

**"ARGUABLY THE MOST INFLUENTIAL  
MUSIC DOCUMENTARY SINCE WOODSTOCK."**

-MEMPHIS COMMERCIAL APPEAL

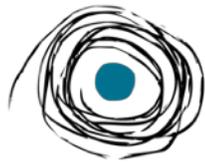
**"A LANDMARK DOCUMENTARY  
OF THE LIVING BLUES TRADITION."**

-BILLBOARD

# Deep Blues

A ROBERT MUGGE FILM





FILM MOVEMENT<sup>®</sup>  
CLASSICS

# Deep Blues

A ROBERT MUGGE FILM



**NEW 4K RESTORATION**

**“A movie no blues lover, no popular music aficionado,  
and no devotee of American culture and folkways should miss.”**

—Michael Wilmington, *Los Angeles Times*

United Kingdom | 1991 | English Language | 91 minutes  
1.33:1 Original Aspect Ratio | Stereo 2.0

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## SYNOPSIS

In 1990, commissioned by Dave Stewart of Eurythmics, veteran music film director Robert Mugge and renowned music scholar Robert Palmer ventured deep into the heart of the North Mississippi Hill Country and Mississippi Delta to seek out the best rural blues acts currently working. Starting on Beale Street in Memphis, they headed south to the juke joints, lounges, front porches, and parlors of Holly Springs, Greenville, Clarksdale, Bentonia, and Lexington. Along the way, they visited celebrated landmarks and documented talented artists cut off from the mainstream of the recording industry. The resulting film expresses reverence for the rich musical history of the region, spotlighting local performers, soon to be world-renowned, thanks in large part to the film, and demonstrating how the blues continues to thrive in new generations of gifted musicians.

## FEATURING THE MUSIC OF

**Junior Kimbrough - R.L. Burnside - Jessie Mae Hemphill - Big Jack Johnson  
Roosevelt "Booba" Barnes - Jack Owens & Bud Spires - Lonnie Pitchford  
Booker T. Laury - Wade Walton - Jessie Mae's Fife And Drum Band**



Director Robert Mugge and Jack Owens

## CREDITS

Director and Editor.....**Robert Mugge**  
Executive Producer..... **David A. Stewart**  
Producer..... **Eileen Gregory**  
Producer..... **John Stewart**  
Writer and Music Director .....**Robert Palmer**  
Director of Photography.....**Erich Roland**  
Audio Director.....**William Barth**  
Line Producer..... **Robert Maier**  
Multitrack Recording..... **Johnny Rosen**  
Music Mixing.....**Lee Manning**  
Sound Mixing..... **Athan Gigiakos**  
Title Graphics..... **Laurence Dunmore**  
Still Photographer.....**Axel Küstner**

Film Lab.....**Commonwealth Films, Inc.**  
4K Remastering.....**Difuze (Montreal)**

## DEEP BLUES TIMELINE

- 2021** DEEP BLUES remastered in 4K, re-released to theaters in commemoration of its 30th Anniversary, and released on Blu-ray & HD digital for the first time ever
- 2007** DEEP BLUES named one of the Top 25 Music DVDs of All Time by *Rolling Stone*  
DEEP BLUES named an Essential Southern Documentary by Oxford American
- 2003** Robert Mugge's DEEP BLUES, HELLHOUNDS ON MY TRAIL and LAST OF THE MISSISSIPPI JUKES play week-long run to open AFI Silver Theatre in Silver Spring, MD
- 2000** DEEP BLUES first release on DVD
- 1992** DEEP BLUES U.S. festival premiere at Sundance Film Festival in Park City, UT  
DEEP BLUES New York theatrical premiere at Walter Reade Theater at Lincoln Center  
Robert Mugge receives Keeping the Blues Alive in Film Award from the Blues Foundation in Memphis for DEEP BLUES
- 1991** DEEP BLUES world premiere at the Sydney Film Festival in Australia  
DEEP BLUES television premiere on Britain's Channel 4 Television

## KEEPING TIME

by Robert Mugge

(written in 2003; updated in 2021)

In the years after their creation, films take on lives of their own, far beyond what their makers intended. Like children, they grow up, leave home, and engage in relationships their parents could never have imagined, much less controlled.

