

THE BLUES: EPISODE 4

Standin' at the Crossroads

KEB' MO': Welcome to The Blues, the history of America's greatest roots music, from PRI, Public Radio International.

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Hi. I'm Keb' Mo', and together we'll explore the sounds, meet the musicians, hear the history, and travel to the places where the Blues continues to make its mark. Today we head back to the 1930s, the Depression years... This is The Blues - Standin' at the Crossroads.

STETSON KENNEDY: Everyone was poor in the Great Depression. But I suspect we never have gotten over the Depression. It's hell to be poor, ain't it?

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT (SPEECH): The only thing we have to fear is fear itself.

COLIN ESCOT: During the depression record sales really tanked. Radio had just come in and people could listen to music for free on the radio and record sales which had been really healthy almost went off the radar.

EDDIE CANTOR: My uncle, he got a good break. He died in September. Poor fellow had diabetes at 45. That's nothing. I had Chrysler at 110.

CLEMENT PRICE: During the long, agonizing decade of the Great Depression, fewer Blacks moved north because the jobs that they would have hoped to find were just no longer there.

PARTIAL SONG: "Brother, Can You Spare a Dime"

ANGELA DAVIS: The Depression did not radically change the economic circumstances of Black communities. The Depression created huge economic problems for people who had not previously known the depths of economic depression. But, for many Black people, life continued as it had before.

SONG: Robert Johnson, "I'm A Steady Rollin' Man"

KEB' MO': Recorded in 1937, that's an example of Depression-era Blues, from one of the all-time masters, Robert Johnson. "I'm A Steady Rollin' Man."

The Great Depression began with the stock market crash of October, 1929. By then, the Blues had matured in Black communities, spread throughout the South, and made its way to the large cities in the North.

The popularity of the phonograph and the birth of the recording industry brought the Blues to juke joints and homes everywhere. But in the 1930's, business was so bad that many record companies went under as the economy tanked.

Trying to get the country back on its feet, President Franklin Roosevelt created the New Deal, a major effort by the federal government designed to create jobs and to rebuild pride in America.

The Music Division of the Library of Congress sent out scouts to discover, record, and preserve American Folk music. In 1933, John and Alan Lomax, a father and son team who had been collecting songs in the South, now had the government's support.

LOMAX: Uh, tell me what's your name?

ERVIN WEBB: Ervin Webb.

LOMAX: And, uh, where did you learn that song, Ervin?

ERVIN WEBB: Just composing my own...makeup.

LOMAX: What were you thinking about when you made it up? Where you out in the line?

ERVIN WEBB: I was out in the line but I was thinking about goin' home.

SONG: Ervin Webb, "I'm Goin' Home"

KEB' MO': The Lomax field recordings are a direct link to America's past. Here's Bonnie Raitt.

BONNIE RAITT: The music is a reflection of where we were at, whether it's politics, sociological. The records we have from the Lomax recordings, they are so important a part of how we can learn about our past and how to celebrate where this music really lives.

WILLIAM FERRIS: They were Southern Whites from Texas who had a deep love and commitment to the music that they were recording.

KEB' MO': William Ferris, co-editor of the Encyclopedia of Southern Culture.

WILLIAM FERRIS: This commitment to the music led them into prisons like Parchman Penitentiary in the Mississippi Delta. They got in there essentially by chutzpah, befriended murders and people in there for various crimes who were also amazing singers like Huddie Ledbetter, who became known as "Leadbelly."

LEADBELLY: Now this is a "Rock Island Line". These boys is cuttin' with pole axes. A man cut right-handed he stand opposite side of the other man. The other man cut left-handed, he standing on the other side. And boy's going to sing about that Rock Island Line which is a mighty good road to ride.

SONG: Leadbelly, "Rock Island Line"

KEB' MO': Leadbelly's story has been told by Charles Wolfe and Kip Lornell in the book entitled *The Life and Legend of Leadbelly*.

