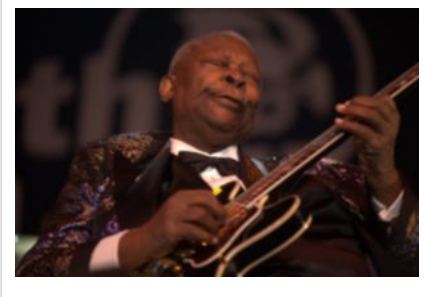




B.B. King



B.B. King

B.B. King	
	
King performing in 2009	
Background information	
Birth name	Riley B. King
Born	September 16, 1925 near Berclair, Mississippi United States
Origin	Itta Bena, Mississippi, United States
Genres	Blues, Memphis blues, electric blues, blues rock, rock and roll, R&B, soul, soul blues, jazz, jazz blues
Occupations	Musician, singer, songwriter, record producer
Instruments	Vocals, guitar, piano
Years active	1948–present
Labels	Geffen/Interscope/Universal, Bullet Records, RPM Records, Crown, ABC, MCA, Reprise/Warner Bros., Virgin/EMI
Associated acts	Bobby Bland, Eric Clapton, Pappo, U2
Website	www.bbking.com ^[1]
Notable instruments	
Gibson ES-355 "Lucille"	

Riley B. King (born September 16, 1925), known by the stage name **B.B. King**, is an American blues musician, singer, songwriter, and guitarist.

Rolling Stone magazine ranked him at No. 6 on its list of the 100 greatest guitarists of all time (previously ranked No. 3 in the 2003 edition of the same list),^[2] and he was ranked No. 17 in Gibson's "Top 50 Guitarists of All Time".^[3] According to Edward M. Komara, King "introduced a sophisticated style of soloing based on fluid string bending and shimmering vibrato that would influence virtually every electric blues guitarist that followed."^[4] King was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1987. He is considered one of the most influential blues musicians of all time, earning the nickname "The King of Blues", and one of the "Three Kings of the Blues Guitar" (along with Albert King and Freddie King). King is also known for performing tirelessly throughout his musical career appearing at 250–300 concerts per year until his seventies. In 1956 it was noted that he appeared at 342 shows. King continues to appear at 100 shows a year.

Over the years, King has developed one of the world's most identifiable guitar styles. He borrowed from Blind Lemon Jefferson, T-Bone Walker and others, integrating his precise and complex vocal-like string bends and his left hand vibrato, both of which have become indispensable components of rock guitarists' vocabulary. His economy and phrasing has been a model for thousands of players. King has mixed blues, jazz, swing, mainstream pop and jump

into a unique sound. In King's words, "When I sing, I play in my mind; the minute I stop singing orally, I start to sing by playing Lucille."

Early life

King was born in a small cabin on a cotton plantation outside of Berclair, Mississippi, to Albert King and Nora Ella Farr on September 16, 1925. In 1930, when King was four years old, his father abandoned the family, and his mother married another man. Because Nora Ella was too poor to raise her son, King was raised by his maternal grandmother Elnora Farr in Kilmichael, Mississippi.

King grew up singing in the gospel choir at Elkhorn Baptist Church in Kilmichael. At the age of 12, he purchased his first guitar for \$15.00, although another source indicates he was given his first guitar by Bukka White, his mother's first cousin (King's grandmother and White's mother were sisters). In 1943, King left Kilmichael to work as a tractor driver and play guitar with the Famous St. John's Quartet of Inverness, Mississippi, performing at area churches and on WGRM in Greenwood, Mississippi.

