Robert Johnson is certainly the most famous artist to feature out of the Delta Blues musical genre. He will forever be remembered in American folklore for his supposed exchange with the devil to gain mastery of the guitar. Johnson’s work embodies most of the artists that came a generation earlier. Elements of Charley Patton, Son House, Skip James, Lonnie Johnson, and Tommy Johnson are evident across his body of work. His playing embodies the very essence of the Delta Blues sound intertwined with elements of early jazz. The songs illustrated in this E-Book cover his most essential works, and will give the learner a solid foundation in beginning Delta Blues guitar playing. The book will cover songs based in three essential tunings: Vestapol E Minor, Open ‘G’ (Spanish) and standard ‘E’.
From Four Till Late

Standard ‘E’ Tuning (E-A-D-G-B-E)

From Four Till Late utilizes the basics of playing in the key of ‘C’. The tuning is in ‘E’ standard. The jazzy feel of this song can be accredited to Lonnie Johnson’s influence on Robert’s playing.

The introduction is a classic Johnson signature. It is a chromatic run up the neck board on a ‘C’ chord starting on the 5th/8th fret. Let the pinkie remain idle, and play the notes on the bottom string while the index finger moves down from the 8th fret up to the 5th fret on the 4th string. Resolve the sequence to a ‘G7’ chord.

The introduction continues with a series of strums using typical chords in the key of ‘C’.
The first verse is a fluctuating play on the ‘C’ and ‘C6add2’ chord followed by the ‘F’ and ‘F7’ chords, before finally resolving in ‘C’. Here, he begins to sing the song.

A lick in ‘C’ based on the 1\textsuperscript{st} and 2\textsuperscript{nd} strings on the 3\textsuperscript{rd} and 5\textsuperscript{th} frets follows after the chords. Hold this pattern and move up the neck towards the 1\textsuperscript{st} and 3\textsuperscript{rd} frets. This lick will appear throughout the song. He resolves everything into a ‘C7’ chord.
The ‘F’ and ‘Fm7’ chord follow, and represent the ‘IV’ chord in the song. Play the 1st string/3rd fret on and off while playing these chords. Resolve the sequence in a ‘C’ chord.

The lick in ‘C’ appears again and resolves into an ‘A7’ chord.

The verse finishes with strums of ‘D7/F#’ and ‘G7’ before the sequence of C7, F, Fm7, and G7 similar to the initial introduction. This sequence represents the ‘V’ chord for the song.
These chords below follow afterwards in quick succession.

The second verse substitutes the initial chords with a combination of strategic double stops echoing the singing. Play these carefully regarding the timing before resolving into a ‘C’ chord.

From Memphis to Nfكي is a thirty six hour ride
The lick in ‘C’ follows...

```
3-3-3-2  2-2-1-0
5-5-5-4  4-4-3-1
  3  3  3  3
```

Continue with the same stance for the ‘F’ and ‘Fm7’ chords.

```
1-1  1-3-1  1-1-1  1-3-1-0
1-1  1-1-1  1-1-1  1-1-1
2-2  2-2-2  2-1-1  1-1-1-0
3-3  3-3-3  3-1-1  1-1-1-2
```

From Memphis to Norfolk is a thirty six hour ride

The lick in ‘C’ appears again and resolves into an ‘A7’ chord.

```
3-3-3-2  2-2-1-0
5-5-5-4  4-4-3-1
  3  3  3  3
```

This is the ‘V’ chord and turnaround that follows.

```
1-1  1-0  0-1  1-1-1-0-0-0-0
1-1  1-1-1  1-1-1-1-1
2-0  1-1-1  1-1-1-2
3-3  3-3-3-3
```

A man like a prisoner and he’s never satisfied
The verses continue with the same musical concepts except for the very last one to which Johnson plays the ‘IV’ chord differently.

New double stops appear where the ‘F’ and ‘Fm7’ chords were played initially. These double stops resemble diminished notes. Carefully sing the lyrics against this measure to remain in timing.

