

The Rough Guide To Delta Blues (2016)

Written by bluesever

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1 –Bukka White *Special Streamline* 2:53 2 –Tommy Johnson *Bye Bye Blues* 3:00 3
–Skip James *Hard Time Killin' Floor Blues* 2:47 4 –Robert Wilkins *I'll Go With Her* 3:03 5
–Son House *Country Farm Blues* 2:08 6 –Bo Carter *Who's Been Here?* 2:34 7 –Ishman
Bracey *Trouble Hearted Blues (Take 2)* 3:20 8 –Mississippi Sheiks *The World Is Going
Wrong* 3:21 9 –Arthur Petties* *That Won't Do* 2:58 10 –Willie Brown (2) *M & O Blues* 3:07
11 –The Mississippi Moaner *It's Cold In China Blues* 2:46 12 –Johnny Temple (2) *The Evil
Devil Blues* 3:04 13 –Mississippi Bracey *Stered Gal* 3:05 14 –Garfield Akers *Dough Roller
Blues* 3:08 15 –Mattie Delaney *Tallahatchie River Blues* 2:45 16 –Willie 'Poor Boy' Lofton*
Dirty Mistreater 2:46 17 –Kid Bailey *Rowdy Blues* 2:56 18 –Geeshie Wiley *Eagles On A
Half* 3:01 19 –Joe Callicott *Traveling Mama Blues* 3:13 20 –Jelly Jaw Short *Barefoot Blues*
2:54 21 –Rube Lacey* *Mississippi Jailhouse Groan* 3:18 22 –Charlie McCoy (2) *Last Time
Blues* 2:54 23 –Sonny Boy Nelson *Street Walkin'* 2:32 24 –Memphis Minnie & Kansas Joe
I'm Talking About You 2:38 25 –Charley Patton *Poor Me* 2:56

The most influential of all the blues forms, Delta blues laid the foundations for what was to become rock and roll. Born in the punishing and poverty-stricken environment of the Mississippi Delta, this Rough Guide traces its early origins with classic tracks by many Delta legends as well as lesser known artists shrouded in mystery.

There can be little doubt that the blues grew up in the Mississippi Delta as an elaboration on work chants, slave songs, and the lyrical and haunting field hollers. Developing around the turn of the nineteenth century into the twentieth, the Delta blues became the most influential of all the blues forms, rising out of the fertile agricultural triangle located between Vicksburg, Mississippi to the south and Memphis, Tennessee to the north, and bordered by the Mississippi River to the west and the Yazoo River to the east. The regular flooding of these rivers left the land incredibly flat and blessed with some of the most fertile soil on the planet – perfect conditions for growing cotton. It was here that black sharecroppers worked the land in one of the harshest systems of slavery ever known. Poverty was rife throughout the Delta and it was

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this punishing environment which gave birth to the blues.

Typically blues songs were handed down by word of mouth and artists would freely add new lyrics in order to make them their own. The guitar became the primary tool of the Delta bluesman due to the ease of carrying it around, and this spawned incredible instrumental virtuosity amongst performers. One such figure was Charley Patton who is widely considered to be the 'Father of the Delta Blues'. An immensely gifted performer, Patton was amazingly prolific and served as a major influence on other legendary Delta bluesmen who followed including Robert Johnson, Son House and Howlin' Wolf. Tommy Johnson was a contemporary of Charley Patton and was also an incredibly gifted writer, singer and guitarist. Renowned for performing tricks with his guitar, playing it between his legs, behind his head and throwing it in the air while playing, Tommy Johnson unfortunately recorded very little – only 16 songs in three sessions between 1928 and 1929. Many of the original Delta bluesmen either died at a relatively early age or drifted into obscurity. Son House, however, was an exception and lived long enough to be re-discovered during the 1960s folk revival. Despite his tough life, House managed to beat the odds and along with a handful of other featured artists – including Skip James, Bukka White, Robert Wilkins and Joe Calicott – enjoyed a successful second phase of his musical career with young audiences thirsty for a taste of authentic Delta blues.

Memphis was the closest big city to the Mississippi Delta and this became a magnet for blues singers desperate to escape the hardships of the Delta country. Its epicentre was the lawless and rowdy Beale Street and it was here that many of the great Delta bluesmen were recorded as well as one of the few women to emerge from the Delta blues scene, Memphis Minnie. On the featured track 'I'm Talking About You', she is accompanied by Joe McCoy 'Kansas Joe', her second husband, who along with his brother Charlie McCoy were important instrumental sidemen appearing on a number of seminal blues recordings.

One of the pioneering musicians of the Delta, Willie Brown was a contemporary of Charley Patton and Son House and disappeared from the music scene during the 1940s. One of the great blues riddles is whether the featured Kid Bailey was a pseudonym for Willie Brown. Mystery pervades this collection with scant little known about many of these Delta pioneers, from the country blues divas Geechie Wiley and Mattie Delaney to the enigmatic Mississippi Bracey – was he related to his more illustrious namesake Ishman Bracey? What we do know is that the first Great Migration from the South to 'the Promised Land' of Chicago brought more African Americans from Mississippi than any other state. With the migrants came the Delta blues which became the foundation of the classic post-war Chicago blues style and in turn shaped the development of popular music around the world. ---worldmusic.net

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