

THE BLUES™

pbs.org/theblues

Fact sheet

Title

The Blues™ project

Television series title

The Blues

PBS series schedule

Seven-night blues television festival premieres Sunday, September 28 from 9–11pm on PBS. Check local listings for exact broadcast dates and times.

Exclusive project sponsor

Volkswagen of America, Inc. is proud to be the exclusive national sponsor of *The Blues*, and has long been a strong supporter of music, film and the creative arts.

Project overview

The Blues, executive produced by filmmaker Martin Scorsese, is a seven-film television series of personal and impressionistic films viewed through the lens of seven world-famous directors who share a passion for the music.

The blues is a powerfully influential music genre; an expression of the African-American experience that speaks of universal emotions. Countless of the world's most celebrated artists have credited the blues with influencing their music. In this musical journey, we are able not only to trace the actual journey of the music from Africa, across America, and to Europe, but also trace the effects of the blues on all popular music. It can be argued that no other type of music has had a more everlasting influence on today's artists than the blues.

As Willie Dixon so aptly said, **“The blues are the roots; everything else is the fruits.”**

Sponsored by Volkswagen, *The Blues* project's goals are to celebrate and increase appreciation of blues music; to capture the essence and cultural impact of this genre through stories of artists and their music; and to inspire audiences to explore their own personal relationships with the blues.

The Blues is a multi-media presentation from Vulcan Productions and Road Movies in association with Cappa Productions and Jigsaw Productions. *The Blues* aims to capture the essence of the blues—its emotional resonance—and explore how this music has so deeply influenced people the world over.

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The much-anticipated series, premiering Sunday, September 28 from 9–11pm on PBS, anchors a multi-media project to help raise awareness of the blues and its contribution to American culture and music worldwide. Its goal is to reach as many people as possible through the following initiatives:

- a seven-film television series on PBS
- an extensive Web site at pbs.org/theblues
- a 13-part radio series on public radio stations nationwide, distributed by Public Radio International
- a teacher's guide containing blues lesson plans, teaching strategies and resource materials for high school teachers of English, Social Studies and Music
- a companion book published by Amistad, an imprint of HarperCollins, entitled *Martin Scorsese Presents The Blues: A Musical Journey*
- value-added DVDs, a CD boxed set, individual soundtracks for each show, a single "Best of" album and individual artist recordings released collaboratively by Hip-O Records/Universal Music Enterprises and Columbia/Legacy
- "On the Road," a national schedule of film, music and heritage events celebrating the blues throughout the year
- a "Salute to the Blues" benefit concert that took place at Radio City Music Hall on February 7, 2003
- a film of the "Salute to the Blues" concert for theatrical release directed by Antoine Fuqua (*Training Day*) and executive produced by Martin Scorsese

The Blues—TV Series

Under the guiding hand of Executive Producer Martin Scorsese, ***The Blues*** is a seven-part television series of personal and impressionistic films viewed through the lens of seven world-famous directors who share a passion for the music. The films, by Charles Burnett, Clint Eastwood, Mike Figgis, Marc Levin, Richard Pearce, Martin Scorsese, and Wim Wenders, capture the essence of blues music and delve into its global influence—from its roots in Africa to its inspirational role in today's music. Four of the seven films are written by Charles Burnett, Robert Gordon, Peter Guralnick, and Wim Wenders.

The Blues is a series of impressionistic and iconoclastic films—each director exploring the music through his own personal connections. Simply put, it is the journey from Robert Johnson's Delta blues "Love in Vain," to John Coltrane's transcendental anthem, "A Love Supreme." Driven by the beat of performances by famous players from every kind of music the blues has inspired—hip-hop, rhythm and blues, soul, country and rock 'n' roll—this seven-part series takes us on a journey as soulful and ebullient as the music itself. Martin Scorsese personally introduces each of the seven episodes. Along with Scorsese, Paul G. Allen and Jody Patton of Vulcan Productions and Ulrich Felsberg of Road Movies are executive producing the series; Alex Gibney is the series producer; Margaret Bodde is the producer and Richard Hutton is the co-producer.

The Blues is closed captioned for deaf and hard-of-hearing viewers, and described for people who are blind or visually impaired by the Media Access Group at WGBH. The descriptive narration is made possible by a special grant from Volkswagen and is available on the SAP channel of stereo TVs and VCRs.

Feel Like Going Home—Director **Martin Scorsese** (*The Last Waltz, Raging Bull, Gangs of New York*) pays homage to the Delta blues. Musician Corey Harris travels through Mississippi and on to West Africa, exploring the roots of the music. The film celebrates the early Delta blues-men through original performances (including Willie King, Taj Mahal, Otha Turner and Ali Farka Touré) and rare archival footage (featuring Son House, Muddy Waters and John Lee Hooker).

