



Ragtime Blues Guitar of Rev. Gary Davis

By Stefan Grossman

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Rev. Gary Davis was a musical giant. His ideas spanned a wide range of techniques and styles. His repertoire featured blues, rags, show instrumentals and gospel songs. He played with his thumb and index finger to pick out complex melodies, rhythmic licks and lightning fast single-string runs. In this book, seven of Rev. Davis's blues are presented. These arrangements have been performed and recorded by a host of great artists including Bob Dylan, Taj Mahal, Hot Tuna, David Bromberg, John Renbourn, Bert Jansch and many others. These lessons are for the intermediate to advanced fingerstyle guitarist. The accompanying three CD lessons teach these arrangements phrase by phrase as well as presenting the original recordings. LESSON ONE: Our first lesson highlights two of Rev. Davis's most popular blues arrangements. Hesitation Blues is played in the key of C. Baby, Let Me Follow You Down is played in the key of G. LESSON TWO: The key of C was a favorite for Rev. Davis. In this lesson we explore the party tune Sally Where'd You Get Your Liquor From (made popular by Hot Tuna). Rev. Davis used to joke that he could play Candyman so many different ways that he would be able to play it nonstop for at least 8 hours without repeating himself! We look at two versions of this very popular folk blues with the regular Candyman followed by the Two-Step Candyman. LESSON THREE: "Raggin' the blues" was a great part of Rev. Davis's repertoire. His Walkin' Dog Blues is a tour de force in a blues in C. All fourteen verses are transcribed here, and we study how this arrangement develops. Buck Rag is a fascinating rag played in the key of C. Single-string runs, counterpoint lines, rhythmic variations and syncopated bass patterns are featured.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Stefan Grossman has been recording, performing, and writing about acoustic fingerstyle techniques and styles for more than 30 years. At age 15 he started taking lessons from the legendary bluesman the late Rev. Gary Davis. He also learned music from records by Brownie McGhee and Lightnin' Hopkins. When Grossman was 18, he formed the Even Dozen Jug Band with guitarist Steve Katz, harmonicist/singer John Sebastian and pianist Josh Rifkin. The group recorded the LP Even Dozen Jug Band [out of print] for Elektra in 1964. At the same time, Stefan became more interested in his work as a blues researcher. During the period from 1965-1975 he studied and traveled with some of the legendary figures in the world of blues guitar-- Skip James, Mississippi John Hurt, Son House, Mississippi Fred McDowell, and other great black American bluesmen and songsters. From this experience Stefan authored his landmark five-volume series for Oak Publications that presented these styles to pickers worldwide. In 1973 Stefan co-founded Kicking Mule Records to counter the shortage of good instructional guitar records and music. With a lineup of artists including guitarists Dave Evans, Ton Van Bergeyk, Happy Traum, Duck Baker, Bert Jansch, John Renbourn and Davy Graham, Kicking Mule has been instrumental in promoting and preserving the best in blues, ragtime, and contemporary picking. Stefan has played with bands all over the world and has recorded numerous CDs. He has also written many books that have been published or distributed by Mel Bay Publications.

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