



Postcard 1

The London Blues/R&B Club Scene

Writing Questions: Why did the Blues surge to popularity in post-World War II Britain? Why did electric Blues and Rhythm and Blues (R&B) become more popular than traditional acoustic Country Blues? What was the appeal of American Blues to white Londoners?

Writing Point of View: You have just arrived in 1963 London. You've spent a few nights listening to Cyril Davies and Alexis Korner at the Ealing and Marquee clubs. You send your first postcard to tell your cousin about the vibrant music scene and reflect on how it is a response to the pressures of growing up in post-World War II Britain.

Resources:

1. Video: Pete Townsend of the Who discusses growing up in postwar Britain
2. Excerpt from Rolling Stones guitarist Keith Richards' autobiography

From *Life*, by Keith Richards, 2011

"Rhythm and blues was the gate. Cyril Davies and Alexis Korner got a club going, the weekly spot at the Ealing Jazz Club, where rhythm and blues freaks could conglomerate. Without them, there might have been nothing. It was where the whole blues network could go. ... Rhythm and blues was a very important distinction in the '60s. Either you were blues and jazz or you were rock and roll, but rock and roll had died and gone pop — nothing left in it. Rhythm and blues was a term we pounced on because it meant really powerful blues... from Chicago. It broke through the barriers. ... Alexis Korner was the daddy of the London blues scene. Alexis's band was damn good. Cyril Davies was a hell of a [harmonica] player... The Ealing Club was a trad[itional] jazz club that Blues Incorporated took over on Saturday nights. It was a funky room, sometimes ankle deep in condensation."

3. Video: Blues performances in Britain, 1958-1963: Muddy Waters performs "Rolling Stone" live in Manchester in 1958 (Rolling Stones founders Mick Jagger and Keith Richards were in the audience); Cyril Davies performs in London in 1963; Blues Incorporated (Alexis Korner and Cyril Davies) perform the Muddy Waters song "Hoochie Coochie Man" in 1962.

4. Excerpt from article about London's R&B craze from the British music newspaper *Record Mirror*, 1963

1963: Rhythm and Blues Made The News

Norman Jopling, *Record Mirror*, December 21, 1963

This has been THE year for rhythm and blues fans. There is no doubt about it. At the beginning of the year the R & B craze hadn't spread outside of a small circle of 'fanatics'. Now, it's the big thing. Whether or not it will continue to dominate the scene is debatable, but so far it is very, very big.

How did it all start? Well, without doubt the Marquee Club together with Cyril Davies and Alexis Korner had a good deal to do with it.

5. Article examining the origins of London's Marquee Club, from the British music newspaper *Melody Maker*, 1968

Ten Years of the Marquee

Chris Welch, *Melody Maker*, April 6, 1968

When the Stones were rollin' – for £10 a gig

Mick Jagger was paid £10 a gig when he brought his group, the Rollin' Stones, to a London Jazz Club, and helped launch the R&B boom that swept Britain and the World.

The echoes of that screaming, hard-hitting revival period are still rolling round the world, and the club is still with us, known to thousands of customers and musicians as the Marquee....

[Said Marquee manager John Gee:] "Alexis [Korner] told me R&B would catch on, but I didn't believe him. They started at the Marquee on Thursday nights and during the summer it snowballed into the biggest thing ever."