Welcome to the Living Blues

Blues music symbolizes the key to unlocking the soul of American music. Any aspiring musician or enthusiast of music has to recognize the raw ingenuity and brilliance of this antiquated art form. The songs enclosed in this E-Book represent some of the most core compositions this enigmatic genre has to offer. I’ve studied American Early Roots and Blues music for more than twenty years, and these songs offer the aspiring learner the complete foundation to take root in their studying campaign. I have carefully selected these 20 songs across various styles and artists to give the learner a comprehensive and fulfilling guide in discovering this traditionally rich and profound musical form. By accessing and playing these songs, it is you, who continues to keep this tradition alive. Together we will uncover and unlock the hidden treasure this music has to offer.

Kindly yours,

Delta Lou-
Country Blues

Open ‘F#’ Tuning (C#-F#-C#-F#-Bb-C#)

Country Blues is played in open ‘G’ tuning yet it is pitched down a ½ step to ‘F#’. Influences of Robert Johnson’s Walking Blues are evident.

The introduction begins with heavy sliding on the 12th fret followed by a pull-off on the 3rd fret dissolving into an open chord. The slide will be used almost entirely throughout the song.

The rest of the introduction turns into this turnaround arrangement before kicking off the first stanza. It is not played with a slide except for the part at the end.

Waters begins the stanza with a combination of sliding from the 5th string/3rd and 4th fret into an open note on the 4th string. This is followed by a mini turnaround segment without using the slide. Repeat this sequence 4 times.

“Well, Feel like holdin baby”
The 'IV' position will have you play a hammer-on starting on the 5th string/4th fret resolving into a barred 5th fret with your slide. Use the slide with great emphasis.
This lick to follow will mirror Son House’s **Death Letter Blues**. It’s a combination of palm muting and strategic sliding on individual notes.

Here the ‘V’ position comes into focus by sliding on the 7th fret immediately followed by the ‘IV’ position. Use heavy emphasis with the slide in playing this segment.

Back to the turnaround played in the introduction.

The instrumental break is quite extensive. There will be heavy emphasis of using the slide across the whole run.
The 12th fret ends with an arpeggiated finish.

Waters shifts from the 12th frets and pulls-off into a series of licks on the 2nd and 3rd frets.

Back to the ‘IV’ position.

Individual notes played with the slide.

Continues...
Before finally ending the turnaround played in the introduction.

Back to Coda.

Repeat the concepts demonstrated thus far across the remaining stanzas.

**Lyrics**

I get later on in the evenin' time, I feel like, like blowin' my horn

I woke up this mo'nin', find my, my little baby gone, hmm

Later on in the evenin', main man, I feel like, like blowin' my horn

Well I, woke up this mo'nin' baby, find my little baby gone

A well now, some folks say they worry, worry blues ain't bad

That's a misery feelin' child, I most, most ever had

Some folks tell me, man I did worry, the blues ain't bad

Well that's a misery ole feelin', honey now, well gal, I most ever had

Well, brooks run into the ocean, ocean run in, into the sea
If I don't find my baby somebody gonna, gonna bury me, um-hm

Brook run into the ocean, child, ocean run into the sea

Well, if I don't find my baby now, well gal, you gonna have to bury me

Yes, minutes seem like hours an hours seem like days

Seems like my baby would stop her, her lowdown ways, hey

Minutes seem like hours child, an hours seem like days

Yes, seem like my woman now, well gal, she might stop her lowdown ways

Well now I'm, I'm leavin' this mo'nin' if I had-a, whoa ride the blind

I feel mistreated girl you know now, I don't mind dyin'

Leavin' this mo'nin, tell ya I had-a now ride the blind

Yeah, been mistreated baby now, baby an I don't mind dyin'
Poor Boy Long Ways From Home

Open ‘A’ Tuning (E-A-E-A-C#-E)

Poor Boy Long Ways From Home is played in open ‘G’ Tuning tuned one step up to ‘A’. The song is played moderately fast with fluid use of the bottleneck throughout.

The introduction is played also like the main verse and riff. Slide from the 1st string/5th fret to the 12th fret/bottom two strings to initiate the kick off lick. Then come back to the ‘IV’ position to slide a barred chord on the entire 5th fret. The kick off lick comes again before resolving to the ‘V’ position. The ‘V’ position utilizes a barred chord on the entire 7th fret. Play open chords after the entire sequence before moving back to coda.

The main verse with lyrics. Repeat more of the same.
Continue the sequence.

Lyrics

Poor boy a long way from home
Poor boy I'm a long way from home
Poor boy I'm a long way from home
I don't have no happy home to go home to

When I left my home my baby's in my arms
When I left my home my baby's in my arms
When I left my home my baby's in my arms
She wanna know, 'Daddy, when you comin' back home?'

(Guitar)
They got me down here on the farm

Got me down here on old farm

I don't have no one to come and post my bail

Baby, I wanna come back home to you

(Guitar)

Sorry, baby I can't call you over the phone

Sorry, I can't call you over the phone

'Cause they got me down here on this little farm

But I can't call you baby over the phone.

(Guitar to end)
Going Down South Blues

Standard ‘C#’ Tuning (C#-F#-B-E-G#-C#)

R.L. is using a picking pattern again in ‘E’. The song is utilizing typical blues holdings in ‘E’ yet it is tuned down one and a half steps to ‘C#’ standard tuning’. Once the guitar is tuned accordingly, you still will want to anticipate still playing the song in the key of ‘E’.