The Soul of a Man—Director **Wim Wenders** (*Buena Vista Social Club; Wings of Desire; Paris, Texas*) explores the lives of his favorite blues artists—Skip James, Blind Willie Johnson and J. B. Lenoir—in a film that is part history and part personal pilgrimage. The film tells the story of these lives in music through a fictional film-within-a-film, rare archival footage, and covers of their songs by contemporary musicians, including Bonnie Raitt, Lucinda Williams, Lou Reed, Eagle Eye Cherry, Nick Cave and The Bad Seeds, The Jon Spencer Blues Explosion, Cassandra Wilson, Garland Jeffreys, Los Lobos and others.

The Road to Memphis—Director **Richard Pearce** (*The Long Walk Home, Leap of Faith, A Family Thing*) traces the musical odyssey of blues legend B.B. King in a film that pays tribute to the city that gave birth to a new style of blues. Pearce's homage to Memphis features original performances by B.B. King, Bobby Rush, Rosco Gordon and Ike Turner, as well as historical footage of Howlin' Wolf and Fats Domino.

Warming by the Devil's Fire—Director **Charles Burnett** (*Killer of Sheep, My Brother's Wedding, To Sleep with Anger*) presents a tale about a young boy's encounter with his family in Mississippi in 1955, and intergenerational tensions between the heavenly strains of gospel and the devilish moans of the blues.

Godfathers and Sons—Director **Marc Levin** (*Slam, Whiteboys, Brooklyn Babylon*) travels to Chicago with hip-hop legend Chuck D (of Public Enemy) and Marshall Chess (son of Leonard Chess and heir to the Chess Records legacy) to explore the heyday of Chicago blues as they unite to produce an album that seeks to bring veteran blues players together with contemporary hip-hop musicians. Along with never-before-seen archival footage of Howlin' Wolf, Muddy Waters and the Paul Butterfield Blues Band, are original performances by Koko Taylor, Otis Rush, Magic Slim, Ike Turner and Sam Lay.

Red, White & Blues—Director **Mike Figgis** (*Stormy Monday, Leaving Las Vegas, Timecode*) joins musicians such as Van Morrison, Eric Clapton, Jeff Beck and Tom Jones performing and talking about the music of the early 60s British invasion that reintroduced the blues sound to America.

Piano Blues—Director—and piano player—**Clint Eastwood** (*Play Misty for Me, Bird, Unforgiven*) explores his life-long passion for the piano blues, using a treasure trove of rare historical acts as well as interviews and performances by such living legends as Pinetop Perkins and Jay McShann, as well as Dave Brubeck and Marcia Ball.

Fact Sheet

The Blues—International Theatrical Release/Distribution

- International distributor Road Sales (Promark)
- Great interest in all European and Asian countries
- Depending on each country, a possible theatrical release on a small scale
- Also depending on the country, a TV and Video release
- Wim Wenders' *The Soul of a Man* is premiering at Cannes
- Possible film festival participation at San Sebastian, Amsterdam and Venice

The Blues—The Web Site: www.pbs.org/theblues

- Planned launch—August, 2003
- (Please note: until August, a preview site serves as placeholder and provides background information to the project and series)
- Pbs.org/theblues serves as a complement to the film series to provide additional context and perspective.

Web site goals:

- Reinforce information introduced in each film
- Offer educational materials for teachers to use in the classroom
- Explore critical milestones of the evolution of blues music
- Provide an informative and entertaining interactive experience targeted for broad audience appeal

The Blues—The Radio Series

- a 13-part radio series on public radio stations nationwide, distributed by Public Radio International and premiering September 28
- Co-produced by Experience Music Project (EMP) and Ben Manilla Productions
- Hosted and narrated by Grammy award winner Keb' Mo'
- Presented by WGBH Boston
- History of the blues—documentary style
- Chronological, oral history of the blues
- Extensive interviews with blues artists past and present

The Blues—The Educational Initiative

- Broadcast series-related education initiative (begins August 2003)
- On-line lesson plans: discography, bibliography, etc.
- Free teacher's guide, complete with lesson plans, discography, bibliography and blues CD
- Broad range of lesson plans, teaching strategies and resource materials for the classroom
- Target audiences: high school teachers of English, Social Studies and Music
- Produced by Experience Music Project (EMP)

The Blues—The Companion Book

- Published by Amistad, an imprint of HarperCollins, entitled *Martin Scorsese Presents The Blues: A Musical Journey*
- Preface written by Martin Scorsese, afterword by Chuck D, and contributions from a wide variety of contemporary writers as well as selections culled from previously published works
- Edited by renowned music writer Peter Guralnick, author of *Last Train to Memphis* and *Sweet Soul Music*; Robert Santelli, author of *The Big Book on Blues* and *Best of the Blues*, Holly George-Warren and Christopher John Farley
- The book will be published concurrently with the television broadcast of ***The Blues*** series.