KIP LORNELL: We had to get Legend in there because he does indeed seem to be bigger than life.

KEB' MO': This is Professor Kip Lornell.

KIP LORNELL: Everybody's perception of him is he's big, you know, 6'3", 250 pounds. He wasn't. He was a strong man, but he wasn't a tall man. He also has a legend of being in prison and singing his way out of prison twice and beating murder raps. We found no evidence that he ever actually killed anyone. So there was a lot of legend surrounding Leadbelly and his life which did make him seem like a far bigger figure than he was, but in fact, he was a very large figure in many regards. One of the things to remember about where Leadbelly grew up is that he spent part of his early days in Harrison County, Texas. According to the 1900 census, Harrison County, Texas had the highest percentage of African-Americans of any county in the United States. You know, he didn't see White folks for years because he lived in such a Black world, which really helped shape his repertoire.

SONG: Leadbelly, "Good Night Irene"

BROWNIE MCGHEE: I lived with Leadbelly. I played with Lead. Lead was great. He was a guiding light.

KEB' MO': Bluesman, Brownie McGhee. The legacy of John and Alan Lomax is controversial. In some cases they get credit for writing Leadbelly's songs. But in Brownie McGhee's view, they helped Leadbelly.

BROWNIE MCGHEE: The Lomax's kept Leadbelly in front of the people. If it hadn't have been for the Lomax's, Leadbelly would have been out of the picture. Songs that Lead did, you understand, survives now a days by every type of artist there is.

JOHN FOGERTY: To me, you can hear the dusty fields.

KEB' MO': John Fogerty, leader of Creedence Clearwater Revival, has recorded several Leadbelly songs.

JOHN FOGERTY: In my mind, I could see chain gangs and you got that sense of guys really sweating and singing their hearts out.

Now I realize that, since I'm white, that was sort of a romantic, Hollywood version. If I'd been black and had forefathers in that situation, I'd a been really pissed off.

When you hear music like that from people that don't appear to be making a commercial record, it just seems a lot more honest. You feel like you're getting into their being, their soul somehow. I mean, Leadbelly, I don't know if he was the greatest singer in the world or the greatest guitar player in the world. But he had what I would call a commanding presence.

SONG: Leadbelly, "The Midnight Special"

KEB' MO': That was Leadbelly singing the "The Midnight Special". I'm Keb' Mo' and we're sampling music from the Great Depression on The Blues.

In the 1920's and 30's there was a racial dividing line between Blacks and Whites as we all know. Within the Black community itself, there was a musical dividing line, a line between church music and any other kind of music.

KIP LORNELL: For Leadbelly in particular, this would include Blues and Country dance tunes.

KEB' MO': Folklorist and author Kip Lornell.

KIP LORNELL: He also played religious songs of all kinds. He played spirituals, but he also composed Gospel songs.

GEORGE HUNT: I don't know too many Blues personalities that couldn't play church music and play it well.

KEB' MO': George Hunt is a visual artist and historian.

GEORGE HUNT: In my era and time, you had to go to church. I don't care what you did on Saturday. If you got in at four o'clock you gonna get up at six o'clock and get ready to go, you know, to church. If you didn't go to church that meant the devil had already claimed your soul. And you, you had no choice but to run ragged like you did, you know. There was no salvation for you.

KEB' MO': Just about every Blues singer ever born has had to deal with the struggle between the sacred and the secular.

BUDDY GUY: My mother was Baptist and you know a lot of Baptists, I don't know if you know, always figured Blues was the devil's music.

KEB' MO': Buddy Guy.

BUDDY GUY: But they didn't stop me from listening to it. I would just bury my ears close as I could to the radio.

KEB' MO': Jimmy Rogers.

JIMMY ROGERS: My grandmother didn't want me playing the blues in the house. The first guitar that I owned, I had to put it out in the corncrib. I hid it out in the corncrib. She didn't ever go up there anyway, 'cause you had to climb up there on a ladder, like to get up in this corncrib. And she's a stout lady, she would never do that, you know? So I had a good hiding place for it.