Of the films I've directed, none has more clearly demonstrated this principle than *Deep Blues*, originally completed and released in 1991. Scene for scene, I recall decisions made and actions taken – not only by me, but by executive producer Dave Stewart, producers Eileen Gregory and John Stewart, writer and music director Robert Palmer, line producer Robert Maier, cinematographers Erich Roland and Christopher Li, music recording technicians William Barth and Johnny Rosen, and music mixer Lee Manning – that gave the film its scope, its structure, its rhythms, its textures, and more. And yet, today, I also can watch *Deep Blues* the way I assume others do: as something separate from all of us; as a window into a world that now exists more as fading memory than as continuing fact (that is, the world of Mississippi blues).

Frankly, I consider it a blessing that a film can take on a life of its own because, since we made it, most of the better-known artists who performed for us – R. L. Burnside, Junior Kimbrough, Jessie Mae Hemphill, Big Jack Johnson, Roosevelt “Booba” Barnes, Jack Owens, Bud Spires, Booker T. Laury, Lonnie Pitchford, Frank Frost, Sam Carr, and Napoleon Strickland – have died, as has blues deejay Early “The Soul Man” Wright. So, too, has author, journalist, and musician Robert Palmer, the musical and spiritual guide for our project.

As we all know, no one among us can stop the clock, which is one very good reason for having the blues. Yet, every so often, we at least can freeze a moment in time via vinyl, celluloid, or more recent forms of digital audio and video, so that our children's children can see what we saw, hear what we heard, know what we knew, and maybe even feel what we felt, regarding great American artists, whether widely known or not. In that respect, the moments we captured in *Deep Blues* are very special indeed,

which is why the film itself lives on, even as so many who worked on it, or appeared in it, are slipping away.

That the film exists at all is thanks entirely to the generosity of executive producer Dave Stewart, who paid for this project out of his own pocket, declaring that he wished to “give something back” to traditional blues artists who had inspired him when he was starting out, and who have continued to inspire him ever since. Moreover, on this, the thirtieth anniversary of the film’s release, he has underwritten its remastering in 4K video so that our new distributor, Film Movement, can “relaunch it” in accordance with current distribution standards.

On such an occasion, perhaps I should clear up two longtime misconceptions. First, from the beginning, executive producer Dave Stewart and producer Eileen Gregory intended *Deep Blues* to be a film, which they hired me to direct and edit, and Bob Palmer to write and narrate. The notion that Bob was hired to record audio of Mississippi blues and then produce a CD was simply a narrative device I devised in order to tie together widely disparate scenes my crew and I were preparing to shoot and record, and the CD Bob eventually did produce was merely an after-the-fact soundtrack album derived from the crew’s recordings, though a great one, of which Bob and Dave could be proud. Second, the film was never intended to be called *Deep Blues*. That came about late in the project, because the producers and I could not agree on a title. Facing a deadline for completion, I asked Bob if he would permit us to borrow the name of his 1981 book, and happily, he agreed. Of course, this also represented a logical compromise, because the film, like Bob’s book before it, does reflect his underlying belief that African-American musicians of the Deep South, drawing upon their unique history and cultural heritage, produced the deepest blues ever created, which was true of those who remained in Mississippi, just as it was of those who migrated to Memphis, Chicago, Detroit, St. Louis, Kansas City, and elsewhere.

In conclusion, origin stories aside, please know that we, as proud parents of this newly remastered film, are pleased to share, still again, some exceptionally deep and varied blues, and hope to continue doing so for many years to come.



Dave Stewart, Robert Palmer and Abe Schwab



Dave Stewart, Robert Palmer and Booker T. Laury



R.L. Burnside and Dave Stewart



Jessie Mae's Fife And Drum Band



Jessie Mae Hemphill



Junior Kimbrough



Clarksdale deejay Early Wright



Big Jack Johnson



Jack Owens and Bud Spires



Lonnie Pitchford playing the diddley bow



## **ABOUT FILM MOVEMENT**

Founded in 2002, Film Movement is a North American distributor of award-winning independent and foreign films based in New York City. It has released more than 250 feature films and shorts culled from prestigious film festivals worldwide. Its catalog includes titles by directors such as Hirokazu Kore-eda, Maren Ade, Jessica Hausner, Andrei Konchalovsky, Andrzej Wajda, Diane Kurys, Ciro Guerra and Melanie Laurent. In 2015, Film Movement launched its reissue label Film Movement Classics, featuring new restorations released theatrically as well as on Blu-ray and DVD, including films by such noted directors as Eric Rohmer, Peter Greenaway, Bille August, Marleen Gorris, Takeshi Kitano, Arturo Ripstein, Sergio Corbucci and Ettore Scola. For more information, visit [www.filmmovement.com](http://www.filmmovement.com).