

The Blues, A to Z
Lecture by Gary Saretzky

Abstract

Although the blues began as acoustic Black folk music in the South in the early 1900s, by the 1950s it had evolved into an amplified urban genre popular in Chicago and other Northern cities. In that decade, the blues gave birth to rock'n' roll through the efforts of Ike Turner, Elvis Presley, Chuck Berry, and others, but the blues never died and continues to attract a dedicated following. This presentation uses the speaker's own photos of regionally and nationally known blues musicians such as James Cotton, Elvin Bishop, Sue Foley, Filthy Rich, Steve Guyger, Billy Hector, Ana Popovic, Hubert Sumlin, Walter Trout, Joe Louis Walker, and Dawn Tyler Watson, who have performed in New Jersey and in nearby Delaware and Pennsylvania as the basis for discussing the vibrant blues scene today. Unlike the 1950s, when blues fans usually needed to go to juke joints in segregated neighborhoods to hear their favorite performers, today blues musicians perform in a wide variety of venues, including restaurants, theaters, and outdoor festivals, as well as online.

Bio

A member of the Blues Hall of Fame, New Jersey Chapter, as a photographer, Gary Saretzky worked as an archivist for more than fifty years at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Educational Testing Service, and the Monmouth County Archives. Saretzky taught the history of photography at Mercer County Community College, 1977–2012, and served as coordinator of the Public History Internship Program for the Rutgers University History Department, 1994–2016. He has published more than 100 articles and reviews on the history of photography, photographic conservation, and other topics, and has self-published two books of his photographs of blues musicians. A large collection of his photographs of blues musicians is at the Blues Archives of the University of Mississippi and a substantial number are at the Trenton Free Public Library.