RUTH BROWN: When you're the oldest of eight children, there are many days when you witness and experience the blues.

KEB' MO': Ruth Brown.

RUTH BROWN: Of course, I didn't get an opportunity to actually sing it, because it was considered the devil's music, as you know. And as I loosely used to say, I don't know why the devil's got to have the good stuff.

KEB' MO': From 1928, this is Tampa Red on guitar and Georgia Tom on piano with "Honey, It's Tight Like That."

SONG: Tampa Red, "Honey, It's Tight Like That"

KEB' MO': That was "Honey, It's Tight Like That" from Tampa Red recorded in 1928. To learn more about Tampa Red, visit yearoftheblues.org/radio.

The piano on that last song was played by a man known as Barrelhouse Tommy or Georgia Tom. His real name was Thomas A. Dorsey. In addition to being a much-recorded Blues musician during the Depression, he is considered the father of modern Gospel music.

JERRY BUTLER: The man who started the term 'Gospel music', Thomas Dorsey, said it was nothing but the Blues.

KEB' MO': Soul singer, Jerry Butler

JERRY BUTLER: You know, you could change the lyric to a good Gospel song and it would be the Blues. Or you could change the lyric to a good Blues song and it would be Gospel. As a matter of fact, Ray Charles did a whole number on (singing) "I got a woman, way over town, that's good to me." The same song (singing): "there's a man, goin' round, takin' names". Same thing: the Blues, with different lyrics.

KEB MO: According to Blues legend, one musician who took the battle between sacred and secular to the limit was Robert Johnson.

As the story goes, Robert Johnson was not a very good guitar player when he dropped from sight only to re-appear as the most gifted player of his time. Some say he sold his soul to the devil. After recording only twice, he died at the age of 27, allegedly poisoned by a jealous husband.

The myth and the music of Robert Johnson reached into the 1960's where it touched a generation of rock musicians.

ERIC CLAPTON: As a young man I was very excited by risk and drama.

KEB' MO': Eric Clapton.

ERIC CLAPTON: It amplified and it heightened the experience of listening to him and the identification that I got out of it, because at the age of 18, I didn't expect to live beyond 25.

KEB' MO': I'm Keb' Mo'. Up next, we'll have the story of the Blues singer who supposedly sold his soul to the Devil: Robert Johnson.

Major financial support for The Blues is proudly provided by Volkswagen. A road trip wouldn't be the same without music and no music is more connected to the American road than the Blues. Join Volkswagen in celebrating 100 years of The Blues.

This is The Blues: Standing at the Crossroads from PRI, Public Radio International. (19:25)

BREAK

(20:26)

KEB' MO': Welcome back to The Blues: Standin at the Crossroads, from PRI, Public Radio International. I'm Keb' Mo' and we are exploring the music of the Great Depression. This is just a little bit of The Rolling Stones doing the Robert Johnson song, "Love in Vain."

PARTIAL SONG: The Rolling Stones, "Love In Vain"

KEB' MO': Many music fans discovered Robert Johnson by listening to Rock versions of his songs including George Thorogood.

GEORGE THOROGOOD: First of all, I said, well if Keith Richards and Jimi Hendrix are the baddest cats in the world, who did they listen to? They listened to Chuck Berry and they listened to Bo Diddley. Well, who did they listen to? Muddy Waters and Elmore James. Well, who did they listen to? Robert Johnson. I stopped there.

KEB' MO': Legendary bluesman Muddy Waters was impressed by the way Robert Johnson could play both rhythm and lead on guitar.

MUDDY WATERS: He was carrying his own background, you know? Picking and carrying his own background and singing, too. A great guitar player can do that. And that's the way the Delta Blues was going then.

ERIC CLAPTON: It did something emotionally to me for sure, but there was also something much deeper going on which I cannot define at all and probably never will be able to.