The main riff is a picking pattern as demonstrated below in ‘E’.

\[
\begin{array}{cccccc}
& C# & G# & E & B & F# & C#\\
0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\
2 & 5 & 2 & 5 & 2 & 5 & 2 \\
1 & 0 & 2 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\
\end{array}
\]

R.L. then sings the lyrics over this predominant riff over and over throughout the song.

\[
\begin{array}{cccccc}
& C# & G# & E & B & F# & C#\\
0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\
2 & 5 & 2 & 5 & 2 & 5 & 2 \\
1 & 0 & 2 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\
\end{array}
\]

I'm going with you babe  I'm going with you babe

Then he finishes off the stanza by sitting on the ‘E’ note on the 5th fret/4th string twice.

\[
\begin{array}{cccccc}
& C# & G# & E & B & F# & C#\\
0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\
2 & 5 & 5 & 2 & 2 & 5 & 2 \\
1 & 0 & 2 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\
\end{array}
\]

I don't care where you go

This is the riff break that ends the stanzas before they go back to the main picking pattern. Again, the ‘E’ blues scale makes an appearance.

\[
\begin{array}{cccccc}
& C# & G# & E & B & F# & C#\\
0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\
2 & 0 & 2 & 0 & 2 & 0 & 2 \\
1 & 0 & 2 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\
\end{array}
\]
The rest of the song repeats the parts illustrated thus far. Apply them according to what you hear in the original recording.

Lyrics

Going with ya babe
I’m going with you babe
I’m going with you babe
I’m going with you babe
I’m going with you babe
I don’t care where you go

I’m going down South
I’m going down South
I’m going down South
I’m going down South
I’m going down South
I’m going down South
The chilly wind gonna blow

I’d rather be dead
I’d rather be dead
I’d rather be dead
I’d rather be dead
I’d rather be dead
I’d rather be dead
And six feet in the ground
Some black man
Some black man
Some black man
Some black man
Some black man
Some black man
Some black man
Some black man
Always hangin’ around

Going...
Going...
Going...
Don’t care where you go

I’m going with you babe
I’m going with you babe
I’m going with you babe
I’m going with you babe
I’m going with you babe
I’m going with you babe
I don’t care where you go
Bird Without A Feather

Standard ‘C#’ Tuning (C#-F#-B-E-G#-C#)

The song is utilizing typical blues holdings in ‘E’ yet it is tuned down one and a half steps down to ‘C#’ standard tuning. Once the guitar is tuned accordingly, you still will want to anticipate playing the song in the key of ‘E’.

The main riff is extracted from the ‘E’ blues scale descending.

He transitions to an ‘E’ Chord while only plucking the strings shown below as double stops.

After he plays that, he starts off with the lyric, “Just like a bird without a feather” at a resting point where no music is being played. He plays this melody below right after the spoken lyric. Again, he is extracting out notes from the ‘E’ blues scale.

Back to the main riff that started the song.
Then repeat the concepts illustrated thus far against the remaining stanzas.

**Lyrics**

*Just like a bird without a feather*
*You know I’m lost without your love*
*Just like a bird without a feather*
*You know I’m lost without your love*

*You know I need your love*
*Just like the angels need heaven above*

*Well you know as soon as I shot my baby*
*But I did it because she did me wrong*

*Well you know as soon as I shot my baby*
*I did it because she did me wrong*

*Yeah, you know the judge called it murder*
*The penitento’ (penitentiary) is my home*

*Yeah, I love that woman*
*Said she didn’t love no one but me*

*Yes, I love that woman*
*She says she loved no one but me*
Yeah, but I caught my baby cheatin’

Now my home ain’t half it used to be
Little Babe

Standard ‘D#' Tuning (D#-G#-C#-F#-Bb-D#)

This song utilizes typical blues holdings in ‘E’ yet it is tuned a half step down to standard ‘D#’ tuning. Once the guitar is tuned accordingly, you still will want to anticipate playing in the key of ‘E’. R.L. sits on an alternating bass picking pattern based upon an octave interval on the ‘D#’ note between the 6th and 4th strings.

The main riff of the song is shown below. He is essentially sitting on an ‘E’ chord, but letting his fingers extract out the notes he needs.

He sings the lyrics of the song over this alternate bass picking pattern on the ‘D#’ octave interval. It eventually reverts back to the main pull-off riff to cap off the stanzas. You should hold an ‘E’ chord while playing this.

He then plays a melody hinging on the 1st and 2nd strings that accentuate the singing of the higher notes of the ‘E’ blues scale. This solo appears towards the end of the song.
Lyrics

You go and I’ll come witchya little babe
You go and I’ll come witchya little babe
You go and I’ll come witchya
Bet your life I won’t quit ya little babe

You get the fair
We go the show
You bet the horses
I’ll pick up the dough

You go and I’ll come witchya little babe

You go and I’ll come witchya little babe
You go and I’ll come witchya
Bet your life I won’t quit ya little babe

You go to jail
I go yo’ bond
You get time
Yeah what I would do
Stay outside and wait for you
You go...
You go and I’ll come witchya little babe

You go and I’ll come witchya

Bet your life I won’t quit ya little babe
Me and the Devil Blues

Standard ‘E’ Tuning (E-A-D-G-B-E)

Me and The Devil Blues comes out Johnson’s work in the key of ‘A’. It is played in standard ‘E’ tuning.

The introduction utilizes the typical turnaround arrangement based on diminished chords starting on the 8th/9th fret. Utilize the right finger picking combination here with the thumb resting on the 5th string open. You will play the C#, C, and B diminished chords before resolving in a variation of the ‘A’ chord.

The rest of the introduction features a classic Johnson signature. It is a chromatic run on the neck board on an ‘A’ chord starting on the 2nd/5th fret. Let the pinkie remain idle and play the notes on the bottom string while the index finger moves down from the 5th fret up to the 2nd fret on the 4th string. Resolve the sequence to an ‘E7’ chord.
The thumb will play the 5\textsuperscript{th} string open muted. This is called the ‘dead thumb’ technique. It is a staple of Johnson’s playing and of Delta Blues guitar in general. Play the diminished chords followed by the dead thumb strokes on the 5\textsuperscript{th} string in between strikes.

