

## About the Blues CD 2:21

Blues music developed in the early 1900s from field hollers (music sung in the cotton fields), early spirituals, and gospel music performed in rural southern black churches. Blues was the music that was performed at black social functions such as parties, dances, and roadhouses. Often the blues was performed in secret, since the local churches usually forbade their members to perform secular, or nonreligious, music.

Modern blues has evolved from many sources and regions. The two primary sources of influence on modern blues are:

- The early rural acoustic blues music of the 1920s and '30s, mostly from rural southern regions such as the Mississippi Delta and North Carolina. Early rural blues artists include Robert Johnson and Charley Patton, both of the Delta region, and Blind Boy Fuller and Rev. Gary Davis, both from the North Carolina area. Typically this kind of blues is performed by a solo guitarist/singer and an acoustic guitar, fingerstyle.
- The more sophisticated electric urban blues of the 1940s. Early electric blues artists include Muddy Waters (McKinley Morganfield), Howlin' Wolf, T. Bone Walker, and B.B. King, who came along a little later. This style of blues was centered around Chicago and was usually performed on electric guitar with a full band.

Blues has evolved since its early beginnings and has influenced many modern styles of music, especially jazz and rock. Listen to Blind Boy Fuller's recording of "Corinne, What Makes You Treat Me So?" This example of early rural blues was recorded in 1934.

**The Blues Form:** Most blues songs follow a basic three-chord (**I, IV, and V**), 12-measure form ("Corinne" is a 16-measure form). Usually the form is broken into three phrases: phrase 1 is four measures, phrase 2 is usually a repeat of phrase 1 but with different chords (**IV and I**), and then phrase 3 is an answer to the first two phrases. Can you identify the three phrases as you listen to "Corinne, What Makes You Treat Me So?"

## Artist Portrait: Fulton Allen (Blind Boy Fuller) CD 2:22

Fulton Allen was born in Durham, North Carolina, in 1907 and died in 1941. He was a laborer in a coal yard when he began to lose his sight in his late teens. Once he lost his sight, Fulton "Blind Boy Fuller" Allen was forced to play and sing on street corners to make a living during the height of the Great Depression in the early 1930s. He began by teaching himself to play. He also studied with the great Reverend Gary Davis, and together they are credited with defining the style of early rural blues music that grew out of rural Carolina (known as the Piedmont style). In 1934, while performing on a street corner, Blind Boy Fuller was discovered by a young record store owner and blues fan, James Baxter Long. Mr. Long brought Blind Boy and Gary Davis to New York for their first recording sessions.



### The Blues Guitar

Any type of guitar can and has been used to perform the blues. Many blues artists played inexpensive (or even home-made) acoustic guitars since they couldn't usually afford the high-priced models. However, some of the guitar types that are most often associated with the blues are:

- Small-bodied acoustic guitars like the Gibson L-00™. The small bodies and wide necks on these guitars make them well suited for fingerstyle solo acoustic blues.
- Semi-hollow-body electric guitars like the Gibson Lucille™ (B.B. King's signature guitar, based on the Gibson 335 model) are popular with Chicago-style electric blues artists.
- Resonator guitars have a metal cone that produces a bright and loud sound that is often associated with the blues. These guitars are often played with a slide as well as with a pick or fingers.