

Urban or City Blues are terms used to describe more formally structured, sophisticated post war material, even though the blues recorded by dance band orchestras and female vocalists are clearly urban in nature. Every city had a red light district, a levy, a train station, gambling houses, street corners and tenement stoops - all providing a ready audience in need of entertainment. In general this is cool vs hot material, a bit detached compared to Country material. The beat tends to be heavier and distinctively regular, as often players had to work together in ensembles. There is much credence to a theory of parallel development as well as the more convenient linear development resulting from Delta (Country) musicians migrating north.

Lonnie Johnson was a prolific blues guitarist, violinist, author and singer in New Orleans who first came to prominence in the 1920s. His take on country blues performers was that their 'authenticity' was actually a lack of professionalism, terming them 'primitives'. One good example of the blurred relationship between city and country blues is that one of the best known country blues musician Robert Johnson learned much from studying Lonnie Johnson's (no relation) recordings. As stated in *Nothing But the Blues*, "By the late 1930s, singers like Robert Johnson were making urban blues less a matter of geography than of attitude."

Notable city bred or resettled early bluesman of the 20s & 30s include Leroy Carr (another major Robert Johnson influence) and Francis "Scrapper" Blackwell, both from Indianapolis, Chicago's Georgia Tom and Tampa Red who ushered in urban 'hokum' or 'good time' blues with the massive, dirty, "It's Tight Like That," Chicago's Big Bill Broonzy, and Big Joe Turner from Kansas City. Turner would popularize boogie-woogie after moving to NYC in 1939 and be considered a 'jump' blues artist. Dallas born T-Bone Walker danced and played urban blues, codifying his showstopper performance style in LA by the early 1940s. All this indicates that even before World War II the urban blues were a living, thriving music.

Mississippians Muddy Waters and Sunnyland Slim moved to Chicago in '43, the same year that Charles Brown went from Texas to LA. Waters made his first important recordings in 1947, and in 1948, when radio station WDIA adopted an all-Black music format, Memphis joined Chicago as a major center for the urban sound.

Water's dubbed his sound 'deep blues,' menacing and hard. What he ushered in would be called, "Chicago Blues." On his early recordings Waters was backed only by his electric Gibson guitar and the bass of Ernest "Big"

Crawford. On stage he led an ensemble called the Headhunters, featuring Crawford, Little Walter on harmonica, guitarist Jimmy Rogers and a traps drummer. Water's band would become a prime stop for many leading musicians, including Junior Wells, Otis Spann, James Cotton and Willie Dixon. Howlin' Wolf was a major figure on the Memphis scene until he moved to Chicago to become Waters' biggest rival around 1952. Later arrivals included Sonny Boy Williamson II and Jimmy Reed. Around 1956 Chicago's west side produced the urban blues next twist, a horn section in guitar bands led by Otis Rush, Magic Sam and Buddy Guy.

Back in Memphis, BB King was, well, the King. His plucked note style would later influence all modern bluesman. Other Memphis notables included Bobby "Blue" Bland (also assoc. w/ Texas), Junior Parker and Little Milton. Bland's smooth delivery and on the money pitch was in obvious contrast to most of his peers.

By the 1940 the urban style would be an essential component in the even tempoed, more frantic sounding **Jump Blues**. "Jump" could be characterized as horn-driven, up-tempo, jazz influenced small combo or orchestral music, having little reliance on stringed instruments with a heavy, regular beat and featuring an upfront male vocalist. The Music of Black Americans defines jump as "having a relentless heavy, beat, formed when Delta bluesman encountered jazz in Chicago, around 1940 when Sonny Boy Williamson #1 added a drummer." The leading jump artist was Louis Jordan and "jump" is just as often characterized as a jazz style.

It was jump that would push the blues into rhythm *and* blues, a primary source for rock & roll.