KEB' MO': Eric Clapton.

ERIC CLAPTON: It moves me to the core. And I'll get that even listening in my car or wherever, today exactly the same as I did when I was a small boy.

KEB' MO': Here's Robert Johnson and "Love In Vain."

SONG: Robert Johnson, "Love in Vain"

KEB' MO': There you have it. "Love in Vain" from a true master of American music, Robert Johnson. Johnson's recordings have been released many times since they were first recorded in the 1930's. Generations of Blues and Rock musicians have tried to emulate his style.

In 1991, Lawrence Cohn put together the Grammy-winning double CD "Robert Johnson: The Complete Recordings."

LAWRENCE COHN: He had a short recording life. He only had, including the alternate takes, only 41 pieces recorded and here we are so many years later and we're still listening to him and dissecting his musical persona and you know some of his songs are just so haunting and so extraordinary. I mean, the poetry it just makes the hair stand up on your head.

KEB' MO': Robert Johnson was born in 1911 in Hazelhurst, Mississippi. There are only two photographs of him in circulation and little is truly known about his life. Historians believe he grew up in a broken home and at an early age was fascinated with the Blues. It's reported that the young Johnson sat outside Mississippi Delta juke joints and listened to the likes of Son House and Willie Brown play.

LAWRENCE COHN: I interviewed Son House several times when he was rediscovered.

KEB' MO': Once again, Lawrence Cohn.

LAWRENCE COHN: Johnson, he said, when he was 16 or 17 years old, he said he was a great harp player. He said he really was absolutely terrific. Guitar player, he said he was probably the worst guitar player in the area. And he said, "When Willie Brown and I used to play, we used to take our breaks and go back and you know, have something to drink, he would jump up on the stage and grab the guitar, and we'd lose customers because the people would leave because of the noise that he was making". And he said, "I was constantly having to tell him 'Look Robert, you know, you really can't play, don't do that'" and then he said, Johnson disappeared. He said he couldn't remember exactly for how long. Johnson came back one day, and he said, "Can I play?" He said "No." He said, "You know what happens when you play." And he and Willie Brown went in the back and said a few minutes later he heard this guitar playing that blew him off his chair and he went out and he said that it was Johnson. And he said he just couldn't believe it, just couldn't believe it, the transformation.

ROBERT JR. LOCKWOOD: Robert was about 65 years ahead of his own time. He could just go anywhere and make money.

KEB' MO': One of the few people alive today who knew Robert Johnson is his stepson, Robert Junior Lockwood.

ROBERT JR. LOCKWOOD: I'd seen him get up at 9 o'clock at night and go downtown and start playing and lights (would) start coming on. Walk away with \$100 to \$150 in a couple of hours. It was incredible how he could play and back himself up. Very gifted man.

KEB' MO': Robert Johnson learned a lot from the country blues masters around him. And he himself was a guitarist with extraordinary skills. But did he do something, something dark and mysterious, to get such a talent at such a young age?

DAVID EVANS: Some fans of Robert Johnson would like to assume that he made a pact with the Devil.

KEB' MO': David Evans is a professor of music at the University of Memphis.

DAVID EVANS: Robert Johnson sang a number of songs with themes of contact with the Devil, conflict between a religious life and the Blues life. He does have a song called "Crossroads Blues". Some people have interpreted it as going to a crossroads to meet the Devil.

WILLIAM FERRIS: Well, you have in traditional African religion as well as in Christianity, the tradition of the crossroads.

KEB MO: Professor William Ferris.

WILLIAM FERRIS: This is like the Damascus road experience in the Old Testament with Paul. But you have this in voodoo and you have it in the Blues. The association of the Devil with the Blues is deeply embedded within the Mississippi Delta and within the Black experience itself.

KEB' MO': Here's Robert Johnson: "Cross Road Blues".

SONG: Robert Johnson, "Cross Road Blues"

KEB' MO': Robert Johnson's "Cross Road Blues" recorded in 1937 during the Depression.

