

Learning More About Music Genres

Music today is more varied than ever before. New styles are evolving at a rapid pace, adding to an already rich catalog of existing music. This variety is both wonderful and daunting to behold; wonderful, because it means the banquet of choices keeps getting richer; daunting, because there is so much more to choose from.

An understanding of musical styles makes it easier to navigate these choices. It helps us break the world of music into understandable pieces. As much as musicians rail against being categorized—sometimes rightly so—having labels and categories gives us a common language that makes it easier to talk about music. What's more, style labels help to group related artists together and so are helpful for music discovery.

The Allmusic Site Comes to the Rescue – Again!

The Allmusic Web site's genre and style information pages mesh nicely with its artist and album information pages. Both the artist and album information pages have links to genre pages, which can also be accessed from the EXPLORE BY GENRE heading on the Allmusic home page. Access to some of this content—while still free—now requires registration.

The Allmusic genre and style pages each contain a capsule summary of the genre discussing its musical characteristics and evolution. Following this summary are lists of “top” artists, albums, and songs, selected by Allmusic's editors as the best and most representative examples of the style. See Figure 24.1 for an example. Clicking on the artist, album, or song pages will take you to an Allmusic Web page with more information. Links to fifteen second sound clips (Windows Media Player required) are also provided. In some cases, links are provided to essays written by Allmusic staff about a given genre or style.

If you're looking for essays, I recommend going to the broadest genre category pages: those for rock, jazz, country, and world music. Each of these pages provides links to at least twenty different essays on specific styles of music within the broader category. These pages contain links to style-specific essays that may not appear on the appropriate Allmusic style page. In addition to providing useful information about musical styles, these essays often recommend useful or important recordings to listen to.

Figure 24.1. Allmusic Swamp Blues Information Page

explore by... / Blues / Electric Blues / Send to Friend

explore by... Swamp Blues

Genre

Swamp Blues, the looser, more rhythmic variation of the standard Louisiana sound, also brings more contemporary elements of New Orleans, zydeco, soul music, and Cajun to bear on its style. The guitar work is simple but effective, and is heavily influenced by the boogie patterns used on Jimmy Reed records, with liberal doses of Lightnin' Hopkins and Muddy Waters. Unlike the heavy backbeat of the more popular urban styles, its rhythm can be best described as laid-back, making even its most uptempo offerings share the same mood and ambience of the most desultory of slow blues. — **Cub Koda**

Related Styles

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • R&B • New Orleans Blues • Harmonica Blues • Swamp Pop • Louisiana Blues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Juke Joint Blues • Slide Guitar Blues • Acoustic Texas Blues • Acoustic Louisiana Blues • Zydeco 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Orleans Blues • Swamp Pop • Modern Electric Blues
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Swamp Blues Album Highlights



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Top Artists

[Click here for full list.](#)

- [Guitar Junior](#)
- [Slim Harpo](#)
- [Lazy Lester](#)
- [Lightnin' Slim](#)
- [Nathan Ashire](#)
- [Tab Benoit](#)
- [Cookie B. the Cupcakes](#)
- [Joe Hudson](#)
- [Lonesome Sundown](#)
- [Whispering Smith](#)
- [Katie Webster](#)
- [Marcia Ball](#)
- [Guitar Gable](#)
- [Larry Garner](#)
- [Silas Hogan](#)
- [Jerry "Boogie" McCain](#)
- [Kenny Neal](#)
- [Rockin' Sidney](#)

Top Albums

[Click here for full list.](#)

- [I Hear You Knockin'! The Excello Singles](#)
- [Lazy Lester](#)
- [Rooster Blues](#)
- [Lightnin' Slim](#)
- [The Best of Slim Harpo \[Hip-O\]](#)
- [Slim Harpo](#)
- [Crawl: Charly Blues Masterworks, Vol. 1](#)
- [Guitar Junior](#)
- [Deluxe Edition](#)
- [Kenny Neal](#)
- [Deluxe Edition](#)
- [Katie Webster](#)
- [Gatorhythms](#)
- [Marcia Ball](#)
- [I'm a Mojo Man: The Best of the Excello Singles](#)
- [Lonesome Sundown](#)
- [King of the Swamp Blues 1954-61](#)
- [Lightnin' Slim](#)

Top Songs

[Click here for full list.](#)

- [Baby Scratch My Back](#)
- [Slim Harpo](#)
- [Don't Take It So Hard](#)
- [Snooks Eaglin](#)
- [Down in the Swamp](#)
- [Tab Benoit](#)
- [I Got Love If You Want It](#)
- [Slim Harpo](#)
- [I Hear You Knockin'](#)
- [Lazy Lester](#)
- [I'm a King Bee](#)
- [Slim Harpo](#)
- [I'm a Lover Not a Fighter](#)
- [Lazy Lester](#)
- [My Home Is a Prison](#)
- [Lonesome Sundown](#)
- [Rooster Blues](#)
- [Lightnin' Slim](#)
- [Traveling Mood](#)
- [Snooks Eaglin](#)

Music Services Good for Genre Explorations

Online jukeboxes and Internet radio services provide the best means for exploring new music genres through listening. Notable examples include:

- **Musicmatch Online**

Musicmatch Radio users can listen to over 200 genre-based radio stations while accessing style information provided from the Allmusic Guide.

Musicmatch On-Demand users can also access playlists and artist lists for the same genres. Here, the focus is on artists and albums that are most popular with other Musicmatch users.

- **Rhapsody**

For each genre and subgenre covered, Rhapsody provides a summary of the style, a sampler playlist, and lists of key artists and albums (as determined by critical opinion), with links to the album and artist pages if available. Also listed are Rhapsody radio stations that play music from that style.

- **Live365**

Although not as well organized as either Musicmatch Online or Rhapsody, Live365 is home to a large number of single-genre, single-theme radio stations that make it easy to conduct listening explorations of a given style. Where else are you going to find a station devoted to sea shanties?