

## Mestres do Blues 08 - Albert King – Live (1979)

Written by bluesever

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*1. watermelon man 2. don't burn down the bridge 3. blues at sunrise 4. that's what the blues is all around 5. stormy monday 6. kansas city 7. i'm gonna call you as soon as the sun goes down 8. as the years go passing by 9. overhall junction 10. i'll play the blues for you*

Musicians: Albert King – guitar, vocals Rory Gallagher – guitar Lowell Fulson – vocals Louisiana Red – guitar James Washington – keyboards Lonnie Turner – bass Joe Turner – drums Steve Wilson – horn Wayne Preston – horn Nate Fitzgerald – horn

Albert King (April 25, 1923 – December 21, 1992) was an American blues guitarist and singer.

One of the “Three Kings of the Blues Guitar” (along with B.B. King and Freddie King), Albert King stood 6’ 4”, weighed 250 lbs and was known as “The Velvet Bulldozer”. He was born Albert Nelson on a cotton plantation in Indianola, mississippi. During his childhood he would sing at a family gospel group at a church. One of 13 children, King grew up picking cotton on plantations near Forrest City, Arkansas where the family moved when he was eight years old. He began his professional work as a musician with a group called In The Groove Boys in Osceola, Arkansas. He had also briefly played drums for Jimmy Reed’s band and on several early Reed recordings. Influenced by blues musicians Blind Lemon Jefferson and Lonnie Johnson, but also interestingly hawaiian music, the electric guitar became his signature instrument, his preference being the Gibson Flying V, which he named “Lucy”.

King was a left-handed “upside-down/backwards” guitarist. He was left-handed, but usually played right-handed guitars flipped over upside-down so the low E string was on the bottom. In later years he played a custom-made guitar that was basically left-handed, but had the strings reversed (as he was used to playing). He also used very unorthodox tunings (i.e., tuning as low as C to allow him to make sweeping string bends). Some believe that he was using open E minor tuning (C-B-E-G-B-E) or open F tuning (C-F-C-F-A-D). A “less is more” type blues player,

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he was known for his expressive “bending” of notes, a technique characteristic of blues guitarists.

He recorded his first record in 1953 for Parrot Records in Chicago, but it had no impact. His first minor hit came in 1959 with Lonely Man written by Bobbin Records A&R man and fellow guitar hero Little Milton, responsible for King’s signing with the label. However, it was not until his 1961 release Don’t Throw Your Love On Me So Strong that he had a major hit, reaching number fourteen on the U.S. Billboard R&B chart. In 1966 he signed with the Stax record label. Produced by Al Jackson, Jr., King with Booker T. & the MG’s recorded dozens of influential sides, such as Crosscut Saw and As The Years Go Passing By, and in 1967 Stax released the album, Born Under A Bad Sign. The title track of that album (written by Booker T. Jones and William Bell) became King’s best known songs and has been covered by many other artists.

Another landmark album followed in Live Wire/Blues Power from one of many dates King played at promoter Bill Graham’s Fillmore venues. It had a wide and long-term influence on Jimi Hendrix, Eric Clapton, Robbie Robertson, and later Gary Moore and Stevie Ray Vaughan (Criminal World, on David Bowie’s 1983 release Let’s Dance, features a guitar solo copied note-for-note from his hero [artist] Albert King by young session musician Stevie Ray Vaughan).

In the 1970s, King was teamed with members of The Bar-Kays and The Movement (Isaac Hayes’s backing group), including bassist James Alexander and drummer Willie Hall adding strong funk elements to his music. Adding strings and multiple rhythm guitarists, producers Allen Jones and Henry Bush created a wall of sound that contrasted the sparse, punchy records King made with Booker T. & the MG’s. Among these was another of King’s signature tunes with I’ll Play The Blues For You in 1972.

As he hit his mid-sixties King began to muse about retirement, not unreasonable given that he had health problems. Nevertheless, when near to death, he was planning yet another overseas tour.

King died on December 21, 1992 from a heart attack in Memphis, Tennessee. ---last.fm

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