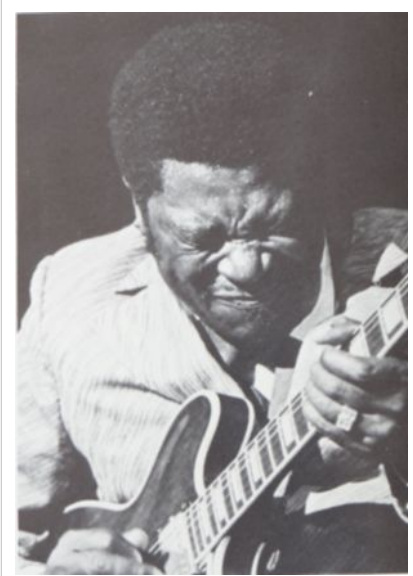
In 1946, King followed Bukka White to Memphis, Tennessee. White took him in for the next ten months. However, King shortly returned to Mississippi, where he decided to prepare himself better for the next visit, and returned to West Memphis, Arkansas, two years later in 1948. He performed on Sonny Boy Williamson's radio program on KWEM in West Memphis, where he began to develop a local audience for his sound. King's appearances led to steady engagements at the Sixteenth Avenue Grill in West Memphis and later to a ten-minute spot on the legendary Memphis radio station WDIA. *King's Spot* became so popular, it was expanded and became the *Sepia Swing Club*.

Initially he worked at WDIA as a singer and disc jockey, gaining the nickname **Beale Street Blues Boy**, which was later shortened to **Blues Boy** and finally to *B.B.*^{[5][6]} It was there that he first met T-Bone Walker. "Once I'd heard him for the first time, I knew I'd have to have [an electric guitar] myself. 'Had' to have one, short of stealing!", he said.^[7]

Career

1949–2005

In 1949, King began recording songs under contract with Los Angeles-based RPM Records. Many of King's early recordings were produced by Sam Phillips, who later founded Sun Records. Before his RPM contract, King had debuted on Bullet Records by issuing the single "Miss Martha King" (1949), which did not chart well. "My very first recordings [in 1949] were for a company out of Nashville called Bullet, the Bullet Record Transcription company," King recalls. "I had horns that very first session. I had Phineas Newborn on piano; his father played drums, and his brother, Calvin, played guitar with me. I had Tuff Green on bass, Ben Branch on tenor sax, his brother, Thomas Branch, on trumpet, and a lady trombone player. The Newborn family were the house band at the famous Plantation Inn in West Memphis."^[8]



King in Ann Arbor, c. 1972

King assembled his own band; the B.B. King Review, under the leadership of Millard Lee. The band initially consisted of Calvin Owens and Kenneth Sands (trumpet), Lawrence Burdin (alto saxophone), George Coleman (tenor saxophone), Floyd Newman (baritone saxophone), Millard Lee (piano), George Joyner (bass) and Earl Forest and Ted Curry (drums). Onzie Horne was a trained musician elicited as an arranger to assist King with his compositions. By his own admission, he cannot play chords well^[9] and always relies on improvisation. This was followed by tours across the USA with performances in major theaters in cities such as Washington, D.C., Chicago, Los Angeles, Detroit and St. Louis, as well as numerous gigs in small clubs and juke joints of the southern US states.

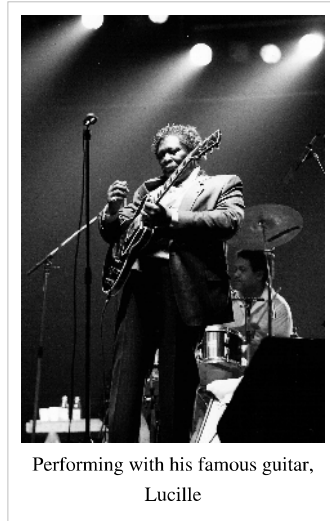
In the winter of 1949, King played at a dance hall in Twist, Arkansas. In order to heat the hall, a barrel half-filled with kerosene was lit, a fairly common practice at the time. During a performance, two men began to fight, knocking over the burning barrel and sending burning fuel across the floor. The hall burst into flames, which triggered an evacuation. Once outside, King realized that he had left his guitar inside the burning building. He entered the blaze to retrieve his beloved guitar, a Gibson hollow electric. Two people died in the fire. The next day, King learned that the two men were fighting over a woman named Lucille. King named that first guitar Lucille, as well as every one he owned since that near-fatal experience, as a reminder never again to do something as stupid as run into a burning building or fight over women.

