

Robert Johnson



Robert Johnson was a street musician. He was a man who shaped and defined the Delta Blues as we know it today.

Born in the Mississippi Delta in 1911, he grew up around dozens of casual performers. He learned to play the harmonica, also called the 'mouth harp' and shortened to 'harp' when he was a young boy. Local musicians commented on how skilled he was at the harp, but what a terrible guitarist.

When he was a teen, Robert left home and disappeared. No one saw or heard from him for a year. When he returned, Robert started playing his guitar, the harp and singing on the street corners, and his guitar playing was amazing. His local community began to whisper about that could have

changed. Soon, a most delicious rumor was started, that he had traded his soul to the Devil for his amazing guitar skill. Many contemporary blues singers still have fun writing ballads and stories about his legendary encounter with the evil one.

Robert Johnson spent his short life traveling around the Delta playing Blues on street corners and in Juke Joints. He created the guitarist/singer pattern that most Delta Bluesmen still follow today. He created the sound of playing the chord changes of the Twelve-bar Blues with playing melodic improvisations in between. His singing voice was that of an ordinary man, nothing special, what made him so notable was the raw emotion and heartfelt sorrow in his blues.

Robert Johnson was invited by a friend to record his songs in 1936 and so he made several visits to a local hotel over the next two years to record the songs he loved the best. Robert Johnson died the following year when he was only 27 years old. He never made a huge profit from his music, but the great amount of money thrown to him on street corners allowed him to live a comfortable life.

His music was released to the general public twenty years after his death and is still studied and celebrated today