

Great Music to Accompany *To Kill a Mockingbird*

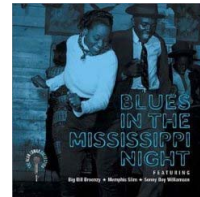
[The Complete Blind Willie Johnson](#), Blind Willie Johnson (Call No: Blues Johnson 2835)



If you've never heard Blind Willie Johnson, you are in for one of the great, bone-chilling treats in music. Johnson played slide guitar and sang in a rasping, false bass that could freeze the blood. But no bluesman was he; this was gospel music of the highest order, full of emotion and heartfelt commitment. Of all the guitar-playing evangelists, Blind Willie Johnson may have been the very best.

[Blues in the Mississippi Night](#), Various artists (Call No: Blues Iomax 0313)

It is not the starkest, deepest, most intense blues ever recorded, but these performances are rich in quality and spirit, like a brilliant string quartet at work. The fellows chatter a lot, defining the music they play and recounting anecdotes from their lively backgrounds.



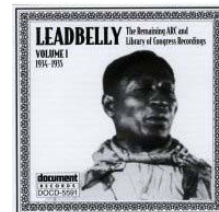
[Do That Guitar Rag \(1928-1935\)](#), Big Bill Broonzy (Call No: Blues Broonzy 3820)



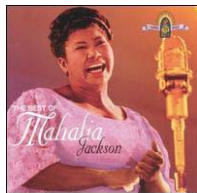
In terms of his musical skill, the sheer size of his repertoire, the length and variety of his career and his influence on contemporaries and musicians who would follow, Big Bill Broonzy is among a select few of the most important figures in recorded blues history.

[Leadbelly: Volume 1 \(1934-1935\)](#), Leadbelly (Call No: Folk Leadbelly 5591)

Huddie Ledbetter, known as Leadbelly, was a unique figure in the American popular music of the 20th century. Because he was an African-American, he is sometimes viewed as a blues singer, but blues (a musical form he actually predated) was only one of the styles that informed his music. He was also an early example of a folksinger whose background had brought him into direct contact with the oral tradition by which folk music was handed down.



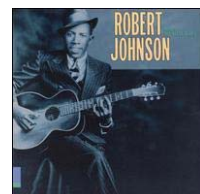
[The Best of Mahalia Jackson](#), Mahalia Jackson (Call No: Religious Gospel Jackson 6911)



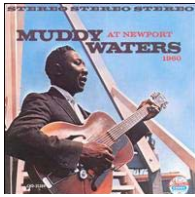
General critical consensus holds Mahalia Jackson as the greatest gospel singer ever to live; a major crossover success whose popularity extended across racial divides; she was gospel's first superstar, and even decades after her death remains for many listeners a defining symbol of the music's transcendent power.

[The Complete Recordings](#), Robert Johnson (Call No: Blues Johnson 1502)

If the blues has a truly mythic figure, one whose story hangs over the music the way a Charlie Parker does over jazz or a Hank Williams does over country, it's Robert Johnson, certainly the most celebrated figure in the history of the blues.



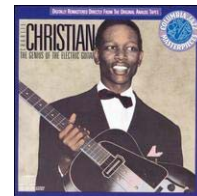
At Newport, 1960, Muddy Waters (Call No: Blues Muddy Waters 5152)



A postwar Chicago blues scene without the magnificent contributions of Muddy Waters is absolutely unimaginable. From the late '40s on, he eloquently defined the city's aggressive, swaggering, Delta-rooted sound with his declamatory vocals and piercing slide guitar attack. When he passed away in 1983, the Windy City would never quite recover.

The Genius of the Electric Guitar, Charlie Christian (Call No: Jazz Christian 5564)

It can be said without exaggeration that virtually every jazz guitarist that emerged during 1940-65 sounded like a relative of Charlie Christian. The first important electric guitarist, Christian played his instrument with the fluidity, confidence, and swing of a saxophonist. This album is a chance to hear the first great electric guitarist in action, and to celebrate the birth of a great musical tradition.



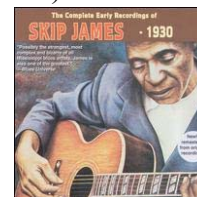
Howlin' Wolf: More Real folk Blues, Howlin' Wolf (Call No: Blues Howlin' Wolf 1283)



In the history of the blues, there has never been anyone quite like the Howlin' Wolf. Six foot three and close to 300 pounds in his salad days, the Wolf was the primal force of the music spun out to its ultimate conclusion. A Robert Johnson may have possessed more lyrical insight, a Muddy Waters more dignity, and a B.B. King certainly more technical expertise, but no one could match him for the singular ability to rock the house down to the foundation while simultaneously scaring its patrons out of their wits.

Complete Early Recordings: 1930, Skip James (Call No: Blues James 2009)

Among the earliest and most influential Delta bluesmen to record, Skip James was the best known proponent of the so-called Bentonia school of blues players, a genre strain invested with as much fanciful scholarly "research" as any. Coupling an oddball guitar tuning set against eerie, falsetto vocals, James's early recordings could make the hair stand up on the back of your neck.



Tragic Songs of Life, Louvin Brothers (Call No: Country Louvin Brothers 0105)



It wouldn't be hard for an album like Tragic Songs of Life to seem either morbid or unintentionally comical, but the genius of the Louvin Brothers is that this music never makes a wrong step; instead, these are 12 stories of the inevitable tragedies that touch every life, and there's a compassion in their performances that's beautiful and profoundly moving. Quite simply, this is a landmark of traditional country music that remains powerful more than fifty years after it was recorded.

The Billie Holiday Songbook, Billie Holiday (Call No: Jazz Vocalists Holiday 2462)

The first popular jazz singer to move audiences with the intense, personal feeling of classic blues, Billie Holiday changed the art of American pop vocals forever. "Strange Fruit" soon became the highlight of her performances. The standard, written by Café Society regular Lewis Allen and forever tied to Holiday, is an anguished reprisal of the intense racism still persistent in the South.



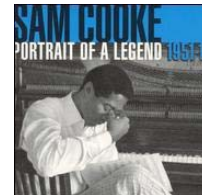
40 Greatest Hits, Hank Williams (Country Williams 2945 #1-2)



Hank Williams, born in Mount Olive, AL, on September 17, 1923, is the father of contemporary country music. He was a superstar by the age of 25; he was dead at the age of 29. In those four short years, he established the rules for all the country performers who followed him and, in the process, much of popular music.

Portrait of a Legend, 1951-1964, Sam Cooke (Call No: Pop/Rock Vocalists Cooke 2642)

Sam Cooke was the most important soul singer in history - he was also the inventor of soul music, and its most popular and beloved performer in both the black and white communities. Cooke was keenly aware of the music around him, and was particularly entranced by Bob Dylan's song "Blowin' in the Wind," its treatment of the plight of black Americans and other politically oppressed minorities. This convinced him that the time was right for songs that dealt with more than twisting the night away. The result was "A Change Is Gonna Come," perhaps the greatest song to come out of the civil rights struggle, and one that seemed to close and seal the gap between the two directions of Cooke's career, from gospel to pop.



The Sermon, Five Blind Boys of Alabama (Call No: Religious Gospel Five Blind 0412)



A treasure trove of previously unreleased material, this brings together 25 new tracks, all recorded between 1953 and 1957. Only two songs, "Heaven on My Mind" and "I'm Going Through," were ever released in any form, but the quality of the material is certainly as high as any of their early sides. Here's one of gospel's greatest groups, singing their hearts out in their absolute prime.