King meanwhile toured the entire "Chitlin' circuit" and 1956 became a record-breaking year, with 342 concerts booked. The same year he founded his own record label, Blues Boys Kingdom, with headquarters at Beale Street in Memphis. There, among other projects, he produced artists such as Millard Lee and Levi Seabury.

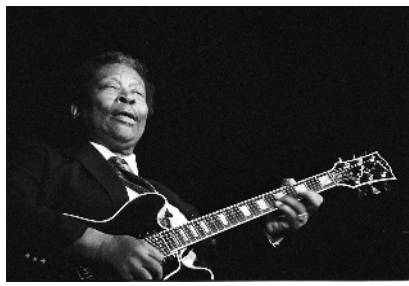
In the 1950s, B.B. King became one of the most important names in R&B music, amassing an impressive list of hits including "3 O'Clock Blues", "You Know I Love You," "Woke Up This Morning," "Please Love Me," "When My Heart Beats like a Hammer," "Whole Lotta Love," "You Upset Me Baby," "Every Day I Have the Blues", "Sneakin' Around," "Ten Long Years," "Bad Luck," "Sweet Little Angel", "On My Word of Honor," and "Please Accept My Love." King was extremely busy during this period and made 342 appearances and 3 recording sessions in 1956 alone. In 1962, King signed to ABC-Paramount Records, which was later absorbed into MCA Records, and this hence into his current label, Geffen Records. In November 1964, King recorded the *Live at the Regal* album at the Regal Theater in Chicago, Illinois.

King won a Grammy Award for a tune called "The Thrill Is Gone";^[10] his version became a hit on both the pop and R&B charts, which was rare during that time for an R&B artist. It also gained the number 183 spot in *Rolling Stone* magazine's *500 Greatest Songs of All Time*. He gained further visibility among rock audiences as an opening act on The Rolling Stones' 1969 American Tour. King's mainstream success continued throughout the 1970s with songs like "To Know You is to Love You" and "I Like to Live the Love".

King was inducted into the Blues Hall of Fame in 1980, and inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1987. In 2004 he was awarded the international Polar Music Prize, given to artists "in recognition of exceptional achievements in the creation and advancement of music."^[11]



Performing with his famous guitar,
Lucille



B.B. King in concert in France 1989

From the 1980s onward he has continued to maintain a highly visible and active career, appearing on numerous television shows and performing 300 nights a year. In 1988, King reached a new generation of fans with the single "When Love Comes to Town", a collaborative effort between King and the Irish band U2 on their *Rattle and Hum* album. Also that year King played for the 1988 Republican National Convention at the behest of the notorious Republican operative Lee Atwater. King has remained friendly with the Bush Family ever since and in 1990 was awarded the Presidential Medal of the Arts by George H.W. Bush and the Medal of Freedom by George W. Bush in 2008. In

2000, King teamed up with guitarist Eric Clapton to record *Riding With the King*. In 1998, King appeared in *The Blues Brothers 2000*, playing the part of the lead singer of the Louisiana Gator Boys, along with Clapton, Dr. John, Koko Taylor and Bo Diddley.

2006–present: farewell tour and later activities

On March 29, 2006, King played at Hallam Arena in Sheffield, England. This was the first date of his United Kingdom and European farewell tour. He played this tour supported by Northern Irish guitarist Gary Moore, with whom King had previously toured and recorded, including the song "Since I Met You Baby". The British leg of the tour ended on April 4 with a concert at Wembley Arena. And on June 28, 2009 King returned to Wembley arena to end a tour around Great Britain with British blues icon John Mayall. When questioned as to why he was embarking on another tour after already completing his farewell stint, King jokingly remarked that he had never actually said the farewell tour would be his last.^[12]

In July King went back to Europe, playing twice (July 2 and 3) in the 40th edition of the Montreux Jazz Festival and also in Zürich at the Blues at Sunset on July 14. During his show in Montreux at the Stravinski Hall he jammed with Joe Sample, Randy Crawford, David Sanborn, Gladys Knight, Lella James, Andre Beeka, Earl Thomas, Stanley Clarke, John McLaughlin, Barbara Hendricks and George Duke. The European leg of the Farewell Tour ended in Luxembourg on September 19, 2006, at the D'Coque Arena (support act: Todd Sharpville).