Play the ‘D7/F#’ chord (shown below) with the dead thumb technique on the top string throughout the measures. Play this chord like a double stop.
He then plays an alternate 'A7' style chord on the 5th/6th fret (see chord diagram below). Keep applying the dead thumb technique on the 5th string throughout.

Johnson then plays the top string open in the 'V' position ('E7' chord) followed by the 'D7/F#' chord which eventually resolves in ‘A’.

and I said hello satan     I believe it's ti - me to - go
Back to the turnaround played in the introduction.

The next stanza is played the same way as the first.

Johnson bends the bottom string on the 8\textsuperscript{th} fret for the only lick that features in the song. This is played over the ‘D7/F#’ chord.
Back to the alternate ‘A7’ chord.

The same ending to the stanzas repeat. Play the transition from ‘E’ to ‘D7/F♯’ and finally to ‘A major’.

The outro is played much like the introduction.

Lyrics

Early this morning

When you knocked upon my door

Early this morning, ooh

When you knocked upon my door

And I said "Hello, Satan

I believe it's time to go"
Me and the Devil
Was walkin' side-by-side
Me and the Devil, ooh
Was walking side-by-side
I'm going to beat my woman
Until I get satisfied

She said "you don't see why
That I will dog her 'round"
Now baby you know you ain't doin' me right, now
She say "you don't see why, hoo
That I would dog her 'round"
It must-a been that old evil spirit
So deep down in the ground

You may bury my body
Down by the highway side
"Baby, I don't care where you bury my body when I'm dead and gone"
You may bury my body, hoo
Down by the highway side
So my old evil spirit
Can get a Greyhound bus and ride
Kind Hearted Woman Blues

Standard ‘F’ Tuning (F-Bb-D#-G#-C-F)

Kind Hearted Woman Blues comes out Johnson’s work in the key of ‘A’. It is played in standard ‘F’ tuning. It has a jazzy feel to it evident by the presence of diminished chords throughout the composition.

The introduction utilizes the typical turnaround arrangement based on diminished chords starting on the 8th/9th fret (see diagram below). Utilize the right finger picking combination here with the thumb resting on the 5th string open. You will play the ‘C#, C, and B diminished’ chords before resolving in a variation of the ‘A’ chord.

The rest of the introduction features a classic Johnson signature. It is a chromatic run on the neck board on an ‘A’ chord starting on the 2nd/5th fret. Let the pinkie remain idle and play the notes on the bottom string while the index finger moves down from the 5th fret up to the 2nd fret on the 4th string. Resolve the sequence to an ‘E7’ chord.
Here Johnson plays a combination of an ‘A7’ and an ‘Adim7’ chord. The thumb will play the 5th string open muted. This is called the ‘dead thumb’ technique. It is a staple of Johnson’s playing and of Delta Blues guitar in general. Play the diminished chords followed by the dead thumb strokes on the 5th string.

The chords appear more frequently moving forward.

The ‘D7/F#’ chord with the dead thumb playing the top string throughout.
Back to the ‘A7’ and ‘Adim7’ chords.

Johnson then plays the top string open in the ‘V’ position (‘E7’ chord) followed by the ‘D7/F#’ chord which eventually resolves in ‘A’.

But these evil hearted woman ... man, they will not let me be

Back to what was played similar to the introduction.

He continues with the ‘diminished’ chords before playing the ‘D7/F#’ chord.
The ‘D7/F♯’ chord with the dead thumb playing the top string throughout.

Back to the ‘A7’ and ‘Adim7’ chords.
Johnson then plays the top string open in the ‘V’ position (‘E7’ chord) followed by the ‘D7/F♯’ chord which eventually resolves in ‘A’.

Back to what was played in the introduction.

In the third stanza, Johnson plays out the entire ‘A7’ and ‘Adim7’ chords going back and forth in conjunction with the strategically sung lyrics.
This lick is played in conjunction with Johnson’s high falsetto portion of the song. Bend the strings accordingly; they will echo the spoken lyrics.

Back to these chords again.

The ‘V’ and ‘IV’ positions.

Back to what was played in the introduction.
Here Johnson solos using the diminished chords. He caps of the break using double stops on the 7th and 5th frets.

To the ‘IV’ position.

Back to these chords.
Back to the ‘V’ and ‘IV’ positions before resolving into the ‘A’ chord.

Back to what was played in the introduction.

Finish out the remaining stanzas with what was demonstrated thus far and apply the concepts accordingly.

Lyrics

I got a kindhearted woman, do anything in this world for me

I got a kindhearted woman, do anything in this world for me

But these evil-hearted women, man, they will not let me be

I love my baby, my baby don't love me

I love my baby, my baby don't love me

But I really love that woman, can't stand to leave her be
Ain't but the one thing, makes Mister Johnson drink

I's worried about how you treat me, baby, I begin to think

Oh, babe, my life don't feel the same

You breaks my heart, when you call Mister So-and-So's name

She's a kindhearted woman, she studies evil all the time

She's a kindhearted woman, she studies evil all the time

You well's to kill me, as to have it on your mind
Sweet Home Chicago

Standard ‘F’ Tuning (F-Bb-D#-G#-C-F)

Sweet Home Chicago utilizes the key of ‘E’ but in standard ‘F’ tuning.

The introduction is a classic Johnson signature. It is a chromatic run up the neck board on an ‘E’ chord starting on the 9th/12th fret. Let the pinkie remain idle and play the notes on the bottom string while the index finger moves down from the 12th fret up to the 9th fret on the 4th string. Resolve the sequence to a ‘B7/F#’ chord. It should be played fast.

After the introduction, Johnson begins his singing over the boogie rhythm (the ‘I’ chord’). Play the thumb on the bass string and index finger on the 5th string and pinch the notes simultaneously together as you move up the 2nd and 4th frets. Shift the sequence down to the 5th and 4th strings using the same technique as the rhythm goes over the ‘IV’ chord (‘A’ major chord). Johnson adds an additional note over the 4th string/5th fret only while playing in the ‘IV’ chord slot.
Continue with the boogie rhythms. Somewhere along the ‘I’ chord he plays a lick while holding the ‘E’ chord by playing the top and 3rd string as a double stop. Carefully come back to the boogie rhythm when the stance is over the 4th fret after successfully playing the lick on the double stop.

