

B. B. King Time Line

Note: This time line is condensed from a time line created by Charles Sawyer and is supplemented with information from the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame.

September 16, 1925 born at Berclair, Mississippi in the Central Mississippi Delta (near Itta Bena) to sharecroppers, Albert and Nora Ella King. He was named after his father's brother, Riley.

1931 – his parents separated and Riley moved with his mother to Kilmichael. His mother died in 1935.

1936 – 1940 – Riley lived with his grandmother and attends church with aunts and uncles who live nearby. At church, the pastor Reverend Archie Fair, played the guitar. Riley played the Reverend's guitar one day after church.

1940 – B.B.'s grandmother died and he was allowed to stay in her cabin on the Henderson farm and raise cotton on one acre for a monthly allowance of \$2.50. His father came for him late in the year, bringing him to Lexington, Mississippi (Holmes County).

Late 1941 – B.B. bought a bicycle and rode for two days (45 miles) back to his family in Kilmichael, Mississippi.

1943 – B.B. moved back to the Delta, to Indianola where a cousin lived. He took a job as a tractor driver on the Barrett plantation.

1944 - 45 – He married Martha Denton. With his cousin and two other people, he began singing in the St. John's Gospel Singers.

1946 – B.B. performed on Sonny Boy Williamson's show on radio station WKEM, which led to steady work at the Sixteenth Avenue Grill in West Memphis.

1949 – King recorded for the first time, cutting four songs (including his debut single, "Miss Martha King" at a Memphis radio station WDIA, where he worked as a performer and deejay.

1950 – On a trip to Memphis, West Coast producer Jules Bihari signed B.B. King, who recorded many albums over the next decade on the RPM, Kent and Crown labels.

1951 – B.B.'s first national hit, a version of Lowell Fulson's "Three O'clock Blues," entered the Rhythm and Blues chart, staying at the top for five weeks.

1961 – Another hit, "You Upset Me, Baby," which King wrote, entered the R & B chart. It was his fourth and final single to reach number one.

1964 – B.B. signed with ABC-Paramount Records. He recorded "Rock Me Baby," which entered the Top Forty, where it peaked at #34. He also recorded the classic blues album, Live at the Regal, a night club in Chicago's Southside.

- 1967 – B. B. performed at the Montreaux Jazz Festival, the Newport Folk Festival, and San Francisco's Fillmore West, exposing the rising blues legend to jazz, folk and rock audiences.
- 1968 – “Paying the Cost to Be the Boss,” one of King's signature songs, enters the R & B chart, where it reached #10.
- 1969 – B.B. opened the first of eighteen performances for the Rolling Stones on the British group's sixth U.S. tour.
- 1970 – “The Thrill Is Gone,” by B.B. King, entered the singles chart, where it peaked at #3 R & B, and #15 Pop. The song earned a Grammy for Best Rhythm and Blues Vocal Performance, Male.
- 1973 – “I Like to Live the Love,” King's last Top Ten R & B hit, peaked at #10 R&B, and #28 on the pop charts.
- 1976 – With Bobby Blue Bland, a duo recording, “Together for the First Time...Live” was released. It became the first gold album for both artists. Another recording of these two, “Let the Good Times Roll,” made it to #20 on the R&B chart.
- 1977 – B.B. King received an honorary doctorate from Yale University. He received a similar honor from Boston's Berklee School of Music in 1982. Produced in 1977, B.B.'s album, “Deuces Wild” included performances with the Rolling Stones, Bonnie Raitt, Van Morrison, Dr. John and Willie Nelson. It became his second gold album.
- 1979 – He toured Russia, performing twenty-seven concerts in thirty cities, furthering his reputation as America's “Ambassador of the Blues.”
- 1980 – B.B. King was inducted into the first class of the Blues Foundation Hall of Fame.
- 1983 – The album, “Blues 'n' Jazz,” won a Grammy for Best Blues Recording.
- 1985 – King celebrated his 60th birthday by releasing his 50th album, Six Silver Strings.
- 1987 – He was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.
- 1988 – B.B. King received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences at the 30th annual Grammy Awards in Los Angeles.
- 1989 – A recording by U2 and B.B. King, “When Love Comes to Town,” won Best Video from Film at the MTV Video Awards.
- 1990 – King released Live at San Quentin, his fifth live album and second recorded at a correctional facility. He has performed sixty prison concerts in his career.

- 1991 – B.B. King received the National Heritage Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts. He also opened B.B. King’s Memphis Blues Club, in the city where he launched his career.
- 1992 – His album, *Live at the Apollo*, a big-band album released the previous year, won a Grammy Award for Best Traditional Blues Recording.
- 1994 – B.B. King’s *Blues Summit* – which included performers John Lee Hooker, Etta James, Buddy Guy, Albert Collins and others – won a Grammy Award for Best Traditional Blues Recording.
- 1995 – In this year when B.B. King turned 75, he was honored at the 18th annual Kennedy Center Honors in Washington, D.C.
- 1998 – The U.S. government designated B.B., King its “Ambassador of Music,” under which title he represented the United States at the World Expo in Lisbon, Portugal.
- 2000 – B.B. King and Eric Clapton collaborated on an album, *Riding with the King*; it became King’s first platinum album.
- 2003 – A new album, *Reflections*, was released. Music on the album included pop, country, jazz and blues standards, and three Louis Armstrong chestnuts.
- 2005 – The state of Mississippi celebrated “B.B. King Day.” A decree of the state legislature reads, “No matter where he appears in the world, B.B. King is a proud ambassador of his home state, and Mississippi is even prouder of this native son.”

Internet Resources related to B.B. King’s life story:

B.B. King Time Line, Charles Sawyer, unabridged:
<http://isites.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do?keyword=bbking&pageid=icb.page319115>

B.B. King Biography, Rock and Roll Hall of Fame:
<http://www.rockhall.com/inductees/bb-king/bio/>

B.B. King official web site: <http://www.bbking.com/>

B.B. King official biography: <http://www.bbking.com/bio/>

Brief Biography; includes a video story about how Lucille got her name:
<http://www.biography.com/people/bb-king-9364839>

PBS Documentary 2003, *The Blues*: <http://www.pbs.org/theblues/index.html>