In November and December, King played six times in Brazil. During a press conference on November 29 in São Paulo, a journalist asked King if that would be the actual farewell tour. He answered: "One of my favorite actors is a man from Scotland named Sean Connery. Most of you know him as James Bond, 007. He made a movie called *Never Say Never Again*."

In June 2006, King was present at a memorial of his first radio broadcast at the Three Deuces Building in Greenwood, Mississippi, where an official marker of the Mississippi Blues Trail was erected. The same month, a groundbreaking was held for a new museum, dedicated to King, in Indianola, Mississippi.^[13] The B.B. King Museum and Delta Interpretive Center opened on September 13, 2008.



B.B. King at Roy Thomson Hall, Toronto,
Ontario (May 2007)

In late October 2006, he recorded a concert CD and DVD entitled *B.B. King: Live* at his B.B. King Blues Clubs in Nashville and Memphis. The four-night production featured his regular B.B. King Blues Band and captured his show as he performs it nightly around the world. It was his first live performance recording in 14 years.

On July 28, 2007, King played at Eric Clapton's second Crossroads Guitar Festival with 20 other guitarists to raise money for the Crossroads Centre for addictive disorders. Performing in Chicago, he played "Paying the Cost to Be the Boss", "Rock Me Baby" and "Thrill is Gone" (although the latter was not published on the DVD release) with Robert Cray, Jimmie Vaughan and Hubert Sumlin. In a poignant

moment during the live broadcast, he offered a toast to the concert's host, Eric Clapton, and also reflected upon his own life and seniority. Adding to the poignancy, the four-minute speech — which had been underlaid with a mellow chord progression by Robert Cray throughout — made a transition to an emotional rendition of "Thrill is Gone". Parts of this performance were subsequently aired in a PBS broadcast and released on the *Crossroads II* DVD.

Also in 2007, King accepted an invitation to contribute to *Goin' Home: A Tribute to Fats Domino* (Vanguard Records). With Ivan Neville's DumpstaPhunk, King contributed his version of the title song, "Goin' Home".

In 2007 King performed "One Shoe Blues" on the Sandra Boynton children's album *Blue Moo*, accompanied by a pair of sock puppets in the video.

In June 2008, King played at the Bonnaroo Music and Arts Festival in Manchester, Tennessee; he was also the final performer at the 25th annual Chicago Blues Festival on June 8, 2008, and at the Monterey Blues Festival, following Taj Mahal. Another June 2008 event was King's induction into the Hollywood Bowl Hall of Fame alongside Liza Minnelli and Sir James Galway.

In July 2008, Sirius XM Radio's Bluesville channel was renamed **B.B. King's Bluesville**.

On December 1, 2008, King performed at the Maryland Theater in Hagerstown, Maryland. On December 3, King was the closing act at the 51st Grammy Nomination Concert, playing "Let the Good Times Roll" by Louis Jordan. On December 30, 2008, King played at The Kennedy Center Honors Awards Show; his performance was in honor of actor Morgan Freeman.

In Summer 2009, King started a European Tour with concerts in France, Germany, Belgium, Finland and Denmark.

In March 2010, King contributed to Cyndi Lauper's album *Memphis Blues*, which was released on June 22, 2010.

King performed at the Mawazine festival in Rabat, Morocco, on May 27, 2010.

In June 2010, King performed at 2010 Crossroads Guitar Festival with The Robert Cray Band, Jimmie Vaughan and Eric Clapton.

On June 25, 2011 King played the pyramid stage at The Glastonbury Music Festival. On the June 28 he opened his new European tour at The Royal Albert Hall, London, supported by Derek Trucks and Susan Tedeschi, Ronnie Wood, Mick Hucknall and Slash.



