

# [Moving the delta blues’ gained public recognition[1]. he](https://assignbuster.com/moving-the-delta-blues-gained-public-recognition1-he-2/)

[](https://assignbuster.com/)[Art & Culture](https://assignbuster.com/essay-subjects/art-n-culture/), [Music](https://assignbuster.com/essay-subjects/art-n-culture/music/)

Moving forward into 1930s, RobertJohnson (1911 – 1938), also known as the ‘ King of the Delta Blues’ gainedpublic recognition1. He became famous not only because he could play a wide range of guitar stylessuch as country blues and jazz2, but he has also masteredvery complex guitar styles. He is said to have adapted the ‘ piano’s lushchordal complexity’ to the guitar3. To elaborate, one of Johnson’sstyle is the ability to sound like couple men are playing guitar at the sametime, where one guitar plays the bass notes and the other plays melodies onhigher notes4. He achieves such an effect by using a thumb pick for lower strings andfingerpicking the higher strings. ‘ SweetHome Chicago’ is one example that exhibits the style, illustrated by Figure2 below.

The lower string is always played in constant while the higher stringhas a different melody, creating a sound similar to two guitars playingsimultaneously. Figure 2 (Bar 4 and 5 of ‘ Sweet Home Chicago’) 9Furthermore, it can be noticed thatthe melody on higher notes are usually descending while the bass notes remainconstant in the first two bars. Many of his songs have this pattern such as ‘ Crossroads Blues’ and ‘ Kind Hearted Woman Blues’, This alsogives the effect of a guitar duet. Another complex guitar style byRobert Johnson is the use of a slide, a technique derived from playing thediddley bow. The player wears a metal/glass tube (slider) to slide over thestrings from one fret to another to create a glissando effect. 5 ‘ Travelling Riverside Blues’ requires this technique after Johnsonsang ‘…barrelhouse all night long’6. Note that the sliding technique wasused after Johnson sings a line of verse in the above example (‘ Travelling Riverside Blues’) as aresponse to the high-pitched vocals.

The practice of singing a line a verse andthen playing the guitar (not necessarily a slide) imitates the call andresponse style, which is featured in many of Robert Johnson’s songs. Johnsonalso uses a technique named ‘ corner loading’. If possible, he plays the guitartowards a corner wall that is right-angled to each other. This increases thebass response as well as the ambience in the room7.

To conclude, Blind LemonJefferson’s style is built around his singing, which can be seen by his uniquemelody structure (I-IV-IV) and silent gaps. He has also adopted the stringbending extensively. On the other hand, Robert Johnson’s style emphasizes ontechnical skills of the guitar, such as sliding and alternating pickingpatterns that sounded like there were multiple guitars being played.

Despitehaving different styles, they both were great guitarist from the 19thCentury that brought significant influences to the world of music.  1 Edward Komara, Encyclopedia of the Blues, vol. 1 (New York: Routledge, 2006). 2 Elijah Wald, Escaping theDelta: Robert Johnson and the Invention of the Blues, 1st ed. (New York: Amistad, 2004).

3 Tom Evans and Mary Anne. Evans, Guitars: From the Renaissance to Rock (London: Paddington Press, 1979). 4 Andy Aledort, “ Robert Johnson Lesson: Unlockthe Guitar Mysteries of the Delta Blues Great,” Guitar World, May 08, 2017, accessed January 20, 2018, https://www. guitarworld. com/lessons/deep-unlocking-guitar-mysteries-delta-blues-great-robert-johnson. 5 Rick Batey and Frank Explicit, The American Blues Guitar: an Illustrated History (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard Corp., 2003). 6 “” Travelling Riverside Blues – RobertJohnson.”,” AZLyrics, accessed January 20, 2018, https://www. azlyrics. com/lyrics/robertjohnson/travelingriversideblues. html. 7 Allan Moore, The CambridgeCompanion to Blues and Gospel Music (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).