The ending is a shortened take on the introduction over the 5th/8th fret. He plays an arpeggio over a ‘C7’ chord on the 5th/6th fret to cap off the song.
Lyrics

From four till late
I was wrin’ my hands and cryin’
From four till late
I was wrin’ my hands and cryin’
I believe to my soul
That your daddy’s Gulfport bound

From Memphis to Norfolk
Is a thirty six hour ride
From Memphis to Norfolk
Is a thirty six hour ride
A mans like a prisoner
And he’s never satisfied

A woman is like a dresser
Some man is always ramblin’ through its drawers
A woman is like a dresser
Some man is always ramblin’ through its drawers
It cause so many men
To wear an apron overhaul
From four until late
She get with a no good bunch and clown
From four until late
She get with a no good bunch and clown
Now, she won’t do nothin’
But tear a good man’s reputation down

When I leave this town,
I’m ‘gonna bid you fare...farewell
When I leave this town,
I’m ‘gonna bid you fare...farewell
And when I return again
You’ll have a great long story to tell
**Malted Milk**

*Drop ‘D’ Tuning (D-A-D-G-B-E)*

**Malted Milk** utilizes the basics of playing in the key of ‘D’. The tuning is standard except that the top string is tuned down to ‘D’. The jazzy feel of this song can be accredited to Lonnie Johnson’s influence on Robert’s playing.

*The introduction is a classic Johnson signature. It is a chromatic run up the neck board on a ‘D’ chord starting on the 7th/10th fret. Let the pinkie remain idle and play the notes on the bottom string while the index finger moves down from the 10th fret up to the 7th fret on the 4th string. Resolve the sequence to an ‘A7’ chord.*

![Chord Diagram](image)

*Johnson incorporates a mini lick on the first and second strings before resolving into a ‘D7’ chord on the 3rd, 4th, and 5th frets (see chord diagram below).*
He then jumps up to the 2nd and 3rd strings to play licks in ‘G’ over the ‘IV’ position in the song.

This lick combination below on the 1st and 2nd strings appears throughout *Drunken Hearted Man* and *Malted Milk*. You are essentially sliding with the fingers in position over the corresponding frets. Resolve to the ‘D7’ chord afterwards.

Back to the ‘D7’ chord followed by the licks in ‘G’.
Here he plays a solo lick on the 2nd string/5th fret after the lick combinations in ‘G’. Bend the notes up and down while locked into position to achieve the same effect as in the original recording.

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\caption{Lick Diagram}
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"tryin' to drive ......my ....blues.....away"

This is the rest of the lick which afterwards resolves into a ‘D major’ chord.

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\caption{D Major Chord Diagram}
\end{figure}
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This melody continues using the ‘D’ major scale which then jumps up the 4th string for the start of the upcoming turnaround. It is a chromatic run on the neck board starting on the 4th fret which then resolves completely into an ‘A7’ chord.

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\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{a7_chord.png}
\caption{A7 Chord Diagram}
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"Baby You” is welcome to my lovin’

Back to the series in ‘G’.

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\caption{G Series Diagram}
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"As the flowers................is .....in......May"
The final signature turnaround at the end which incorporates diminished chords before resolving into an ‘A7’ chord.

The start of the next stanza.

Back to the series in ‘G’.

The lick on the 1\textsuperscript{st}/2\textsuperscript{nd} strings move up to the 8\textsuperscript{th}/10\textsuperscript{th} frets this time around.
Back to the licks in ‘G’.

He plays a solo lick on the bass strings at this juncture.

The rest of the solo lick which then resolves into a ‘D major’ chord.

This melody continues using the ‘D’ major scale which then jumps up to the 4th string for the start of the upcoming turnaround. It is a chromatic run on the neck board starting on the 4th fret which then resolves completely into an ‘A7’ chord.
Back to ‘G’ again.

The final signature turnaround at the end which incorporates diminished chords before resolving into an ‘A7’ chord.

