

ERIC BIBB

Biography

Eric Bibb, already enjoying success in Europe, is becoming a familiar face – and voice – in the U.S. acoustic folk-blues scene. His unique talent continues to draw critical acclaim around the world. Twice nominated for the W.C. Handy Awards and winner of the “Best Newcomer” title in the British Blues Awards, Bibb has been appropriately described as “discreetly awesome” and “a total original.” As his popularity escalates, earlier comparisons to legendary greats Ry Cooder and Taj Mahal are being replaced by quotes that speak to Bibb’s ability to “use standard blues ingredients to cook up something all his own.”

Born in 1951, Bibb is a native New Yorker with deep roots in the American blues and folk tradition. He is the son of 1960s folk and musical theater singer and television personality Leon Bibb. His uncle was the world-famous jazz pianist and composer John Lewis, a member of the Modern Jazz Quartet. His godfather was singer/actor/activist Paul Robeson. Surrounded by major musical figures of the day, young Eric was inspired and influenced by Odetta, Richie Havens, Pete Seeger, Earl Robinson, Joan Baez, Bob Dylan, Judy Collins and many others.

Bibb got his first steel stringed guitar when he was seven. By the time he was in junior high school, he was consumed by music. When Bibb was 16, his father invited him to play guitar in the house band for his television show, *Someone New*. In later years, Bibb played guitar for the Negro Ensemble Company in 1969 at St. Mark’s Place in New York City. He left for Paris at age 19, where he played in restaurants, then headed to Sweden, where he settled in the ‘70s. He returned to New York in the 1980s for a brief five-year stay, where he continued to write and opened for headliners such as The Persuations, Sonny Terry, Brownie McGhee, Tania Maria and Etta James.

Bibb’s first signing was to BMG/Sweden as a writer in the early ‘80s. He later signed to the independent Swedish label Opus 3, where he produced several albums. Two of these, *Spirit & The Blues* and *Good Stuff*, were later released in the U.S., which helped to expand Bibb’s international audience. Bibb appeared at the London Blues Festival in 1996, and has toured the world many times since, appearing at festival and club dates in the U.S., Canada, UK and Europe.

A performance by Eric Bibb is an enriching experience, both musically and spiritually. His music, like his personality, is intimate, assured and passionate, drawing listeners into the moment more as participants than as spectators. His rich and sensitive vocals and lyrics provide a perfect balance to his fine fingerpicking technique. Purveying a beautifully realized and deftly accomplished soulful and gospel-infused folk-blues, Bibb has no problem blending various genres effortlessly, melding a traditional rootsy American style with a subtle, contemporary sensibility. As one critic wrote, “Eric’s singing and versatile guitar playing fuses a variety of genres to become a New World Blues.”

Bibb joined Telarc International, a division of Concord Music Group, in 2004 as one-third of *Sisters & Brothers*, a gospel-flavored blues collaboration that also featured musical soulmates

Rory Block and Maria Muldaur. Later that same year, he recorded *Friends*, a solo effort with guest appearances by several longtime friends and collaborators, including Taj Mahal, Odetta, Guy Davis and Charlie Musselwhite.

In September 2005, Bibb released *A Ship Called Love*, a 14-track tapestry of blues, folk and balladry. He followed up with the release of *Diamond Days* (September 2006 in the UK, January 2007 in the U.S.) and *Get Onboard* (2008), a 12-track set that featured guest appearances by guitarist/songwriter Bonnie Raitt and blues/folk/gospel singer Ruthie Foster.

Bibb's latest effort on Telarc, ***Booker's Guitar***, was inspired by the discovery of a 1930s vintage Resophonic National steel-body guitar that had belonged to Delta blues legend Booker White – an older cousin to B.B. King. The encounter inspired the album's half-spoken, half-sung title track, which Bibb recorded in England using White's guitar. The remaining tracks, although recorded in rural Ohio on Bibb's own guitars, sprang from the same well of inspiration.

“Once I had written that song, I really wanted to make a complete statement and document my connection to the Delta blues tradition,” says Bibb. “I really wanted to put myself in the position of my heroes, but in a contemporary context, and create songs that I feel could have been part of their repertoire and could have come from their own experience.”

Telarc discography

Sisters & Brothers (2004) CD-83588
Friends (2004) CD-83619
A Ship Called Love (2005) CD-83629
Diamond Days (2007) CD-83660
Get Onboard (2008) CD-83675
Booker's Guitar (2010) TEL-31756-02