Back to the ‘IV’ chord. Play over an ‘A Major Chord’.

Continue the boogie rhythm on the ‘I’ chord. Play the lick on ‘E’ before resolving into the ‘V’ chord which is B7/F#. Play 6 to 7 down strums of this chord loosely when he sings “back to the land of California”.

Back to the land of California
Bend and play this lick on the 7th/8th fret/bottom two strings after the B7/F# chord. The remaining melody complements the singing strategically. Make sure your timing is right. A typical turnaround in ‘E’ on the 4th, 3rd, 2nd, and 1st frets follow after the lyric “Chicago”. Resolve into the B7/F# chord.

Johnson then sits on the ‘I’ chord boogie rhythm longer when singing “Now 1 and 1 is 2”.

He continues...
Back to the ‘IV’ chord.

Revert back to the ‘I’ chord boogie rhythm and lick on the ‘E’ chord before resolving in ‘B7/F#’.

The remaining licks on the ‘V’ chord.

The ending has elements of the introduction with an arpeggio on the ‘E7’ chord over the 9th/10th fret capping off the song.
Lyrics

Oh baby don't you want to go
Oh baby don't you want to go
Back to the land of California
To my sweet home Chicago
Oh baby don't you want to go
Oh baby don't you want to go
Back to the land of California
To my sweet home Chicago

Now one and one is two
Two and two is four
I'm heavy loaded baby
I'm booked I gotta go
Cryin' baby
Honey don't you want to go
Back to the land of California
To my sweet home Chicago
Now two and two is four
Four and two is six
You gonna keep monkeyin' round here friend-boy
You gonna get your business all in a trick
But I'm cryin' baby
Honey don't you wanna go
Back to the land of California
To my sweet home Chicago

Now six and two is eight
Eight and two is ten
Friend-boy she trick you one time
She sure...
Traveling Riverside Blues

Open ‘Bb’ Tuning (F-Bb-F-Bb-D-F)

Traveling Riverside Blues is played in open ‘Bb’ tuning. The song features heavy emphasis on sliding over the 12th fret.

The introduction starts off with brisk slides on the 12 fret. The classic turnaround which starts from the 3rd fret and ends in an open chord over the bass strings is signature to Robert Johnson’s music with open ‘G’ tuning. Pinch the slide on the 5th fret/1st string to ring in the opening verse.

With the slide, work your way to the 5th fret while sliding heavily on the 3rd, 4th and 5th strings. With the slide pressed down, pull off with the slide gradually on the 3rd, 2nd, and 1st frets before resolving into an open chord.

The main riff will follow and appear throughout the song. The execution of this lick must remain in timing. Carefully utilize the slide on notes played against the 3rd fret.
He repeats with...

Now back to the signature riff.

There is a bass run that follows over the 'V' position. This is played entirely with a slide. Study the sung portion to get the timing down just right.

Now back to the main riff.
In the second verse, Johnson slides briskly back and forth against the 11th and 12th frets without ever playing the bottom first string. The sliding will mimic the singing. End the verse by gradually pulling off with the slide, chromatically, on the 3rd, 2nd and 1st frets before resolving into an open chord.

Main riff...

He repeats with...

The main riff again...
The 'V' position chord bass run.

Back to the riff once more.

Johnson sticks with playing the same sequences against the 12th fret as already demonstrated throughout the remaining verses in the song.

In the second verse, Johnson plays an impromptu instrumental break featuring the 12th fret and bass strings on the second fret. It will appear only once in the song.
Then back to...

Back to the main riff.

The ‘V’ chord bass run and turnaround.

Repeat the concepts demonstrated thus far accordingly against the remaining verses.

The ending is a classic Johnson turnaround.
Lyrics

If your man get personal, want to have your fun
If your man get personal, want to have your fun
Best come on back to Friar's Point, mama, barrelhouse all night long

I got women's in Vicksburg, clean on into Tennessee
I got women's in Vicksburg, clean on into Tennessee
But my Friar's Point rider, now, hops all over me

I ain't gon' to state no color but her front teeth crowned with gold
I ain't gon' to state no color but her front teeth is crowned with gold
She got a mortgage on my body, now, layin' on my soul

Lord, I'm goin' to Rosedale, gon' take my rider by my side
Lord, I'm goin' to Rosedale, gon' take my rider by my side
We can still barrelhouse baby, on the riverside

Now you can squeeze my lemon 'til the juice run down my
'Til the juice run down my leg, baby, you know what I'm talkin' about
You can squeeze my lemon 'til the juice run down my leg
Spoken: That's what I'm talkin' 'bout, now
But I'm goin' back to Friar's Point, if I be rockin'to my head
Walkin’ Blues

Open ‘A’ Tuning (E-A-E-A-C#-E)

Walking Blues is undoubtedly a piece influenced by the playing styles of Charley Patton and Son House. It is played in open ‘G’ tuning tuned one whole step up to ‘A’.

The introduction is typical of Johnson’s work in open tuning. Heavy emphasis is made on sliding on the 12th fret and moving down the neck board to the 3rd fret before pulling off with the slide. The classic turnaround segment based on the bass strings follows afterwards.

This is the main riff played while he sings out the stanzas. Apply the slide over the 3rd/4th fret combination of notes on the 5th string before pulling off into the open 4th string note.
He then transitions into the 'IV' position by sliding firmly on the 3rd and 5th frets on the 5th string.

This lick follows after. Use the slide throughout. Pinch the note on the 5th fret/1st string with finesse.