Repeat the concepts demonstrated thus far across the next two stanzas. He eventually does away with the solo licks and reverts to playing and sitting on a ‘D’ chord over the 1st and 2nd strings as shown below.

The ending of the song. Bend the 2nd string/5th fret to the effect of what is heard in the original recording. Resolve the last chord to a natural ‘D’ chord.
Lyrics

I keep drinkin' malted milk, tryin' to drive my blues away

I keep drinkin' malted milk, tryin' to drive my blues away

Baby, you just as welcome to my lovin' as the flowers is in May

Malted milk, malted milk, keep rushin' to my head

Malted milk, malted milk, keep rushin' to my head

And I have a funny, funny feelin', and I'm talkin' all out my head

Baby, fix me one more drink, and hug your daddy one more time

Baby, fix me one more drink, and hug your daddy one more time

Keep on stirrin' my malted milk, mama, until I change my mind

My doorknob keeps on turnin', it must be spooks around my bed

My doorknob keeps on turnin', must be spooks around my bed

I have a warm, old feelin', and the hair risin' on my head
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”.
Bend and play this lick on the 7\textsuperscript{th}/8\textsuperscript{th} 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 4\textsuperscript{th}, 3\textsuperscript{rd}, 2\textsuperscript{nd}, and 1\textsuperscript{st} 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...
**Phonograph Blues**

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

**Phonograph Blues** comes out of 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. 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 into an ‘A’ chord.

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.

He moves back into the ‘D7/F#’ chord.

Back to these chords again.
The ‘V’ and ‘IV’ positions.

Back to what was played in the introduction.

The 4th Stanza continues with more of the same diminished chords.

Next, Johnson plays an instrumental break using the diminished chords more frequently.
Back to the ‘IV’ position.

Back to these ‘A’ chords.

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

Back to what was played in the introduction except that Johnson finishes the song on an ‘A7’ chord instead of an ‘E’ chord.
Finish out the remaining stanzas with what was demonstrated thus far and apply the concepts accordingly.

**Lyrics**

*Beatrice, she got a phonograph*

*And it won’t say a lonesome word*

*Beatrice got a phonograph*

*But it won’t say a lonesome word*

*What evil have I done?*

*What evil has the poor girl heard?*

*Beatrice, I love my phonograph*

*But you broke my windin' chain*

*Beatrice, I love my phonograph*

*But you have broke my windin' chain*

*And you taken my lovin'*

*And you gave it to your other man*

*Now we played it on the sofa, now*

*We played it 'side the wall*

*My needles have got rusty, baby*

*It will not play at all*

*We played it on the sofa*

*And we played it 'side the wall*

*But my needles have got rusty*

*And it will not play at all*
Beatrice, I go crazy

Baby, I will lose my mind

Baby, I go crazy

Honey, I will lose my mind

Why don't you bring your clothes back home

And try me one more time?

She got a phonograph

And it won't say a lonesome word

She got a phonograph

Ooh, won't say a lonesome word

What evil have I done?

Oh, what evil has the poor girl heard?
**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.

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But my Friar’s Point rider, now, hops all over me

Back to the riff once more.

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

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1112 1212 1112 1212 1112 1212 1112 1212 3-2-1-0 3-2-1-0 
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ain’t gon’ to state no color but her front teeth crowned with gold

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
**Love In Vain**

*Open ‘G#’ Tuning (D#-G#-D#-G#-C-D#)*

*Love in Vain* is an unusual composition played in Spanish style open ‘G#’ tuning. Johnson experiments with some unconventional chords in this piece. There is no presence of slide playing.

The introduction is played with the fingers and is a gentle run up to the verse. The rhythm is very relaxed and dreamlike.

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This is an alternate take on Johnson’s traditional turnaround arrangement. It ends with a suspenseful chord before the first verse.

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The verse features dynamic chords followed by a steady pulsating bass beat on the 4th fret/5th string.