European Tour 2009, Vienna, July 2009



Barack Obama and B.B. King singing "Sweet Home Chicago" on February 21, 2012

On February 21, 2012, Barack Obama and Michelle Obama hosted, "In Performance at the White House: Red, White and Blues", a celebration of blues music held in the East Room of the White House and B.B. King was among the performers. Later on that night, President Obama, encouraged by Buddy Guy and B.B. King, sang part of "Sweet Home Chicago".^[14]

On March 22, 2012, King played a concert at the Chicago House of Blues, where Benson made a guest appearance and both King & Benson held a jammin' session for over 20 minutes, it was also the celebration of Benson's birthday.

King performed on the debut album of rapper and producer Big K.R.I.T., who also hails from Mississippi.

On July 5, 2012, King performed a concert at the Byblos Festival, Lebanon.

Over a period of 64 years, King has played in excess of 15,000 performances.

A feature documentary about B.B. King narrated by Morgan Freeman, and directed by Jon Brewer was released on October 15, 2012.

Equipment

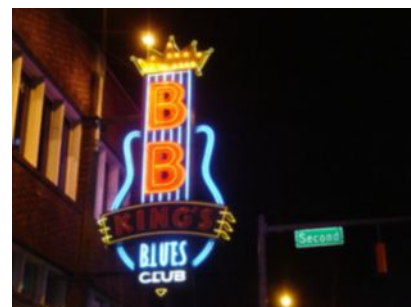
B.B. King uses simple equipment. He played guitars made by different manufacturers early in his career: he played a Fender Telecaster on most of his recordings with RPM Records (USA).^[15] However, he is best known for playing variants of the Gibson ES-355. In 1980 Gibson Guitar Corporation launched the B.B. King Lucille model. In 2005 Gibson made a special run of 80 Gibson Lucilles, referred to as the "80th Birthday Lucille", the first prototype of which was given as a birthday gift to King, and which he has been using ever since.

King uses Lab Series L5 2x12" combo amp and has been using this amp for a long time. The amp was made by Norlin Industries for Gibson in the 1970s and '80s. Other popular L5 users are Allan Holdsworth and Ty Tabor of King's X. The L5 has an onboard compressor, parametric EQ, and four inputs. King has also used a Fender Twin Reverb.

He uses his signature model strings "Gibson SEG-BBS B.B. King Signature Electric Guitar Strings" with gauges: 10-13-17p-32w-45w-54w and D'Andrea 351 MD SHL CX (Medium .71mm, Tortoise Shell, Celluloid) Picks.

B.B. King's Blues Club

In 1991, B.B. King's Blues Club opened on Beale Street in Memphis, and in 1994, a second club was launched at Universal City Walk in Los Angeles. A third club in New York City's Times Square opened in June 2000. Two further clubs opened at Foxwoods Casino in Connecticut in January 2002 and another in Nashville in 2003. A club in West Palm Beach opened in the fall of 2009 and an additional one, based in the Mirage Hotel, Las Vegas, opened in the winter of 2009. In 2007, a B.B. King's Blues Club in Orlando opened on International Drive. The Memphis, Nashville, Orlando, West Palm Beach and Las Vegas clubs are all the same company.



Sign outside B.B. King's Blues Club on Beale Street, Memphis

Legacy

King is widely regarded as one of the most influential blues guitarists of all time, inspiring countless other electric blues and blues-rock guitarists.

Philanthropy

In 2001, King signed on as an official supporter of Little Kids Rock, a non-profit organization that provides free musical instruments and instruction to children in underprivileged public schools throughout the US. He sits on LKR's Honorary Board of Directors.

