

## Crucial Chicago Blues (2003)

Written by bluesever

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01. *Low Down And Dirty* - Luther Allison 02. *Ernestine* - Koko Taylor 03. *Somebody Changed the Lock* - Junior Wells 04. *Take Five* - Hound Dog Taylor [play](#) 05. *Cotton Picking Blues* - Son Seals 06. *Let Me Stir in Your Pot* - Carey Bell 07. *Mama, Talk to Your Daughter* - Magic Slim 08. *Cold Lonely Nights* - Lonnie Brooks 09. *Take It Easy, Baby* - Pinetop Perkins 10. *My Mind Is Gone* - Lil' Ed & the Blues Imperials

[play](#)

11. *23 Hours Too Long* - James Cotton 12. *I Hear Some Blues Downstairs* - Fenton Robinson

One of three simultaneously released, budget-priced Alligator blues compilations (the other two are Crucial Guitar Blues and Crucial Harmonica Blues), Crucial Chicago Blues is a 12-track anthology of the Chicago-based label's hometown artists. Harp players such as Carey Bell, James Cotton, and Junior Wells share space with guitarists Fenton Robinson, Magic Slim, Son Seals, and Lonnie Brooks, who nearly steals the show with his solo on a live "Cold Lonely Nights." Muddy Water's pianist, Pinetop Perkins, is the only keyboard entry and oldest performer. In fact, the album should put "contemporary" in its title, since the classic blues performers most fans associate with Chicago -- such as Otis Rush, Muddy Waters, and Howlin' Wolf -- were never Alligator artists and hence are not included. Regardless, this is a formidable lineup, with the tough Chicago guitar sound well-represented by Magic Slim and Luther Allison. Both Little Ed & the Blues Imperials and Hound Dog Taylor (the label's first signing) tear into slide-guitar boogie, with the latter's "Take Five" a sizzling example of the kind of unbridled, house-rocking music that Alligator staked its early reputation on. At 50 minutes, though, this is on the short side for a sampler. That, along with the lack of liner notes (other than mini-advertisements for the albums these cuts are from) and specific track information are in keeping with the budget price. Still, it's difficult for blues fans not to enjoy all of what is here. Both purists and new listeners will find this a worthy collection of some of Chicago's and Alligator's most essential artists. ---Hal Horowitz, AMG

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