---

And I followed her to the sta---tion
More dynamic ‘7’ chords with the complimentary bass beat on the 4th fret remaining constant.

The ‘IV’ chord portion features more dynamic chords based in the family of 7ths.

The continuing bass beat followed by Johnson’s take on the ‘V’ chord.
These chords take on the role of the 'IV' chord.

The rests between chords in this turnaround are key. Timing needs to be just right while observing the sung portion.

Continue the concepts demonstrated thus far against the remaining stanzas. There is no unique ending but the fading off of the last measure.

**Lyrics**

*Spoken: "I wanna go with our next one myself."*

And I followed her to the station
With a suitcase in my hand

And I followed her to the station
With a suitcase in my hand

Well, it's hard to tell, it's hard to tell
When all your love's in vain

All my love's in vain
When the train rolled up to the station
I looked her in the eye
When the train rolled up to the station
And I looked her in the eye
Well, I was lonesome, I felt so lonesome
And I could not help but cry
All my love’s in vain

When the train, it left the station
With two lights on behind
When the train, it left the station
With two lights on behind
Well, the blue light was my blues
And the red light was my mind
All my love’s in vain
Stop Breakin' Down Blues

Stop Breakin' Down Blues is played in open ‘Bb’ tuning. The tempo is much faster than in Johnson’s other songs.

The introduction is a fast take on Johnson’s classic turnaround over the bass strings on the 3rd, 2nd, and 1st fret. He transitions instantly into the first verse by playing a looping figure with the bass remaining constant on the 5th string open, and the 1st string/5th fret being played in syncopation with the bass notes.

The chromatic succession of notes on the 5th strings/3rd and 4th frets kick off each measure of the verse. After playing this lick, Johnson continues with the looped syncopated sequence.

He continues...

Every time I'm walkin' down the streets

Some pretty mama stats breakin' down with me
For the ‘IV’ chord, Johnson slows down the beat slightly, and plays typical chords in open Spanish tuning over the 5th and 8th frets. This is very similar to the chords found in Stones in my Passway.

Back to the syncopated loop which then shifts to the 1st string/3rd fret while maintaining the same stance.

The ‘V’ position is constructed with the same fingering featuring in the ‘IV’ position. This time around, shift over to the 7th and 10th frets. The ‘IV’ chord follows over the 5th fret before finally resolving back to the loop figure.

Then proceed to the loop figure before kicking off the second verse. There is no traditional turnaround in this instance.

Repeat the concepts demonstrated thus far against the remaining stanzas in the song.
The ending is very typical of his turnaround in Spanish tuning.

Lyrics

Every time I'm walkin' down the streets

Some pretty mama starts breakin' down with me

Stop breakin' down, yes stop breakin' down

The stuff I got'll bust your brains out, baby

Ooh, it'll make you lose your mind

I can't walk the streets now, can't console my mind

Some no-good woman she starts breakin' down

Stop breakin' down, please stop breakin' down

The stuff I got gonna bust your brains out

Ooh, it'll make you lose your mind

Now, you Saturday night womens, you love to ape and clown

You won't do nothin' but tear a good man reputation down

Stop breakin' down, please stop breakin' down

The stuff I got'll bust your brains out, baby

Ooh, it'll make you lose your mind
Now, I give my baby, now the ninety-nine degree

She jumped up and throwed a pistol down on me

Stop breakin' down, please stop breakin' down

Stuff I got'll bust your brains out, baby

Ooh, it'll make you lose your mind

I can't start walkin' down the streets

But my pretty mama don't start breakin' down with me

Stop breakin' down, yeah stop breakin' down

The stuff I got'll bust your brains out, baby

Ooh, it'll make you lose your mind
If I Had Possession Over Judgment Day

Open ‘A’ Tuning (E-A-E-A-C#-E)

If I Had Possession Over Judgment Day is played in open ‘A’ tuning. Much emphasis is on sliding forcibly over the 12th fret.

