



JW ENTERTAINMENT

Bringing the Blues to You



BIG JACK JOHNSON BIO

A true master of contemporary Delta blues, Big Jack Johnson is one of the best Blues guitarists ever to come out of Clarksdale, Mississippi and that is a long list. Born in 1940 in Lambert, MS, Johnson has spend the past 40 years living and playing the blues. His musicianship has been so renowned, that he has performed by invitation with Sonny Boy Williamson, Jimmy Reed, Robert Nighthawk and Carl Perkins, to name a few. He first recorded at the famous Sun Studios in Memphis in 1964. Unlike many Bluesmen today, Big Jack has stayed in the Delta and continues to make his home in the same place he started out in. Not that he hasn't traveled. Tours have taken him to Japan, Germany, Holland, and many other European countries. He's also in regular demand at the festivals that have sprung up all over the U.S. In 1962 Big Jack first gained prominence when he teamed up with Frank Frost and Sam Carr and formed what most blues fans think of as the perfect Blues trio. Originally called Frank Frost and the Nighthawks, then Little Sam Carr and The Blues Kings, they finally settled on the Jelly Roll Kings when they recorded for Earwig Records in 1978. Big Jack has been named "Best Live Performer" in The Living Blues Magazine Critic's Poll and won the 1997 W.C. Handy Award for his MC Records release, "*We Got To Stop This Killin'.*" An incredibly gifted and intense guitarist and vocalist, Johnson plays electric slide with the dirty, greasy feel of Elmore James and shouts verses that sound as old as the Delta soil he was born on. This is raw, powerful, electric Delta blues at its very best.

Encouraged by his musician-father, Big Jack became a proficient guitarist at an early age. Lacking nothing in terms of pure talent, his vocal and instrumental skills have become world-class -- he is the blues as much as any artist that has ever played. In fact, "Big Jack" has garnered some prestigious awards, recorded with diverse groups and for various labels, and rocked the stages of clubs and festivals the world over.

So why the constant struggle for recognition?

"Nobody seems to want to put me at the right place at the right time," the artist told me. "They just leave me hangin'. So you know I have to try to bang around and do my own stuff and try to get out here so people can hear me, 'cause really I haven't been where people could see what I had for them." And so does Mr. Johnson proceed from gig-to-gig along his blues path, certain of his talents and abilities, yet humble to a fault. Through it all the artist emerges as both gentleman and musician's musician -- a deeply religious and respectful man. "Ain't no sense in runnin' . . . you can't run from Him," Jack remarks, ". . . and you can't hide."

Blues was not his only musical influence, however. "I listened to country and western and blues, and I like to mix it up now, cause that's what I heard," recalls the bluesman. I listened to the Grand Ole Opry with DeFord Bailey, Grandpa Jones, Red Foley -- all those guys . . . and Hank Williams, who I heard live in Memphis when I was really young."

"But B.B. King was my idol," Jack says, "and Albert too." I would see him at the Masonic Hall in Clarksdale -- Robert Nighthawk, Sonny Boy Williamson -- I played with all those guys. Robert with all that slide stuff and Sonny Boy would just eat that harp up, man."

Anyone familiar with Jack's shows knows that no one quite equals him in live performance. He steps in front of the mike, and a hush envelopes the crowd. Here is a real blues man . . . the real deal with all of the legendary power, command and excitement. Not since Earl Hooker has a guitarist with such virtuosity, emotion, and eclectic makeup come before the public. If you ever have the chance to see Big Jack Johnson in person, don't miss it. You're in for a real treat!

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