning The Devil's Note. In blues music, the Devil's Note refers to the flattened fifth note of the scale that defines the blues scale. The Flat 5 is also known as The Blue Note. The origin of the devil myth is due to the African music derived Flat 5 note being outside of the Classical theory of formal Western music.

DOCKERY'S FARM

Dockery's Farm is located in Mississippi and was formerly the home and workplace of many iconic blues guitarists including Charley Patton, Son House, Willie Brown and Howlin' Wolf. Dockery's Farm was the epicentre of the delta blues and many people came to this farm for entertainment and to learn how to play the blues.

SHARECROPPING

After the emancipation of African American slaves, plantation owners devised another way to keep the black population down by a system of sharecropping whereby the freed slave was still beholden to the plantation owner through a rent system that did not allow for escaping the cycle of debt. Many blues musicians escaped this unfair working system & migrated to the bigger cities like Chicago, Memphis, St Louis & Detroit.

BOTTLENECK SLIDE

The bottleneck slide is a unique guitar playing technique that has become a trademark sound of the blues music genre. Essentially, the bottleneck slide is gently applied to the guitar strings and then moved from fret marker to fret marker to play the notes of a guitar scale. Blues slide players place their slide directly on top of the fret markers and essentially play on the knife-edge of each fret. The use of a slide on string instruments has also been traced back to early Indian, African and Hawaiian music.

PARCHMAN & SUGARLAND

Parchman Farm is based in Mississippi and was the temporary home to famous blues musicians including Bukka White. Sugarland is the name given to the Texas State Penitentiary and housed blues musicians such as Leadbelly (Huddie Leadbetter) who received a pardon from the prison governor due to the popularity of his blues music.

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THE SONNY TERRY & BROWNIE MCGEE PIGGYBACK STORY

Amongst the many stories of this pioneering blues trio is the legend that Sonny and Brownie enjoyed drinking in 'Whites Only' bars in the segregated American South and would escape from the police by using a piggyback escape trick. Brownie, who was a victim of childhood polio and couldn't run, would jump on the blind Sonny's back and direct him to the exit and out onto the street to avoid arrest. This is one of the most famous blues yarns in the history of the blues.

ROBERT JOHNSON'S HOUSE

When Robert Johnson first began playing guitar he couldn't afford to buy a real guitar so he strung three lines of chicken wire on the side of his wooden shack and used a bottle to slide up and down the strings to create chords. This use of the wooden resonating box was also used with three string cigar-box guitars and the one string instrument known as the Diddley Bow.

ROBERT JOHNSON & THE DEVIL

This famous story involved the iconic blues guitarist Robert Johnson & the crossroads where he was rumoured to have sold his soul in exchange for greater guitar skills. This Devil Myth was attributed to a few other blues musicians including Tommy Johnson and evolved from the supernatural elements of African myths that also included terms like Mojo. In reality, Robert Johnson was an average blues musician who took himself off the blues scene to get lessons from his guitar teacher, Ike Zimmerman, and returned six months later as a far better musician.

THE JB LENOIR STORY

JB Lenoir was a Mississippi blues musician who wrote many blues songs focused on civil rights & social activism & was championed by prolific songwriter & blues double-bass player Willie Dixon who took him to Europe on the American Folk & Blues Festival tour. JB Lenoir was injured in a car crash in Mississippi & later died of his wounds due to delayed care in a rural hospital. In addition to the support of Dixon, JB Lenoir was also celebrated by UK blues musician John Mayall in songs including 'I'm Gonna Fight For You JB'.

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NICK DRAKE

British singer/songwriter Nick Drake is revered by folk and blues guitarists for his intricate guitar melodies and beautiful lyrics. In his short life, Nick Drake hardly sold any records but has influenced a whole generation of musicians including REM, Iron & Wine and Bon Iver.

Albums to listen to: **Five Leaves Left - Bryter Layter - Pink Moon**

DAVY GRAHAM

As a pioneer of world music and the discoverer of the DADGAD open tuning, Davy Graham is the godfather of British Folk guitar.

Albums to listen to: **Folk, Blues and Beyond - Midnight Man - After Hours**

JOHN MARTYN

Encapsulating an intriguing mix of Glaswegian hard-man and sublime poet, John Martyn created beautiful melodies with a jazz tinged vocal style and pioneered the use of guitar looping effects.

Albums to listen to: **Solid Air - Bless The Weather - One World**

BERT JANSCH & JOHN RENBOURN

As members of the iconic folk rock band 'Pentangle', Bert and John influenced the London folk scene collectively and individually.

Albums to listen to: **Bert and John - Basket of Light (Pentangle)**

JACKSON C. FRANK

After surviving a school room explosion that killed half of his classmates and left him physically and psychologically scarred, Jackson C. Frank used his insurance pay-out to travel to the London folk scene and influenced players such as Nick Drake, Bert Jansch, John Renborn and more. Paul Simon produced his first and only album 'Blues Runs the Game' and he later disappeared into music obscurity.



BOOKS ON BLUES

THE STORY OF THE BLUES - PAUL OLIVER

THE COUNTRY BLUES - SAMUAL R CHARTERS

CHASIN' THAT DEVIL MUSIC - GAYLE DEAN WARDLOW

RED RIVER BLUES - BRUCE BASTIN

MISSISSIPPI JOHN HURT - PHILIP R. RATCLIFFE

I SAY ME FOR A PARABLE - MANCE LIPSCOMB

BOUND FOR GLORY - WOODY GUTHRIE

SEEDS OF MAN - WOODY GUTHRIE

BLUES PEOPLE - LEROI JONES

BLOOD AND THE BLUES - DANNY SMITH

THE DEVIL'S MUSIC - GILES OAKLEY

BARRELHOUSE WORDS - STEPHEN CALT

LIGHTNIN' HOPKINS - ALAN GOVENAR

CHASING THE RISING SUN - TED ANTHONY

BILLIE'S BLUES - JOHN CHILTON

THE MUSIC OF AFRICA - J. H. KWABENA NKETIA



Dockery's Farm Musicians

CHARLEY PATTON

SON HOUSE

WILLIE BROWN

ROBERT JOHNSON

HOWLIN' WOLF

DAVID

'HONEYBOY' EDWARDS

Texas Blues Musicians

BLIND WILLIE JOHNSON

BLIND LEMON JEFFERSON

MANCE LIPSCOMB

LEADBELLY

Georgia Blues Musicians

BLIND BOY FULLER

BLIND WILLIE MCTELL

BROWNIE MCGEE

BLIND BLAKE

Piedmont Blues

MISSISSIPPI

HURT

DOC WATSON

REVEREND GARY DAVIS

London Folk Blues

DAVY GRAHAM

JOHN MARTYN

NICK DRAKE

BERT JANSCH

JOHN RENBOURN

RALPH MCTELL