The introduction begins with slide action on the 2nd and 1st strings on the 12th fret followed by a brisk turnaround on the bass strings over the 3rd, 2nd, and 1st frets. Resolve the sequence by pinching the 1st string/5th fret. Let it ring.

The first verse emphasizes heavy sliding over the 5th fret which then shifts into a pressed pull off on the 3rd, 2nd and 1st frets with the slide. Resolve the sequence into an open chord.

This break in the song resembles the one found in Traveling Riverside Blues. Careful application of the slide must be applied over the notes on the 3rd fret.
More sliding over the ‘IV’ chord follows.

An additional note on the 3\textsuperscript{rd}/4\textsuperscript{th} strings on the 3\textsuperscript{rd} fret appears throughout the rest of the song.

This additional note (circled below) differentiates it from the one that featured in \textit{Traveling Riverside Blues}.

The ‘V’ chord portion entails steady sliding on the 5\textsuperscript{th} string predominantly over the 7\textsuperscript{th} and 5\textsuperscript{th} frets.
More of the signature break that follows. The added note appears again.

The second verse starts off with heavy sliding over the 11th and 12th frets before resolving into the pressed pull off over the 3rd, 2nd, and 1st frets.

Back to the break which extends a bit.

Now to the 12th fret again.

And I went to the mountain lookin' far as my eyes could see
Back to the break again...

The ‘V’ chord turnaround.

Main riff is played afterwards.

The third verse begins with pronounced strums on the open chord.

And I rolled and I tumbled and I cried the whole night long
These open chords resolve into sliding over individual strings on the 12th fret before going back to the break.

For the ‘IV’ chord, Johnson reverts back to playing typical chords found over the 5th and 8th frets.

Now back to the break again.

The ‘V’ chord played over the 7th and 10th frets which are followed by the ‘IV’ chord over the 5th and 8th frets.
Back to the riff which extends a little more.

The next verse continues with the same concepts portrayed in the last stanza. Repeat everything from the ‘I’ to the ‘V’ chord in this verse alone.

Had to fold my arms and I slowly walked away

The 4th verse opens with the common application over the 12th fret.

Now run here, baby set down on my knee

Back to the riff again.
Johnson then slides over the 23rd and 24th frets to play two octaves up before coming back to the 12th fret and ending with the pull off on the first three frets.

The riff that follows afterwards.

The 'V' chord.

The ending is typical of Johnson’s work in Spanish tuning. Pinch and ring out the 1st string/5th fret.
Lyrics

If I had possession
Over judgment day
If I had possession
Over judgment day
Lord, the little woman I’m lovin’ wouldn’t
Have no right to pray

And I went to the mountain
Lookin’ far as my eyes could see
And I went to the mountain
Lookin’ far as my eye could see
Some other man got my woman and the -‘a
Lonesome blues got me

And I rolled and I tumbled and I
Cried the whole night long
And I rolled and I tumbled and I
Cried the whole night long
Boy, I woke up this mornin’
My biscuit roller gone

Had to fold my arms and I
Slowly walked away
Spoken: I didn’t like the way she done
Had to fold my arms and I
Slowly walked away
I said in my mind, “Yo,"
Trouble gon’ come some day

Now run here, baby
Set down on my knee
I wanna tell you all about the
Way they treated me
Milkcow’s Calf Blues

Open ‘Bb’ Tuning (F-Bb-F-Bb-D-F)

MilkCow’s Calf Blues is played in open ‘Bb’ Tuning. The song has a fluid country rhythm to it.

The introduction starts off with pinching the slide on the 2\textsuperscript{nd} string over the 7\textsuperscript{th}, 8\textsuperscript{th} and 9\textsuperscript{th} frets in a back and forth motion before pulling off on the 3\textsuperscript{rd}, 2\textsuperscript{nd}, and 1\textsuperscript{st} frets. Resolve the sequence into an open chord.

The opening is followed by this rhythm preceding the first verse.