Fact Sheet

The Blues—The Music CDs

The CD releases for this project are as follows:

- *Martin Scorsese Presents The Blues—A Musical Journey*, 5-CD deluxe boxed set includes a comprehensive collection of the music from the seven films airing on PBS (released by UME/Hip-O Records in North America and Sony internationally)
- *Martin Scorsese Presents The Best Of The Blues*, a single CD compilation that offers an overview of the project (released by Universal in North America and Sony internationally)
- Individual companion CDs to each of the seven films released globally by the company designated:
 - *Feel Like Going Home*—Martin Scorsese (released by Sony)
 - *The Soul of a Man*—Wim Wenders (released by Sony)
 - *The Road to Memphis*—Richard Pearce (released by Universal)
 - *Warming by The Devil's Fire*—Charles Burnett (released by Sony)
 - *Godfathers and Sons*—Marc Levin (released by Universal)
 - *Red, White & Blues*—Mike Figgis (released by Universal)
 - *Piano Blues*—Clint Eastwood (released by Sony)
- *The Blues*—12 individual artist collections include Eric Clapton, Son House, B.B. King, Bessie Smith, Muddy Waters, The Allman Brothers, Taj Mahal, Keb' Mo', Jimi Hendrix, J. B. Lenoir, Stevie Ray Vaughn and Robert Johnson

The Blues—The DVDs/Video

The Blues series is distributed on DVD and home video in North America through Columbia/Legacy. All seven films will be released as a collectors' set concurrently with the PBS broadcast.

The Blues—“On the Road”

The Blues takes the music and the project to music lovers across North America with:

- a national schedule of film, music and heritage events celebrating the blues throughout the year
- “On the Road” festivals include Sundance Film Festival, Full Frame Film Festival, New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival, Beale Street Music Festival, Seattle International Film Festival, Chicago Blues Festival, Spirit Festival, Bumbershoot Music Festival, Toronto International Film Festival and the Monterey Jazz Festival

The Blues—The Concert and Concert Film

Concert

- Friday, February 7, 2003 “Salute to the Blues” benefit concert at Radio City Music Hall, New York
- Presented by Martin Scorsese
- Produced by Vulcan Productions, Experience Music Project (EMP) and presented by Volkswagen
- Net proceeds are primary fundraiser for the Blues Music Foundation
- Legendary lineup of more than 50 artists included B.B. King, Bonnie Raitt, Buddy Guy, Solomon Burke, Natalie Cole, Shemekia Copeland, Robert Cray, Dr. John, Honeyboy Edwards, The Neville Brothers, Vernon Reid and Mavis Staples, as well as Aerosmith, Gregg Allman, India.Arie, Chuck D and many more

Fact Sheet

Concert Film

- Produced by Vulcan Productions
- Martin Scorsese, executive producer
- Antoine Fuqua, director
- Net proceeds from film release go to the Blues Music Foundation

The Blues—YEAR OF THE BLUES (YOTB)

In 1903, composer W.C. Handy first heard the blues, igniting an explosion of its influence that now reaches worldwide, both on its own and through its reverberations in the many genres of which it is a foundation, including jazz, rhythm and blues, rock 'n' roll, soul and hip hop. In celebration of the hundredth anniversary of this encounter, and in recognition of the ongoing impact of the blues upon music and cultural history, both in America and around the world, the United States Congress proclaimed the year beginning January 1, 2003, the YEAR OF THE BLUES. To mark this important occasion, partners Experience Music Project (EMP), the Blues Foundation, Blues Inc., Vulcan Productions, along with other partners, have designed a year-long series of interrelated events, multi-media projects, and education initiatives—to raise awareness of the blues and its uniquely American heritage.

YEAR OF THE BLUES elements include:

- Congressional Proclamation of YOTB
- Yearoftheblues.org launch date December 16, 2002

The YEAR OF THE BLUES Web site has the ultimate goal of celebrating and creating greater awareness of the blues and its evolving place in music and cultural history. The site is a first-stop site (a "portal") for all information on YOTB events, partners and sponsors, and will provide an opportunity to connect visitors who are interested in supporting and/or learning about the blues to resources that will help them do so.

- "Sweet Home Chicago: Big City Blues 1946-1966" Blues Traveling Museum Exhibit created by Experience Music Project (EMP), launches at Experience Museum Project in Seattle September 27 and then tours the country throughout the year