After this lick, Johnson moves into the 'V' position and incorporates slide action on the 7th fret/5th string to cap off the stanza.

The start of the next stanza.
Johnson also plays an alternate version of the ‘IV’ position in the middle of the song. The chording is similar to what you would hear in Stones in My Passway. To play it, barre the 5th fret entirely, then tap the 8th fret/bottom string for the 7th note accent.

Back to this riff.

Johnson incorporates the ‘V’ position at this stage. He maintains the same chord structure over the previous ‘IV’ position example by playing the 7th fret (barre) and tapping the 10th fret/bottom string with the pinkie for the 7th note inclusion.

Repeat the concepts learned thus far across the remaining stanzas according to what you hear in the original recording.
Lyrics

I woke up this mornin’

Feelin’ round for my shoes

Know bout at I got these

Old walkin’ blues

Woke up this mornin’

Feelin’ round oh for my shoes

But you know bout at I got these

Old walkin’ blues

Lord I feel like blowin’ my

Woh-old lonesome horn

Got up this mornin’, my little

Bernice was gone, Lord

I feel like blowin’ my

Lonesome horn

Well, I got up this mornin’

Woh-all I had was gone

Well-ah leave this mornin if I have to

Woh ride the blind ah

I’ve feel mistreated and I

Don’t mind dyin’

Leavin this mornin ah

I have to ride a blind
Babe, I been mistreated

Baby, I don’t mind dyin’

Well, some people tell me that the worried
Blue ain’t bad
Worst old feelin I most
Ever had
Some people tell me that these
Old worried, old blues ain’t bad
It’s the worst old feelin’,
I most ever had

She got a
Elgin movement from her head down
To her toes
Break in on a dollar most any-
Where she goes, ooo ooooooooono
To her head down to her toes
Lord, she break in on a dollar
Most anywhere she goes
Levee Camp Moan

Open ‘G’ Tuning (D-G-D-G-B-D)

Levee Camp Moan is played in open ‘G’ tuning. There is heavy emphasis on sliding over the 12th fret with great application of force in playing the IV and V chords.

The introduction and main riff is shown below. Harmonica accompaniment pairs well with this Delta Blues masterpiece.

The IV chord is played with lots of force.

Half chords harmonizing individual notes. Elements of Robert Johnson’s playing are evident.
He then plays the V chord followed by the IV chord before going back to the beginning.

Then back to the half chord riff.

He reverts back to what was played in the introduction. He starts singing at this point.

Continues singing across the IV chord.
He plays the half chord riff before jumping to the V chord.

Then back to the IV chord followed by the half chord riff.

Then he begins the next stanza by sliding on the 12th fret.

The ending is based off of this lick below.

Apply the concepts demonstrated accordingly as you listen to the original recording.
Lyrics

You know I had a job on the levee
I had a good looking woman who lived in Hughes
You know that pretty little thing
She kept me with the government fleet blues

You know on every pay day
She'd be standing around the landing crying
On every pay day
She'd be standing around the landing crying
She be saying why don't that big boat hurry and
Bring home that man of mine?

You know on every pay day
She could, she could hear the big boat when she blow
Well on every pay day
She could hear the big boat when she blow
But when I done not get the check
She told me she couldn't use me no more
But I said that's all right big girl
Honey, that's all right for you
Yeah - hooooo -- little girl that's all right for you
I say you treat me low down and dirty
See, baby, that's the way you's do

I packed up all my clothes
Left her settin' in the back door crying
Aye yeah I left her settin' in the back door crying
You know that done run the poor girl crazy
I believe she gonna lose her mind

You know don't come here honey
Throwing up your doggone hands
Don't come here baby
I said throwing up your doggone hands

You know I, I been your dog
Ever since that I been your man

But I said baby when you get lonesome
Set right down and write to me
Yeah -- yeah -- set right down you can write to me
You know I can read your little writing baby
Don't care where in this world I'll be
You know love . . . make you do things you don't want to do
You know love . . . make you do things you don't want to do
You know from love sometime
Will leave you feeling so sad and so blue
Oh, Listen here honey
Think about poor me some time
Yeah -- hooooo -- think about poor me some time
You know I feel so bad
When you roll across my mind

You know if you never no more see me
You'll forever be on my mind
If I never no more see you
Yeah, you'll forever be on my mind
You know every time I think about you honey
I just can't keep from crying

Oh it's so hard
To love when they don't love you
Ah, yeah -- yeah, when they don't love you
You can't do nothing baby when they do not want you

But I tell 'em look it here, baby
Your little trouble is coming home some day
Yeah just like I tell you

Your little trouble is coming home some day

I said you gonna be sorry

That you treated poor me this way
Preachin’ Blues

Open ‘E’ Tuning (E-B-E-G#-B-E)

Preachin’ Blues is played in vestapol tuning pitched at ‘E’. There is a lot of emphasis in sliding forcibly on the 12th and 3rd frets.

The introduction is played with a slide throughout followed by fast up-down-up open chord strums.

A brief transition played before the main riff. These will be brisk and fast open strums.

He plays this standard ‘vestapol’ lick on the 7th/8th frets as he sings. He caps off the link by dissolving into the 12th fret with the slide.

Well, I’m a get me religion... and join the baptist church...
An alternate instance found later in the song with the slide resting and reverberating on the 12th fret.

**Lyrics**

Yes, I'm gonna get me religion

I'm gonna join the Baptist Church

Yes, I'm gonna get me religion

I'm gonna join the Baptist Church

You know I wanna be a Baptist preacher

Just so I won't have to work

One deacon jumped up and he began to grin

One deacon jumped up and he began to grin

You know he said, "One thing, elder I believe

I'll go back to barrelhousin' again"

One sister jumped up and she began to shout

One sister jumped up and she began to shout

"You know I'm glad this corn liquor's goin' out"

Another deacon jumped up and said, "Why don't ya hush?"

