

## Urban Blues and R&B

- Use of "blue" notes and the blues scale
  - Scale = a collection of tones
  - Blues Scale = a scale that features altered tones ("blue" notes) which are "flattened" or "bent" down in pitch
- Lyrics in Blues Music
  - Address a variety of topics, but most often focus on personal misfortunes
  - Verses in an "A-B-A"
    - A - "I went down to the crossroads, fell down on my knees."
    - A - "I went down to the crossroads, fell down on my knees."
    - B - "Asked the Lord above, 'Have mercy, save poor Bob, if you please.'"
- Some more musical terms to remember
  - Phrase: a melodic "sentence"
  - Harmony: use of two or more notes simultaneously
  - Chord: three or more notes sounded together to form a harmonic unit
  - Form: a plan used to organize sections of a piece of music
    - Techniques of form
      - Repetition
      - Contrast
      - Variation
    - Typical formal units in popular music
      - Intro
      - Verse
      - Chorus
      - Bridge, solo, etc.
      - Outro or fade-out
    - Form in the Blues
      - Strophic structure (verses only, no choruses)
      - 12-bar Blues Structure
        - A standardized harmonic plan used for each verse (see handout)
        - Also common in Jazz, Rock and Country
- Urban Blues
  - c. 1945-1970
  - Amplified, gritty style developed in industrial northern cities
  - Muddy Waters (1915-83)
  - "Hoochie Coochie Man"
- R&B (Rhythm & Blues)
  - Proto-Rock style c. 1945-1955

- High-energy dance music emphasizing life's joys rather than its problems
- "Blues up-tempo" with **backbeat** and **boogie-woogie** bass
- Distributed via "indies" (small, independent record labels like Atlantic Records)
- Some Notable R&B Artists
  - Louis Jordan (1908-75), "Choo Choo Ch'Boogie," 1946
  - Big Joe Turner (1911-85), "Shake, Rattle and Roll," 1955
  - Bo Diddley (1928-2008), "Bo Diddley," 1955