TV appearances

B.B. King has made guest appearances in numerous popular television shows, including *The Cosby Show*, *The Young and the Restless*, *General Hospital*, *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air*, *Sesame Street*, *Married... with Children*, *Sanford and Son*, and *Touched by an Angel*. He has also made a cameo in the movie *Spies Like Us*. He voiced in the last episode of *Cow and Chicken*.^[16]


Personal life

King has been married twice, to Martha Lee Denton, 1946 to 1952, and to Sue Carol Hall, 1958 to 1966. Both marriages ended because of the heavy demands made on the marriage by King's 250 performances a year. It is reported that he has fathered 15 children and, as of 2004, had 50 grandchildren. He has lived with Type II diabetes for over 20 years and is a high-profile spokesman in the fight against the disease, appearing in advertisements for diabetes-management products along with *American Idol* season 9 contestant Crystal Bowersox.

King is an FAA licensed Private Pilot and learned to fly in 1963 at Chicago Hammond Airport in Lansing, IL (now Lansing Municipal Airport – KIGQ).^[17] He frequently flew to gigs, but under the advice of his insurance company and manager in 1995, King was asked to fly only with another licensed pilot; and as a result, King stopped flying around the age of 70.



External video

 *Oral History, B.B. King reflects on his greatest musical influences.* interview date August 3, 2005, NAMM (National Association of Music Merchants) Oral History Library ^[18]

His favorite singer is Frank Sinatra. In his autobiography King speaks about how he was, and is, a "Sinatra nut" and how he went to bed every night listening to Sinatra's classic album *In the Wee Small Hours*. King has credited Sinatra for opening doors to black entertainers who were not given the chance to play in "white-dominated" venues; Sinatra got B.B. King into the main clubs in Las Vegas during the 1960s.^[19]Wikipedia:Citing sources

Discography

Studio albums

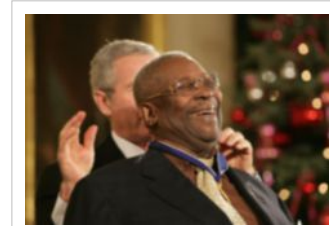
- *Singin' the Blues* (1956)
 - *The Blues* (1958)
 - *B.B. King Wails* (1959)
 - *Sings Spirituals* (1959)
 - *The Great B.B. King* (1960)
 - *My Kind of Blues* (1960)
 - *King of the Blues* (1960)
 - *Blues For Me* (1961)
 - *Blues in My Heart* (1962)
 - *Easy Listening* (1962)
 - *B.B. King* (1963)
 - *Mr. Blues* (1963)
 - *Confessin' the Blues* (1966)
 - *Blues on Top of Blues* (1968)
 - *Lucille* (1968)
 - *Live & Well* (1969)
 - *Completely Well* (1969)
 - *Indianola Mississippi Seeds* (1970)
 - *B.B. King in London* (1971)
 - *L.A. Midnight* (1972)
 - *Guess Who* (1972)
 - *To Know You Is to Love You* (1973)
 - *Friends* (1974)
 - *King Size* (1977)
 - *Midnight Believer* (1978)
 - *Take It Home* (1979)
 - *There Must Be a Better World Somewhere* (1981)
 - *Love Me Tender* (1982)
 - *Blues 'N' Jazz* (1983)
 - *Six Silver Strings* (1985)
 - *King of the Blues: 1989* (1988)
 - *There is Always One More Time* (1991)
 - *Blues Summit* (1993)
 - *Lucille & Friends* (1995)
 - *Deuces Wild* (1997)
 - *Blues on the Bayou* (1998)
 - *Let the Good Times Roll* (1999)
 - *Makin' Love Is Good for You* (2000)
 - *A Christmas Celebration of Hope* (2001)
 - *Reflections* (2003)
 - *B. B. King & Friends: 80* (2005)
 - *One Kind Favor* (2008)
-

Collaborative album

- *Riding with the King* (2000, with Eric Clapton)

Honors and awards

- In 1977, he was awarded an honorary Doctor of Music by Yale University
- In 1980, he was inducted into the Blues Hall of Fame.^[20]
- In 1987, he was inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame.^[21]
- In 1990, he was awarded the National Medal of Arts.
- In 1991, he was awarded the National Heritage Fellowship from the NEA.



