

T-Bone Walker

Aaron Thibeaux “T-Bone” Walker, was a blues Guitarist, Singer, and Songwriter, the first bluesman to use an amplified acoustic guitar, and one of the most influential musicians of the early 20th century. He was born to Rance and Movelia Walker in [Linden, Texas](#) on May 28, 1910, but grew up in the budding blues hotbed of Dallas. Although his mother played guitar, and his stepfather, Marco Washington, played bass and several other instruments, Walker’s first musical expression was dancing, a talent he would incorporate into his incendiary live shows.



Family friendships with two of the most influential early blues artists, Blind Lemon Jefferson and Huddie (Leadbelly) Ledbetter had an early influence on him. Young T-Bone was given the enviable job of leading Jefferson around to different clubs in the Central Avenue and Deep Ellum areas, and he absorbed the style of the legendary bluesman.

Around 1925 he joined Dr. Breeding's Big B Tonic medicine show, then toured the South with blues artist Ida Cox. Walker's recording debut was "Wichita Falls Blues"/"Trinity River Blues", recorded for Columbia Records in 1929 under the name of “Oak Cliff T-Bone,” referencing the name of his Dallas neighborhood. Around 1930, after winning first prize in an amateur show promoted by Cab Calloway, Walker toured the South with Calloway's band, worked with the Raisin' Cain show, and several other bands in Texas, including those of Count Biloski (Balaski) and Milt Larkins. He also appeared with Ma Rainey, a great figure in blues history, in her 1934 Fort Worth performances.

In 1935 Walker moved to Los Angeles where he quickly made a name for himself in two popular nightclubs, Little Harlem and Club Alabam. Crowds of fans were attracted to his acrobatic performances, which combined playing and tap dancing, but his distinctive sound didn't develop until 1942, when he recorded "Mean Old World" for Capitol Records. His electric guitar solos were among the first heard on modern blues recordings and set a standard that is still followed. Walker used a fluid technique that combined the country blues tradition with more polished contemporary swing, his style influenced by Francis (Scrapper) Blackwell, Leroy Carr, and Lonnie Johnson. He was subsequently billed as "Daddy of the Blues."

Much of Walker's output was recorded from 1946–48 on Black & White Records, including 1947's "Stormy Monday Blues", with its famous opening line, "They call it stormy Monday, but Tuesday's just as bad". He followed up with his "T-Bone Shuffle": "Let your hair down baby,

let's have a natural ball". Both are considered blues classics. B. B. King says "Stormy Monday" first inspired him to take up the guitar.

Throughout his career he worked with top quality musicians, including Teddy Buckner (Trumpet), Lloyd Glenn (Piano), Billy Hadnott (Double bass), and Jack McVeA (Saxophone).

Following his work with Black & White, he recorded from 1950–54 for Imperial Records (backed by Dave Bartholomew). Walker's only record in the next five years was T-Bone Blues, recorded over three widely separated sessions in 1955, 1956, and 1959, and finally released by Atlantic Records in.

By the early 1960s, Walker's career had slowed down in the United States, in spite of a much-hyped appearance at the American Folk Blues Festival in 1962 with Memphis Slim, among others. He was a regular attraction abroad, where his recordings made him a great favorite, and he was a participant on television shows and at jazz festivals in Europe. He released a number of critically acclaimed albums, including "I Want a Little Girl", and he won a Grammy in 1970 for "Good Feelin'" (Polydor).

As an artist and performer, Walker was accurately evaluated by blues authority Pete Welding as "one of the deep, enduring wellsprings of the modern blues to whom many others have turned, and continue to return for inspiration and renewal." T-Bone Walker died of a stroke in Los Angeles on March 16, 1975. His funeral at the Inglewood Cemetery was attended by more than a thousand mourners.