Another deacon jumped up and said, "Why don't ya hush?"
You know you drink corn liquor and your lie’s a horrible stink"

One sister jumped up and she began to shout

One sister jumped up and she began to shout

"I believe I can tell y'all what it’s all about"

Another sister jumped up, she said, "Why don’t ya hush?"

Another sister jumped up, she said, "Why don’t ya hush?

You know he’s abandoned, and you outta hush your fuss"

I was in the pulpit, I’s jumpin’ up and down

I was in the pulpit, I’s jumpin’ up and down

My sisters in the corner, they’re hollerin’ Alabama bound

Grabbed up my suitcase and I took off down the road

Grabbed up my suitcase and I took off down the road

I said, "Farewell church, may the good Lord bless your soul"

You know I wish I had a heaven of my own

You know I wish I had a heaven of my own

I’d give all my women a good ole happy home

I’m gonna preach these blues

And I’m gonna choose my seat and sit down

I’m gonna preach these blues

And I’m gonna choose my seat and sit down

But, when the Spirit comes, I want you to
Cypress Grove Blues

Open ‘D minor’ Tuning (D-A-D-F-A-D)

Cypress Grove Blues utilizes the basics of playing in the open ‘D minor’ tuning. It is one of his most recognizable pieces.

The introduction begins with classic key of ‘E’ turnaround chord shapes in standard tuning yet it is being played in open ‘D minor’ tuning.

A brief bass run which then turns into a series of chords on the 3\textsuperscript{rd}/4\textsuperscript{th} frets.

This is the main riff that accompanies the main verse. Play the double stops with precision and sing out the lyrics in conjunction to playing them.
This strategic lick follows with heavy pull-off action on the notes being played on the third string.

This is an alternate way of playing the lick which appears later on in the song.

Both are followed by these chords.

Skip plays what would be a ‘D’ chord in standard tuning at this juncture. This chord serves as the ‘V’ chord in the song. The riff on the second measure is played in conjunction with the riff.

Then to have some woman lord... That I can't control
Here he plays a classic turnaround characteristic to this tuning. It is a chromatic run down the 5th string starting on the third fret.

He plays these chords before going back to CODA.

This is the part played at the end of the song.

**Lyrics**

I would rather be buried in some cypress grove

To have some woman, Lord, that I can’t control

And I’m goin’ away now, I’m goin’ away to stay

That’ll be all right, pretty mama, you gonna need my help someday
And the sun goin' down, and you know what your promise means
And the sun goin' down, you know what your promise means
And what's the matter, baby, I can't see

I would rather be dead and six feet in my grave
I would rather be dead and six feet in my grave
Than to be way up here, honey, treated this a-way

And the old people told me, baby, but I never did know
The old people told me, baby woman, but I never did know
"The good book declare you got to reap just what you sow"

When your knee bone's achin' and your body cold
When your knee bone's achin' and your body cold
Means you just gettin' ready, honey, for the cypress grove
**Poor Me**

*Standard ‘F♯’ Tuning (F♯-B-E-A-C♯-F#)*

*Poor Me* is a folksy tune played in standard tuning while pitched at F♯. Place a capo on the 2nd Fret to be in tune with the original recording if you chose to stay in regular ‘E’ standard tuning. The song is played in the key of ‘C’ (The capo on the 2nd fret will bring you up to the key of ‘D’ in terms of pitch)

The introduction begins with soft strums of the ‘C’ major chord.

![Chord Diagram](image)

Patton transitions into this lick below on the 1st/2nd strings. Pause on the lick before going back into strums of the ‘C’ chord again. He starts to sing at this point of the song.

![Fingerpicking Pattern](image)
Repeat the lick and chord combination.

At this point, jump right into the 'V' chord (G7 or G) while holding down the 1st string/3rd fret with the pinkie always.

Strum a 'G7 or G' chord, and play a chromatic run up and down the 1st string over the 1st, 2nd and 3rd frets all while fingering the 'G' chord.
Patton plays these next four chords in succession. Hold a ‘C’ chord on the 8th/7th fret while holding the pinkie down always on the first string regardless of the chord. He maintains this fingering as he moves back to the ‘C’ major chord all the way up from the 8th/7th frets.

Play the base note first followed by two strums of the chord itself alongside singing, “You may go...”
A lick on the 1\textsuperscript{st}/2\textsuperscript{nd} string below which resolves into a ‘G’ major chord before turning into a ‘C’ major chord.

This lick below represents the turnaround in the song. There is a lot of action on the first string while continuing to hold the ‘C’ chord down as you strike the melody.

Back to these chords again. They follow after he sings, “Don’t the moon...”

Sit on these licks over the 1\textsuperscript{st}/2\textsuperscript{nd} strings. Note the pauses in the song.
Back to these chords again. They appear over and over again. You will start with singing, “You may go...”

Followed by...

And back to the turnaround.

Repeat the concepts demonstrated thus far against the remaining portions of the song.
Lyrics

Yes on me, it's poor me, you must take pity on poor me
I ain't got nobody, take pity on poor me

You may go, you may stay,
But she'll come back some sweet day
By and by, sweet mama, by and by

Don't the moon look pretty shinin' down through the tree?
Oh, I can see Bertha Lee,
Lord, but she can't see me

You may go, you may stay,
But she'll come back some sweet day
By and by, sweet mama,
Baby won't you, by and by

You may go, you may stay,
But she'll come back some sweet day
By and by, sweet mama, by and by
Yes on me, it's poor me,
You must have pity on poor me
I ain't got nobody,
Take pity on poor me

Don't the moon look pretty shinin' down through the tree?
Oh, I can see Bertha Lee,
But she can't see me
You may go, you may stay,
But she'll come back some sweet day
By and by, sweet mama,
Oh baby, won't you, by and by
John The Revelator

Open ‘E’ Tuning (E-B-E-G#-B-E)

John The Revelator is one of Blind Willie Johnson’s most recognizable pieces in open tuning play. It is played in open ‘D’ vestapol tuning tuned one whole step to ‘E’.

