



**DUANE EDDY**

**B.B. KING**

Riley B. King  
Born September 16th, 1925  
Indianola, Mississippi



**GLADYS KNIGHT**



Riley "B.B." King has often been called the King of the Blues, but given his wide-ranging and long-lasting influence, he might more accurately be described as the blues' lifetime ambassador. He has brought the sound and the style across the U.S.A. and all the way to the U.S.S.R., to Caesar's Palace and the Cook County Jail, to the Newport Jazz Festival and the Fillmore East. He topped the rhythm and blues charts in the early Fifties, served as an inspiration to the blues-obsessed guitarists of the Sixties and reached a mainstream audience, as well as the pop Top Twenty, with his elegant and soulful "The Thrill Is Gone."

The hard-working King, born and bred in Mississippi, moved to Memphis, Tennessee, in 1948 to make his living playing the blues. There he met Sonny Boy Williamson (Rice Miller), who offered King a job as a fill-in DJ on a local radio station where he worked. King then found a regular spot on WDIA, a black-operated station, where he became known as the Beale Street Blues Boy, B.B. for short; his show was soon expanded from fifteen minutes to two hours. He began to perform at Memphis's Palace Theater, where Rufus Thomas emceed the amateur show. In 1950, King cut his first sides for RPM Records, a subsidiary of Modern; one song, "Three O'Clock Blues," topped the R&B charts the following year. King repeated that success the next year with "You Know I Love You."

In 1961, King left RPM for ABC-Paramount Records. The live performance LPs he released on that label have come to be regarded as classics, in particular *Live at the Regal*, released in 1965. King always had broad musical tastes – as influences, he has cited both the Texas blues master T-Bone Walker and the Belgian gypsy jazz guitarist Django Reinhardt – and he incorporated jazz, country and rock elements into his work. His eclecticism and sophistication brought him an equally broad audience. His most vocal fans included some of the Sixties' preeminent rock guitarists, among them Mike Bloomfield on this side of the Atlantic and Eric Clapton on the other. His cachet in those circles led King to work with a number of well-known rockers. King opened for the Rolling Stones on their dynamic '69 American tour and soon found himself a fixture at rock venues around the country. In 1970, Carole King, Leon Russell and Joe Walsh appeared on King's *Indianola Mississippi Seeds*. For B.B. King in London, King was joined by an all-star cast: Peter Green, Alexis Korner, Steve Marriot and Ringo Starr.

King continues to tour regularly, appearing in recent years in *Battle of the Blues* shows with Bobby "Blue" Bland. Last year he coheadlined with Miles Davis at the Beacon Theatre, in New York. He was in affable spirits, playing with aplomb the part of the well-traveled elder statesman of the blues, repeating once again with wry humor and the husky voice of experience his time-tested litany of woes: "I let you live in my penthouse, you said it was just a shack/I gave you seven children, now you want to give them back."