Any clean distinction between city and country is sometimes hard to make. One style of blues, from the head of the head of the Mississippi Delta basin was termed **Border Blues**, **Memphis Border Blues** or **Jug Band Blues**. This country style of playing using whiskey jugs for base instruments operated chiefly in urban centers and mostly as larger ensembles. Also all of the proto-jazz, urban piano styles, like stride and boogie could easily be classified as "urban blues" music. To add to the confusion, experts like Charles Keil characterized John Lee Hooker and Lightning Hopkins as, "citified country blues."

A major revival of urban blues was the **British Blues**, a UK based movement that was part of the British Invasion era of rock. What began as an homage in the late 50s almost became a style of its own by the 60s as young white Englishmen researched rock'n'roll roots to produce a variant of modern electric

Blues. Approaches varied, as did levels of authenticity, sincerity and competence. Many of the performers emerged from a similar urban environment as American bluesman, poor and using music as a means to escape poverty. Even if few ever experienced the role of outsider as thoroughly as a Black person in the American south, the music signified nonconformity to young white audiences. Most groups began as crowd-pleasing pub rockers, and some artists, like John Mayall, have endured longer than the fad. If nothing else British Blues offered a gritty foil to Beatlemania. The Rolling Stones took their name from the Muddy Waters blues number and their earliest recordings heavily featured blues songs and blue's based rhythms.

other names or sub-genres :	City Blues Modern Electric Blues Electric Blues Jump Blues Piano Blues Border Blues Memphis Blues Jug Band Blues Barrelhouse Ragtime Stomp Hokum Good Time Dirty Blues
era :	1900s to present heyday : postwar (1945 - 1950) revival : rock era (60s)
place :	Chicago Memphis Kansas City St Louis Cincinnati Indianapolis New York Urban centers across United States
meter :	duple, 4/4 most common
tempo :	moderate - fast
instrumentation:	acoustic era : piano or piano, trumpet or coronet, clarinet, saxophone kit drum, bass jug bands: jug washboard upright bass modern electric era : electric guitar, harmonica, bass, kit drums less common: dance band or classical orchestra jump blues : brass
player or group configuration :	small combo
vocalization :	solo male
lyric content :	strong male point of view love gone bad cheating physical love bragging
authenticity :	modern
song or music structure or form :	composed lyric song ballad
song or music sound description :	electric amplified plucked notes slide bottleneck harmonica raucous
gender :	male
remember :	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DRUM KITS</li> <li>• REGULAR BEAT PLAYED BY ENSEMBLES</li> <li>• MUSICALLY MORE SOPHISTICATED</li> <li>• later work ELECTRIC</li> </ul>

artist	song	specific keyword
W.C. Handy	St Louis Blues	
Lonnie Johnson	Crowing Rooster Blues	New Orleans
Tampa Red	It's Tight Like That	Chicago / hokum
Roosevelt Sykes		St Louis / piano
Little Brother Montgomery		Chicago / piano
Big Joe Turner	Flip, Flop Fly Shake Rattle & Roll	Kansas City
Big Bill Broonzy		Chicago
Muddy Waters	I Can't Be Satisfied Rollin' Stone Hoochie Coochi Man Got My Mojo Workin'"	Chicago
Junior Wells		Chicago
Willie Dixon		Chicago
Howlin' Wolf	Smokestack Lightnin' Back Door Man Killing Floor"	Memphis - Chicago
BB King	Rock Me Baby"	Memphis - Chicago
Bobby Blue Bland	Farther Up The Road Stormy Monday Blues	Memphis
T-Bone Walker	Stormy Monday Blues"	Dallas - LA
Jimmy Reed	Baby What You Want Me To Do	Chicago
Otis Spann		Chicago
Slim Harpo		
Snooks Eaglin		New Orleans
Memphis Jug Band		Memphis
Buddy Guy		Chicago
Elmore James	Dust My Broom It Hurts Me Too	Chicago
John Lee Hooker	Boogie Chillun	Detroit
John Mayall	Room to Move	UK