The introduction starts with a brisk series of open chords followed by the melody that mirrors the lyrics. Most of the melody will be played on the 3rd string between the first and third frets.

The melody extends out like this. The melody on the third string is where most of the song’s structure lies.

The melody ends with a series of brisk open chords followed by an ascending scale.
These open chords are played before the next phase of the verse.

The melody then continues on the third string over the first fret bypassing any notes on the third fret.

The notes on the third fret appear again and cap of this verse.

He then starts back to the beginning.
Lyrics

Well who's that a writing? John The Revelator

Who's that a writing? John The Revelator

Who's that a writing? John The Revelator

A book of the seven seals

Tell me what's John a writing? Ask The Revelator

What's John a writing? Ask The Revelator

What's John a writing? Ask The Revelator

A book of the seven seals

Now who art worthy, crucified and holy

Bound up for some, Son of our God

Daughter of Zion, Judea's Lion

He redeemed us, Jesus bought us with his blood

Now tell me who's that a writing? John The Revelator

Who's that a writing? John The Revelator

Who's that a writing? John The Revelator

A book of the seven seals
Well what's John a writing? Ask The Revelator

What's John a writing? Ask The Revelator

What's John a writing? Ask The Revelator

A book of the seven seals

Well Moses to Moses, Watching the flock

Saw the bush where they had to stop

God told Moses pull off your shoes

Out of the flock, a well a you I choose

Now tell me who's that a writing? John The Revelator

Who's that a writing? John The Revelator

Who's that a writing? John The Revelator

A book of the seven seals

Well what's John a writing? Ask The Revelator

What's John a writing? Ask The Revelator

What's John a writing? Ask The Revelator

A book of the seven seals
The Soul of A Man

Open ‘E’ Tuning (E-B-E-G#-B-E)

**Soul of a Man** is another Blind Willie Johnson classic played in open ‘D’ tuning tuned one whole step up to ‘E’.

The introduction starts off with a series of brisk open chords which eventually lead into the main riff on the 3rd string over the third and first frets.

He plays the next sequence on the third strings over the 5th, 6th, and 8th frets. Play the notes carefully while pairing them with the lyrics being sung.

Back to the melody being played on the 3rd string over the first and third frets.
More of the same stance on the third string with some pull-off action over the same notes.

He continues on with the familiar melody before going back the beginning of the song.

Lyrics

Won't somebody tell me, answer if you can!

Want somebody tell me, what is the soul of a man

I'm going to ask the question, answer if you can

If anybody here can tell me, what is the soul of a man?

I've traveled in different countries, I've traveled foreign lands

I've found nobody to tell me, what is the soul of a man

I saw a crowd stand talking, I came up right on time

Were hearing the doctor and the lawyer, say a man ain't nothing but his mind

I read the bible often, I tries to read it right
As far as I can understand, a man is more than his mind

When Christ stood in the temple, the people stood amazed

Was showing the doctors and the lawyers, how to raise a body from the grave
Bye, Bye Little Girl

Open ‘G’ Tuning (E-A-E-A-C#-E)

Bye, Bye Little Girl is a quintessential piece in familiarizing oneself with playing in Open G tuning. The combination of the alternating bass and melodic riffs in the treble produce the very characteristic ‘loop’ effect often found in McDowell’s compositions with open tunings. This song sounds especially nice while playing it with an electric guitar.

The main riff. The accompanying alternating bass picking pattern must remain a constant to execute and maintain the rhythm.

The break on the IV chord.

Back to the riff.
Turn around and ‘V’ chord. He ‘sits’ on the riff but only briefly. Watch out for the change in tempo.

Back to the riff.

Then you would apply the ‘IV’ chord and ‘V’ chord arrangements across the remaining stanzas as necessary.

**Lyrics**

Yeah Bye Bye

Bye Bye

Little girl, little girl

Yeah Bye Bye

Bye Bye little girl

Bye Bye
Yeah, bye bye little girl
Bye bye little girl
Bye Bye

Sail along
Sail along
Little girl sail along

Yeah, sail along little girl
Sail along little girl
Sail on

You gonna keep on sailing
lose your happy home

I done told you once baby
Twice that you been told

I done told you once darlin’
Twice that you been told again

Next time I tell you honey
Hit that dusty road

Yeah so long
So long little girl
So long
So long little girl
So long little girl
So long

Yeah tell me baby
What you want me to do?

Yeah tell me baby
Honey, what you want me to do?

You must of wanted me baby
To lay down and die for you

I’m going back to the pawn shop
I’m gonna put my watching on you

I’m going back to the pawn shop
Gonna put my watchin’ on you

I don’t want nobody tell me
I owe my baby gone

(outro)
**I Worked Old Lu and I Worked Old Bess**

*Open ‘D’ Tuning (E-B-E-G#-B-E)*

The signature licks found in the composition is repeatedly used across McDowell extensive repertoire. Here you have a marriage of the typical pull-off lick on the third string accompanied by the pronounced slide Hammer-on on the bass strings of the third fret. The two together are a staple of McDowell’s distinctive sound; definitely a characteristic of his work in Open D tuning. Learning the song is essential to mastering his work.

This is the predominant riff used throughout the song. The combination is a Fred McDowell staple used extensively across his wide array of songs.

The verse is worked into the riff with a bending on the 3rd string on the 3rd fret.

The second part of the verse continues with the same as the first part.
To finish off this first stanza, McDowell reverts to the slide to play the bottom two strings. The lick comes in after McDowell speaks “Lord I couldn’t find no Mule”

“Lord I couldn’t find no mule”...

The next stanza goes back to the first and second parts of the verse which repeat the same. You will do this across the entire song.

The end of this second stanza drops starts in the second string rather than the first. He switches off back and forth with this lick and the other throughout the song at the end of his stanzas. Play the second string with a slide gently ringing out the notes.