The story of Robert Johnson selling his soul to the Devil is one of the Blues' most lasting legends. As the tale is told, at midnight, Johnson arrived at the crossroads and handed the Devil his guitar. Satan tuned it, gave it back, and from that moment on, Robert Johnson had supernatural music ability.

Robert Santelli, CEO of the Experience Music Project and author of *The Big Book of Blues*, traveled recently to Clarksdale, Mississippi. On a Saturday night at midnight, he visited the crossroads of Highways 61 and 49 to see what he might find.

ROBERT SANTELLI: There are many crossroads in Mississippi, lonely intersections that cut through cotton country, places where at midnight strange things could indeed occur. But no crossroads is as famous as the one I'm standing at right now. It was here in Clarksdale, Mississippi, at the intersection of highways 49 and 61, where a young Robert Johnson just might have sold his soul to the Devil in exchange for guitar genius. That's the way the legend goes. Tonight, just a few strokes from midnight, I find no signs that Blues history might have been made here, or even blues mythology. What is here is a fast food chicken joint, Abe's Barbecue, a gas station, people hustling, and enough cars and commercial activity to think, "Well, if people aren't selling their souls, they're selling most everything else."

BARRY LEE PEARSON: He didn't sell his soul to the Devil to get that talent, he just studied his peers and was a really good musician himself

KEB' MO': Barry Lee Pearson is co-author of the new book, *Robert Johnson, Lost and Found*.

BARRY LEE PEARSON: We're out to save his soul a little bit. He derives his material from tradition and that tradition is in the African-American community and that's where it should be credited. There's no need to give Satan all that much credit there.

KEB' MO': As near as anyone can figure, Robert Johnson never claimed to have sold his soul to the Devil. It turns out flirting with the Devil was something of a marketing ploy used by musicians, recording companies, and promoters to make music seem more mysterious. In fact, many historians say the Devil myth actually started with another Johnson – singer, guitarist Tommy Johnson.

DAVID EVANS: They are not related as far as anyone's been able to determine, although interestingly, Robert Johnson was born 20 or 25 miles south of where Tommy Johnson was.

KEB' MO': David Evans is author of the biography, *Tommy Johnson*.

DAVID EVANS: Tommy Johnson's older brother, LeDell, told me that Tommy had learned to play the guitar really well by making a pact with the Devil. Now, you have to understand that LeDell Johnson was a preacher, a very fundamentalist preacher, and full of Devil lore. He had encountered the Devil himself, he told me.

KEB' MO': Tommy Johnson's legend even found its way into the recent film, "O Brother, Where Art Thou."

MOVIE CLIP: "O Brother Where Art Thou?"

KEB' MO': Tommy Johnson was played by contemporary blues artist, Chris Thomas King.

CHRIS THOMAS KING: A lot of people confuse my character with Robert Johnson. But it was always meant to be Tommy Johnson because it was Tommy Johnson who, ten years before Robert even began playing the guitar, spread this rumor or myth or whatever it is about the crossroads.

KEB' MO': Tommy Johnson was born in 1896 in Terry, Mississippi. He lived the life of a bluesman to the fullest. He was, by most accounts, a hardy womanizer and an all-night carouser and a particularly heavy drinker.

He recorded only 17 tracks between 1928 and 1930, but his music was emotional and haunting. In the 60s, the California blues-rock group Canned Heat took its name from his song, "Canned Heat Blues." And even today, his music is being reinterpreted. This is musician Rory Block.

RORY BLOCK: I don't have the information to sit down and write a book about Tommy Johnson's life and tell you where he was born and who his mother was. What I have done is simply gone into the music from the emotional point of view without knowing the details.

Tommy Johnson is, he's just unparalleled. The soul in his voice, the, sort of, anguish. There was a real deep crying in his singing that is so compelling. A rich, crying sound that is, is just... I mean, I'm getting goose pimples now just telling you about his voice.