B.B. King receiving Presidential Medal of Freedom from George W. Bush

- King was awarded the Kennedy Center Honors in 1995. This is given to recognize "the lifelong accomplishments and extraordinary talents of our nation's most prestigious artists."
- In 2004, the Royal Swedish Academy of Music awarded him the Polar Music Prize for his "significant contributions to the blues".
- On December 15, 2006, President George W. Bush awarded King the Presidential Medal of Freedom.
- On May 27, 2007, King was awarded an honorary doctorate in music by Brown University.
- On May 14, 2008, King was presented with the keys to the city of Utica, New York; and on May 18, 2008, the mayor of Portland, Maine, Edward Suslovic, declared the day "B.B. King Day" in the city. Prior to King's performance at the Merrill Auditorium, Suslovic presented King with the keys to the city.^[22]
- In 2009, *TIME* named B.B. King No.3 on its list of the 10 best electric guitarists of all time.^[23]
- Each year during the first week in June, a B.B. King Homecoming Festival is held in Indianola, Mississippi.
- A Mississippi Blues Trail marker was added for B.B. King, commemorating his birthplace.
- On May 29, 2010, Sabrosa Park (at the small town of Sabrosa, north of Portugal) was renamed B.B. King Park in honor of King and the free concert he played before 20,000 people.



A commemorative guitar pick honoring "B.B. King Day" in Portland, Maine.

Grammy Awards

Years reflect the year in which the Grammy was awarded, for music released in the previous year.

- 1971: Best Male R&B Vocal Performance for "The Thrill Is Gone".
- 1982: Best Ethnic or Traditional Recording for "There Must Be a Better World Somewhere".
- 1984: Best Traditional Blues Recording for "Blues 'n Jazz".
- 1986: Best Traditional Blues Recording for "My Guitar Sings the Blues".
- 1991: Best Traditional Blues Recording for "Live at San Quentin".
- 1992: Best Traditional Blues Album for "Live at the Apollo".
- 1994: Best Traditional Blues Album for "Blues Summit".
- 1997: Best Rock Instrumental Performance for "SRV Shuffle".
- 2000: Best Traditional Blues Album for "Blues on the Bayou".
- 2001: Best Traditional Blues Album for "Riding with the King".

- 2001: Best Pop Collaboration with Vocals for "Is You or Is You Ain't (Baby)".
- 2003: Best Traditional Blues Album for "A Christmas Celebration of Hope".
- 2003: Best Pop Instrumental Performance for "Auld Lang Syne".
- 2006: Best Traditional Blues Album for "80".
- 2009: Best Traditional Blues Album for "One Kind Favor".

King was given a Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award in 1987.

A Grammy Hall of Fame Award was given to "The Thrill is Gone" in 1998, an award given to recordings that are at least 25 years old and that have "qualitative or historical significance."

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- [1] <http://www.bbking.com/>
- [2] The 100 Greatest Guitarists of All Time (<http://www.rollingstone.com/music/lists/100-greatest-guitarists-20111123/b-b-king-19691231>), *Rolling Stone* magazine.
- [3] Gibson.com's Top 50 Guitarists of All Time (<http://www2.gibson.com/News-Lifestyle/Features/en-us/gibson-reveals-0528.aspx>), Gibson Guitar Corporation
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- [5] *B.B.* is normally written with periods, but no space between the letters.
- [6] *History of Rock & Roll*. By Thomas E. Larson. Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, Dubuque, Iowa. Copyright 2004. Page 25.
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- [22] "King of Portland" (<http://pressherald.mainetoday.com/story.php?id=188662&ac=PHnws>) – *Portland Press Herald*, May 19, 2008
- [23] Tyrangiel, Josh. "The 10 Greatest Electric-Guitar Players (<http://www.time.com/time/photogallery/0,29307,1916544,00.html>)," *TIME*. August 14, 2009. (Retrieved January 6, 2011.)

External links

- Official website (<http://www.bbking.com>) BBKing.com
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- B.B. King (<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0454475/>) at the Internet Movie Database
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