Lord I cannot drive him...
The solo is played with a slide gently ringing out the notes on the first fret.

Then is back to the riff and verses.

This is the last solo before the song ends. He starts with a slide played on the second string. He plays the main riff shortly one last time before sliding and ending the song from the 5th fret to the 12 fret.
Lyrics

Lord I worked old Lu

Babe and I worked old Bess

Lord I worked Old Lu captain

You know I worked old Bell

Lord I couldn’t find no mule

Captain Willie sure aware

He won’t drink no water

He won’t even eat no corn

Lord I can’t no drive him

Lord kept him going on ling

I’m a long line skinner

I got the shortest line

Lord He got a water barry

Lord he won’t even keep time

Lord He’s hollering hurry

Boy you know I’m almost blind
Ohh you got a hot shooootin’ piston
You know he thinks he bad

He got a hard shooting pistol
Babe you know he thinks he bad

What I take him in the morning
Baby he makes me mad

Lord gonna take it in the morning darling
Babe if he makes me mad

(SOLO)

Lord you can’t do me darling
Like you done poor shine

Lord you can’t do me
Honey like you done poor shine

Well you took his money
I declare you can’t take mine
Lord you took his money darling
But I declare you can’t take mine
Hobo Blues

Open ‘A’ tuning (E-A-E-A-C#-E)

Hobo Blues is one of John Lee Hooker’s most recognizable pieces in open tuning play. The licks and chords in this song also appear across much of his repertoire using the same tuning. The song is tuned one whole step up from typical standard ‘G’ tuning.

The introduction below starts off on a lick based on the 3rd fret.

The melody extends like this. The Eb note on the 2nd string/2nd fret is signature to his playing and appears in Crawling King Snake as well.

The signature bass run. A variation of this bass run also appears in Crawling King Snake.

The ending lick of the introduction followed by the open E(7) chord.
He begins every stanza with this lick. He extends and stays on the 3rd fret as he sings.

The rest he sings while holding the IV chord shape shown below.

The strums go like this.

He reverts back to the bass run after “Oh Lord”.

(first started hoboing boys...)  (starts humming notes)
Back to the E(7) chord strum.

The next stanza starts off the same way as the first.

He uses this alternate melody instead of the bass run this time around. It's a variation of the short instance played from the introduction.

Then he repeats the same ideas throughout the rest of the song. Apply them accordingly.
Towards the end of the song he plays an alternate lick based on IV chord positioning. The instrumental break at the end encompasses everything demonstrated beforehand. Apply the licks and chords according to what you hear in the original recording.

Lyrics.

When I first started hoboing, hoboing boys

I took a freight train to

Be my friend

Oh Lord

(mmmmm mmmmm)

You know I hoboed, hoboed, hoboed, hoboed

Hoboed a long-long

Ways from Home

Oh Lord

(mmmmm mmmmm)

You know my mother she followed me that morning, that morning, that morning

She followed me down
To the yard
Oh Lord

(mmmmm mmmmm)

She said my son he’s gone, he’s gone, he’s gone, he’s gone
Yes, He’s gone in the
World somewhere
Oh Lord.

(mmmmm mmmmm)

You know I left my dear old mother, dear old mother, dear old mother
She was on her
Knees a- cryin’
Oh Lord

(mmmmm mmmmm)

You know I hoboed, hoboed, hoboed, hoboed
Hoboed a long-long
Ways from Home
Oh Lord

(mmmmm mmmmm)
Boogie Chillun

Open B tuning (F#-B#-F-B-D#-F#)

Boogie Chillun is another John Lee Hooker classic played in open tuning. This transcription is from the 1948 version to which his guitar is tuned two whole steps up to ‘B’ tuning. You will need a CAPO positioned on the 4th fret to be in tune with the original recording. He plays many variations of this song across many pitches throughout his works. Feel free to play it in whatever pitch you please to use.

The main riff is a combination of flicking the 3rd and 4th strings open followed by a hammer-on slide on the 5th string starting on the 2nd fret and moving up the neck to the 5th fret.

He inserts this lick later on.

He plays the IV chord as he begins singing.
He begins with...

Well my mama, she didn't allow me...

Then back to the main riff.

Just to stay out all not long...oh lord

He continues with the lyrics over the ‘IV’ chord again.

Well my mama, she didn't allow me...

The he plays this lick.
Then back to the IV chord.

Back to the main riff.

He starts telling the story while playing the main riff. “When I first came to town people... I was walking down Hastings Street”.

“I say yes people”...
To this build up.

To which afterwards he stops and sings

‘BOOGIE CHILLUN!’

Back to the main riff.

This is an instrumental break in the IV position towards the end of the song.
Back to the main riff

Back to the next stanza and apply the concepts demonstrated according to what you hear in the original recording.

**Lyrics**

Well, my mama she didn’t 'low me

Just to stay out all night long

Oh, Lord

Well, my mama didn’t 'low me

Just to stay out all night long

I didn’t care she didn’t 'low

I would boogie anyhow
When I first came to town, people, I was walkin' down Hastings Street

I heard everybody talkin' about the Henry Swing Club

I decided I drop in there that night

And when I got there

I say, "Yes, people"

“Yes, they was really was havin' a ball”

Yes, I know

Boogie Chillun'

One night I was layin' down

I heard mama and papa talkin'

I heard papa tell mama

To let that boy boogie-woogie

Cause it's in him

and it got to come out

Well I felt so good

And I went on boogin' Woogin' just the same

Yes
Conclusion

The songs presented in this E-book will most undoubtedly solidify your foundation in understanding and playing Delta Blues Music. Mastery of the songs will prove dividends when you move on to study other Delta Blues artists. Thank you for your purchase of this book, and I hope you continue to love and play the blues forever.

Best wishes,

-Delta Lou

www.deltaloumusic.com