KEB' MO': Okay, here's Tommy Johnson and "Big Road Blues."

SONG: Tommy Johnson, "Big Road Blues."

KEB' MO': Tommy Johnson and "Big Road Blues." You can learn more about Tommy Johnson and Robert Johnson by visiting our website, yearoftheblues.org/radio.

I'm Keb' Mo'. We'll continue our journey through the Country Blues of the 1930s. Next stop: the Piedmont region of the Eastern Seaboard.

LEVON HELM: There's a Piedmont Blues which is like a loping kind of a Blues, more of a high stepping kind of a Blues than Delta Blues. It's worth checking out. Good luck, you'll enjoy it.

KEB' MO': You're listening to The Blues: Standin' at the Crossroads from PRI, Public Radio International. (40:20)

BREAK

KEB' MO': Welcome back to The Blues from PRI, Public Radio International. I'm Keb' Mo'. This is Standin' at the Crossroads - Blues music from the Great Depression.

Now the Mississippi Delta Blues of Robert Johnson and his contemporaries was not the only great blues being made back then. There is a rich Blues tradition along a part of the Atlantic Coast known as the Piedmont region. Most Blues fans would say that it's everything from West Virginia down to Florida.

Here is folklorist Barry Lee Pearson.

BARRY LEE PEARSON: Piedmont Blues is guitar music, a pretty complicated guitar tradition. It's not just guys kind of hitting on the guitar. It's a finger-picking style which may in fact owe its origins to African traditions. You might even go so far as to say Piedmont Blues remained African-American country music. It never did become city music. People have complained that the Piedmont tradition is less intense and perhaps less African than what you find in the Mississippi Delta. I disagree with both of those things. It really depends on who you're listening to.

KEB' MO': According to blues musician Jerry Ricks, it's not just the guitar style. The lyrics are different as well.

JERRY RICKS: When you hear things like, *I ain't gonna state no color, but her front teeth is crowned with gold/ She got a mortgage on my body, she's got a lien on my soul.* The whole metaphor of how they use words is very very different than saying, *Got a little girl, nice and round/ She can look up as long as I can look down/ She's my truckin' little baby.* Because the language that is used in that area is different than the language the Black culture uses in another area.

KEB' MO': One of the early pioneers of Piedmont Blues was Blind Blake. Born in the 1890s, he became one of the best-selling Country Blues artists of the 1920s.

BARRY LEE PEARSON: The fact is, he was a terrific influence on all the rest of the Piedmont musicians who followed.

KEB' MO': Once again, Barry Lee Pearson.

BARRY LEE PEARSON: Here's a guy that probably came from Florida, worked this region for a short period of time and then went to Chicago and became a studio musician and then disappeared. Where he got his style from, that's one question. But his impact on other musicians is amazing and direct. Especially when he does his instrumentals, it's just, it's marvelous.

KEB' MO': Here's Blind Blake and his classic, "Diddie Wa Diddie."

SONG: Blind Blake, "Diddie Wa Diddie"

KEB' MO': From 1929, Blind Blake and "Diddie Wa Diddie." Visit yearoftheblues.org/radio and you just might find out what *Diddie Wa Diddie* means. You can certainly learn more about Blind Blake and the Piedmont style.

Kip Lornell is Professor of Africana Studies at George Washington University. He says the color line in the Piedmont was not as strict as in other parts of the South.

KIP LORNELL: Far higher percentage of African-Americans owned small farms in the Piedmont than they did in Mississippi, that's one major difference. And I think that gave people more of a sense of cooperating with their neighbors irrespective of race. I know that from interviewing Black and White musicians from the Piedmont, a lot of them would talk about integrated corn shucking. When it was corn shucking time, it didn't matter if you were Black or White, you were there helping and those kinds of house parties occurred irrespective of race. I'm not saying it's a panacea, but it was a very different situation from the kind of racial exclusionary policies that you found in Mississippi at the time.

