



It was T-Bone Walker, B.B. King once said, who "really started me to want to play the blues. I can still hear T-Bone in my mind today from that first record I heard, 'Stormy Monday.' He was the first electric guitar player I heard on record. He made me so that I knew I just had to go out and get an electric guitar."

Walker was the godfather of the modern electric blues guitar. He transformed the prewar styles of Blind Lemon Jefferson and Lonnie Johnson into sophisticated, swinging electric music. Millions who have never heard Walker's music know him nonetheless through his profound influence on a host of blues and rock musicians: Duane Allman, Otis Rush, Jimi Hendrix, Buddy Guy, Eric Clapton, Jimmy Page, Albert Collins. Over his forty-year career, Walker produced a series of peerless recordings, including "T-Bone Shuffle," "Mean Old World," "Papa Ain't Salty" and "Call It Stormy Monday."

Walker was born in 1910 in Linden, Texas, to a family of black and Cherokee ancestry. At age two, he moved with his mother to Dallas, where he served as a "lead boy" for country-blues master Blind Lemon Jefferson. While still in his teens, Walker, who was self-taught on guitar, banjo and ukulele, toured with a medicine show and with blues singer Ida Cox. He was first recorded in 1929 under the name Oak Cliff T-Bone. Walker moved to Los Angeles in 1934; he claimed to have begun playing amplified guitar shortly thereafter. If that is true, then he was among the first major guitarists to go electric.

In 1939, Walker joined Les Hite's Cotton Club Orchestra, a rough-and-tumble big band whose alumni include Dizzy Gillespie and Lionel Hampton. With the Hite band, Walker perfected his flowing, hornlike guitar licks and mellow blues vocals. He cut sides for Capitol, Imperial, Atlantic (including the classic T-Bone Blues LP) and a half dozen other labels, most often as a leader but also in tandem with Jimmy Witherspoon, Memphis Slim and Johnny Otis. In 1973, Walker climaxed his recording career with a masterfully eclectic double LP, *Very Rare*; it was produced by Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller, who assembled an all-star cast of jazz veterans and young studio pros to honor the great bluesman. Walker died in Los Angeles of bronchial pneumonia at the age of sixty-four.

"T-Bone Walker is the fundamental source of the modern urban style of playing and singing blues," wrote Pete Welding. "The blues was different before he came onto the scene and it hasn't been the same since."

T-BONE WALKER

Aaron Thibeaux Walker
Born May 28th, 1910
Linden, Texas
Died March 16th, 1975
Los Angeles, California



"'Hey, Good Lookin',' 'Cold, Cold Heart,' 'You Win Again,' 'Your Cheatin' Heart,' 'I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry' – these songs are among the classics of country music, and every one was written and sung by Hank Williams. Williams brought country music into the modern era. He was an astonishingly prolific songwriter, a supremely expressive singer and a performer who blended barely repressed sexuality with an aura of tragic doom.

Hiram Williams was born in the dirt-poor town of Mount Olive, Alabama, in 1923. He had a congenital spinal defect that caused him increasing back pain as he grew older, a pain he would later try to ease with alcohol and pills. His mother, a church organist, taught him traditional hymns and gospel songs; a black street musician, Rufus "Tee Tot" Payne, taught him blues and pop tunes, along with the rudiments of guitar. By the time he was sixteen, Hank had formed the first version of his legendary band, the Drifting Cowboys, and was appearing regularly at local dances and on radio station WFSA.

In 1946, Williams went to Nashville to audition for the Grand Ole Opry; he was turned down. Williams's compositions, however, favorably impressed Fred Rose, who signed him to Acuff-Rose, his publishing company, and, the following year, to MGM Records. Williams's first MGM disc, "Move It On Over," was released in 1947. In early 1949, his version of "Lovesick Blues" shot to the top of Billboard's C&W chart, remaining in the Top Fifteen for more than ten months. He finally appeared at the Grand Ole Opry in June 1949, stopping the show and earning six encores.

Between 1949 and 1953, Williams recorded eleven singles that were million sellers. At the same time, using the pseudonym Luke the Drifter, he issued a series of popular musical sermonettes, including "Be Careful of Stones That You Throw" and "Beyond the Sunset."

The pressures of success proved to be Williams's downfall. His drinking and drug taking increased, and he missed gigs more and more frequently. He was divorced in 1952. Songs like "I'll Never Get Out of This World Alive" seemed to foretell the end. It came in 1953, when Williams suffered a massive heart attack and internal bleeding en route to a show. He was not yet thirty years old.

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HANK WILLIAMS

Hiram Williams
Born September 17th, 1923
Mount Olive, Alabama
Died January 1st, 1953
Oak Hill, West Virginia



For Louis Jordan, life was a nonstop party. Dropping a dynamic downbeat on postwar rhythm and blues, he set the stage for the bacchanal to follow. In his 1949 "Saturday Night Fish Fry," he gazed into a crystal ball and sang, "It was rockin', it was rockin' / You never seen such scufflin' and shufflin' till the break of dawn."

"I wanted to play for the people," he told Arnold Shaw, "for millions, not just a few hepcats." Though he could have been a successful jazz instrumentalist, and indeed had come up playing alto saxophone in Chick Webb's band, he opted for the role of ebullient entertainer. In 1938, at the age of thirty, he formed his own combo, which worked out at Harlem's Elks Rendezvous, and he cut his first records that year. By 1939, his combo was officially called Louis Jordan and His Tympani Five. They reached the charts with hit after hit, including "Ain't Nobody Here but Us Chickens," "Somebody Done Changed the Lock on My Door," "Stone Cold Dead in the Market," "That Chick's Too Young to Fry" and the ever-popular "Caldonia." His best year was 1946, when he released "Choo Choo Ch'Boogie" and "Beware, Brother, Beware," both of which were million sellers.

Jordan's songs not only would supply a good deal of the slang of rock and roll but also would directly influence many of rock's progenitors. Bill Haley's recordings echoed Jordan's "Let the Good Times Roll" spirit, and Chuck Berry has said simply, "I identify myself with Louis Jordan more than any other artist."

LOUIS JORDAN

Born July 8th, 1908
Brinkley, California
Died February 4th, 1975
Los Angeles, California

