

Blues: Where Does it Come From?: A Lecture (20 min)

A. Roots of the Blues:

- B. The American writer, Washington Irving is credited with coining the term 'the blues,' as it is now defined, in 1807. (Tanner 40) The earlier (almost entirely Negro) history of the blues musical tradition is traced through oral tradition as far back as the 1860s. (Kennedy 79)
From: <http://thebluehighway.com/history.html> \Following the Civil War (according to Rolling Stone), the blues arose as "a distillate of the African music brought over by slaves. Field hollers, ballads, church music and rhythmic dance tunes called jump-ups evolved into a music for a singer who would engage in call-and-response with his guitar. He would sing a line, and the guitar would answer it." (RSR&RE 53) (author's note: I've seen somewhere, that the guitar did not enjoy widespread popularity with blues musicians until about the turn of the century. Until then, the banjo was the primary blues instrument.) By the 1890s the blues were sung in many of the rural areas of the South. (Kamien 518) And by 1910, the word 'blues' as applied to the musical tradition was in fairly common use. (Tanner 40) **From:** <http://thebluehighway.com/history.html>
- C. But, the problem was that the blues weren't sung according to the European ideas of even tempered pitch, but with a much freer use of bent pitches and otherwise emotionally inflected vocal sounds. (Machlis 578) These 'bent' pitches are known as 'blue notes'. **From:** <http://thebluehighway.com/history.html>
- D. 12 Bar Blues: Play for them.
- E. Blues of the 20s and 30s:
- Show timeline.
 - Play More Robert Johnson:
http://www.publicdomain4u.com/html/robert_johnson.htm
 - Bessie Smith: <http://www.jazz-on-line.com/artists1.htm>
 - Leadbelly (1940s-1950s): <http://www.publicdomain4u.com/html/leadbelly.htm>
- F. Blues gets electric: 1950s and 1960s:
- Birth of Chicago blues:
 - Muddy Waters: http://www.jazz-on-line.com/Muddy_Waters.htm
- G. The Blues Now: Smaller, Not as Diverse, Aging.
- Show Timeline.
- H. Blues Connection to Rap:
- 12 bar, I, IV, V progressions.
 - Improvisation (freestyling)
 - Sampling:
 - Beck, Moby, Wu Tang Clan
King, Albert
 - King of the Blues Guitar*. (Atlantic 1969)
* "Cold Feet"
Wu-Tang Clan - "Protect Ya Neck (The Jump Off)" (From: <http://www.the-breaks.com/search.php?term=Wu+Tang+Clan&type=6>)
- Interestingly This: In the 1920s, several civil rights leaders were so concerned about the sexual and violent content of popular blues and jazz songs that they established a record company to "undertake the job of elevating the musical taste of the race." Promoted by W.E.B. DuBois and A. Philip Randolph, two of the most important civil rights leaders of the 20th century, Black Swan Records pledged to distribute "the Better Class of Records by Colored Artists," which meant recordings of "respectable" European classical music. <http://www.rgeib.com/biography/ventura/geib-great-art-challenge/rap-jazz.htm>

Blues Timeline: <http://blues.about.com/library/bltimeline.htm>