These are the unique chords played throughout the song. Play them with sharp strokes carefully along with the words. The first verse has its strums shortened compared to upcoming verses.
The chord changes slightly in the following measure. Johnson then plays a series of chords where the bottom string note is paired with an open chord.

Here Johnson plays his typical 'IV' pattern by barring the 5th fret and playing the 1st string/8th fret with his pinkie to play the 7th note. The bass run at the beginning is always instrumental to the set up of the incoming chords.

Combinations of various chords already demonstrated before.

A strategic pause occurs before forcibly sliding hard on the 4th string/5th fret. This is followed by a light bass run on the 6th string to which is hardly heard in the original recording.

Now, you have a little new calf  hoo, and your milk is turnin' blue
More chord combinations that follow.

Johnson continues with more of the same in the second verse. His strums appear more frequently than in the first verse.

Followed by...

Back to the ‘IV’ position.

Now, your calf is hungry and I believe he needs a suck.
Followed by…

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The ‘V’ position break.

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= 5

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But your milk is turnin' blue, hoo
I believe he's outta luck
```

Followed by this pattern. You can substitute the 1st string/2nd fret instead of the 3rd to bring to make the riff ‘Major’. Johnson does incorporate it into this song.

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In the 4th stanza, Johnson plays a bass and chord combination that appears like below. The chord on the 6th/7th fret must be played with sharp strokes.

```
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Now, I feel like milkin' and my cow won't come
Back to the ‘IV’ position.

Followed by these chords.

The ‘V’ position again.

Followed by these chords.
Repeat the concepts demonstrated thus far across the remaining stanzas accordingly.

The ending is a classic turnaround on the bass strings with some slide action on the 5th fret terminating into the 12th fret.

---

**Lyrics**

Tell me, milkcow, what on earth is wrong with you?

Hoo, milkcow, what on earth is wrong with you?

Now, you have a little new calf, hoo, and your milk is turnin' blue

Now, your calf is hungry, and I believe he needs a suck

Now, your calf is hungry, hoo, I believe he needs a suck

But your milk is turnin' blue, hoo, I believe he's outta luck

Now, I feel like milkin' and my, cow won't come

I feel like shootin' and my milk won't turn, I'm cryin' please

Please don't do me wrong

If you see my old milkcow, baby now, hoo, drive her home

My milkcow been ramblin', hoo, for miles around

My milkcow been ramblin', hoo, for miles around

Well, now she in trouble with some other man bull cow, hoo, in this strange man's town
**Hell Hound on My Trail**

**Vestapol 'Em' Tuning (E-B-E-G-B-E)**

Hell Hound on My Trail is played in open ‘Em’ tuning. The influence of Skip James on Johnson’s playing is highly evident in this song.

The introduction is played similarly to a turnaround in the key of ‘E’ in standard tuning. The same chords apply, and Johnson will pull off periodically on the 1<sup>st</sup> string to play the open note in the progression of the chords.

The beginning sequence follows with a turnaround suited for this style of tuning with the descending pattern happening on the 5<sup>th</sup> string starting on the third fret. He resolves this turnaround sequence always with a natural ‘7’ chord based on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> frets always.

He begins the first verse with a pause before singing. Locate the 1<sup>st</sup> string/7<sup>th</sup> fret and 2<sup>nd</sup> string/8<sup>th</sup> fret then pinch and bend upwards on the strings four times.

I got to keep movin’
Maintaining the same fingering, shift up the neck to the 5th and 6th frets and play strategically in timing with the sung portions. He plays the same fingering over the 2nd/3rd fret very briefly before coming back to the 5th and 6th frets. Resolve into a double stop on the open 5th and 1st strings.

Now back to the turnaround piece followed by the natural ‘7’ chord.

In the next measure, he plays a unique pull off on the 2nd string/2nd fret followed by a clean bend on the 1st string/3rd fret. He then plays an octave combination of chords based on the 2nd string/5th fret and bottom string open. Resolve into the open 6th string to keep in timing.