It just didn't seem to be quite as rough and tumble. It seemed to be a little bit more family centric. It seemed to have more kids involved with it.

KEB' MO': Some of the Piedmont players played in the Ragtime flavored finger-picking style of Blind Blake. Others created an original sound using a twelve-string guitar or a harmonica. The most influential of the twelve-string guitarists was Blind Willie McTell.

LAWRENCE COHN: He was kind of unusual. I mean, he was from the South, but he had been educated at blind schools in Chicago and New York.

KEB' MO': Lawrence Cohn is author of "Nothing but the Blues".

LAWRENCE COHN: He had an engaging way of singing, the timbre to his voice. I mean, he had an odd way of phrasing things. He just had a voice that really hit you and his guitar playing was just magnificent. You know, straight finger picking or his slide playing and the songs, I mean the songs were great.

KEB' MO': Record Producer Colin Escott picks up the story of Blind Willie McTell.

COLIN ESCOTT: He was led around by his wife. He'd set up on street corners and just sing and play. He was kind of a hard luck guy in that he was still active up into the '50's and if he'd just hung on a little bit longer into the '60's he would have had a pretty good career. In 1969 I think it was, the Youngbloods and Taj Mahal did "Statesboro Blues" and then the Allman Brothers made it into a Stadium Rock standard. So you know if poor old Blind Willie had he just been able to hang on a few more years he'd have been fabulously rich.

KEB' MO': Recorded in 1928 at the age of 27, this is Blind Willie McTell and "Statesboro Blues."

SONG: Blind Willie McTell, "Statesboro Blues"

KEB' MO': That was Blind Willie McTell's signature song, "Statesboro Blues." Willie McTell played a kind of Depression-era blues called Piedmont Blues. His clever lyrics and soulful delivery were a big influence on the early songwriting of Bob Dylan.

One of the many rock guitarists who play in the Piedmont tradition is Jorma Kaukonen from Jefferson Airplane and Hot Tuna.

JORMA KAUKONEN: I'm a Piedmont style player. One of the things that's nice about finger picking is that you can do it without having a band. Basically, you sit down, it's a person on the guitar and that's all you need. Since I was sort of a shy kid when I learned how to play, that was great for me because I didn't have to like relate to a bunch of people. I could lock myself in the bathroom where we know it always sounds best and play guitar and sing.

KEB' MO': Two modern blues musicians who keep alive the Piedmont style are guitarist John Cephas and harmonica player Phil Wiggins. We asked Cephas and Wiggins to play a Piedmont song exclusively for The Blues. John Cephas.

JOHN CEPHAS: Okay this song um, "Mamie" is a typical song that would be played in the Piedmont.

SONG: Cephas & Wiggins, "Mamie"

KEB' MO': That was "Mamie" recorded exclusively for The Blues by Cephas and Wiggins - two modern day Piedmont Blues artists.

The Piedmont and Delta styles of the Depression are two building blocks of contemporary music. Chris Thomas King, Bonnie Raitt, Aerosmith, Lucinda Williams, Eric Clapton, Beck, Ben Harper and many, many others have used this music as their foundation.

Thank you for joining us.

The Blues is a co-production of EMP Radio and Ben Manilla Productions in association with WGBH Radio, Boston. Produced by Peter Crimmins and Matt Bauer. Executive Producers: Robert Santelli and Ben Manilla. Executive in charge for WGBH Radio: Robert Lyons.

Major financial support for The Blues is proudly provided by Volkswagen. Ever since Blues music first surfaced in Clarksdale, Mississippi, it's traveled America's highways to become a part of our nation's history. Join Volkswagen in celebrating 100 years of The Blues.

Support for this program comes from this station and Public Radio International stations nationwide and is made possible in part by the PRI Program Fund whose contributors include The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.

I'm Keb' Mo' and this has been The Blues, Standin' at the Crossroads.

ANNOUNCER: P-R-I, Public Radio International. (58:58)