

Learn To Play Blues Guitar

It is not that easy to pull out a definition of blues. You can tell that Robert Johnson's 'Rambling on My Mind' or B.B. King's 'Everyday I Have the Blues' is definitely blues, but what about Van Halen, Al Di Meola or Pavarotti's songs?

Of course, you could define the blues by the call-response structure, the dominant 7th chords, the shuffle rhythm, the I-IV-V progression and things like these, but the most complete definition is one that Eric Clapton himself gave to blues music in an interview in 1998:

My definition of Blues is that it's a musical form which is very disciplined and structured coupled with a state of mind, and you can have either of those things but it's the two together that make it what it is. And you need to be a student for one, and a human being for the other, but those things alone don't do it. (Eric Clapton, 1998)

The Blues History

There are many books on the history of blues. It was born in the 20th century's Mississippi Delta in the U.S., short after the Civil War. This music style was played by slaves and white people referred to it as sorrow songs, plantation songs or workaday songs. The term blues was used for the first time around 1925.

It is believed that the band leader William Christopher Handy was the one to write the first blues songs in 1909, which was later printed and documented. The song was initially called Memphis Blues and got the name of Mister Crump later. He got his inspiration from a blues song he heard in the Mississippi railway station six years earlier. W.C. Handy wrote other songs too, such as Beale Street Blues or St. Louis Blues and nowadays there's a blues award named after him - the W.C. Handy Award.

What Do You Need To Learn To Play Blues Guitar?

In order to learn to play blues guitar, there are a few things you need. First of all, you need to own an electric or acoustic guitar with strings made from other than nylon in standard tuning. You also need to know how to read tablature, as well as have some basic guitar knowledge and know how to play a few chords.

You also need some Eric Clapton CDs with blues classics, such as Blues Breakers, From the Cradle or Eric Clapton Unplugged and a good CD player with an auto-repeat shuffle. There's also a plug-in for Winamp you can use to slow down music. A small chord book you can find in any guitar shop is also handy. But most importantly, in order to learn to play blues guitar, you need some good ears.

If you already have some basic guitar knowledge, you can learn to play blues guitar on your own, with the aid of a simple chord book. However, finding a blues guitar teacher who is willing to help you learn to play blues guitar in your area is definitely a good thing. If you have the time and money to take up private lessons, this will probably help improving your guitar playing skills.

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About the Author

Christopher Buckley is owner of one of the internet's largest guitar learning resources. To find out more about learning blues guitar, visit Learn Guitar Blog at <http://www.learn-guitar-blog.com>