This is followed by the turnaround.
The ‘V’ position is similar to Skip James’ approach in *Devil Got My Woman*. Strike the base notes on the 6\(^{th}\) string/7\(^{th}\) fret twice followed by playing a ‘m7’ chord on the 2\(^{nd}\)/3\(^{rd}\) frets. Resolve into the open 6\(^{th}\) string to keep within timing.

```
\begin{verbatim}
\text{the days' keeps on worryin' me} \quad \text{there's a hellhound on my trail}
\end{verbatim}
```

This is followed by the turnaround.

```
\begin{verbatim}
\text{hellhound on my trail} \quad \text{hellhound on my trail}
\end{verbatim}
```

The second verse incorporates an additional note over the lick on the 7\(^{th}\)/8\(^{th}\) frets.

```
\begin{verbatim}
\text{If today was Christmas Eve}
\end{verbatim}
```

```
\begin{verbatim}
\text{If today was Christmas Eve} \quad \text{and tomorrow was Christmas Day}
\end{verbatim}
```
Back to the turnaround that follows.

Johnson repeats this arrangement below against the next few stanzas. The pull off on the 2\textsuperscript{nd} fret goes away. He also incorporates a brief bass run between the 3\textsuperscript{rd} and 5\textsuperscript{th} frets back and forth on the 5\textsuperscript{th} string. Resolve into the open 6\textsuperscript{th} string to keep within timing.

Now back to the turnaround again.

The 'V' position.
The turnaround, followed by the natural ‘7’ chord.

In the third verse, Johnson breaks from the licks happening on the 1\textsuperscript{st} and 2\textsuperscript{nd} strings. He starts off with a descending bass run on the 5\textsuperscript{th} string starting on the 5\textsuperscript{th} fret. It’s a gradual climb up the neck, chromatically to the second fret. Stay in timing with the sung portions. He plays the notes simultaneously on the 6\textsuperscript{th} and 5\textsuperscript{th} strings together.

The turnaround that follows.
He repeats these licks from the previous stanza.

You sprinkled hot foot powder all around your daddy's door, hmm hmm hmm

Followed by the turnaround again.

mmmm mmmmm

The 'V' position.

It keep me with ramblin' mind, rider every old place I go

The turnaround preceding the next verse.

every old place I go
Repeat the concepts demonstrated for the final stanza. There is no distinctive ending for the song. He simply resolves the entire song in the 7 chord and fades away.

**Lyrics**

_I got to keep movin'_

_I got to keep movin'_

_Blues fallin' down like hail_

_Blues fallin' down like hail_

_Umm mmm mmm mmm_

_Blues fallin' down like hail_

_Blues fallin' down like hail_

_And the days keeps on worryin' me_

_There's a hellhound on my trail_

_Hellhound on my trail_

_Hellhound on my trail_

_If today was Christmas Eve_

_If today was Christmas Eve_

_And tomorrow was Christmas Day_

_If today was Christmas Eve_

_And tomorrow was Christmas Day_

_Spoken: Aow, wouldn't we have a time, baby?_

_All I would need my little sweet rider just_

_To pass the time away, huh huh_

_To pass the time away_
You sprinkled hot foot powder, mmm

mmm, around my door

All around my door

You sprinkled hot foot powder

All around your daddy's door, hmm hmm hmm

It keep me with ramblin' mind, rider

Every old place I go

Every old place I go

I can tell the wind is risin'

The leaves tremblin' on the tree

Tremblin' on the tree

I can tell the wind is risin'

Leaves tremblin' on the tree

All I need's my little sweet woman

And to keep my company, hmm hmm, hey hey

My company
Conclusion

The songs presented in this E-book will undoubtedly solidify your foundation in understanding and playing Delta Blues Music. Mastery of Robert Johnson will also help you to move on to study other Delta Blues artists that will follow in lessons to come in the future.

Thank you for downloading this E-Book, and I hope that you continue to love and play the blues forever.

Best wishes,

Delta Lou-

www.deltaloumusic.com