

**2x GRAMMY winning legend, Blues Hall of Famer, six-time Grammy nominee, and 13-time Blues Music Award winner, with cameo in the Netflix original *Dolemite Is My Name* starring Eddie Murphy, and autobiography on its way**

Bobby Rush has been making records for nearly 70 years and has more than 400 recordings, 75 career releases, and now 27 studio albums to his name. He's finally telling his story in his autobiography **I Ain't Studdin' Ya: My American Blues Story** currently available for pre-order and due out June 22 via Hachette Books who have published Keith Richards, Buddy Guy, and Tina Fey to name a few.

After earning a **Grammy Award** for **Best Traditional Blues Album** and a **Blues Music Award** for **Album of the Year** for his studio recording *Porcupine Meat* in 2017, he spent a year writing his follow-up. In 2019, at age 85, he released *Sitting on Top of the Blues* with 11 originals, earning him another Blues Music Award and Grammy Award nomination. Rush is one of the last Black bluesmen from the class to emerge out of and triumph in the 1950s, '60s, and '70s. He has recorded for more than 20 labels, from Checker/Chess and ABC to Philly Int'l and Rounder/Concord. To cap off 2019 he had a cameo in the Golden Globe-nominated Netflix original film *Dolemite Is My Name*, the Rudy Ray Moore biopic featuring **Eddie Murphy** as Moore. Rush kicked off 2020 with the release of "**Dolemite Kid**," a single inspired by his nine years on tour with Moore, his day working with Murphy, and the hit film itself.

But Rush, who turned 87 in November, is not done yet. With the release of his 2020 album *Rawer Than Raw*, an all-acoustic effort that pays tribute to the rich blues history of Mississippi, Rush has cemented his reputation as one of the preeminent bluesmen in the world, one of the last living links to the music's glorious past, and an inspiration for its future stars. The album just **won a Grammy Award for Best Traditional Blues Album**, his second Grammy Award and sixth nomination.

Partly inspired by the popular series of intimate solo concerts Rush has made a mainstay of his concert calendar in the years since his first all-acoustic album (titled *Raw*), *Rawer Than Raw* casts a spotlight on five Mississippi Blues Hall of Famers: early acoustic blues greats **Skip James** and **Robert Johnson**, and Rush's contemporaries on the music scene of the '50s and '60s, **Howlin' Wolf**, **Sonny Boy Williamson II**, and **Muddy Waters**. One song "Dust My Broom" was written by Robert Johnson, but caught Rush's attention after it was recorded by **Elmore James**. The record features a half dozen covers of some of their best-known songs rendered in Rush's own inimitable, acoustic style, characterized by wailing harmonica and a stomping foot to keep the rhythm.

Bobby Rush was born Emmett Ellis, Jr. outside Homer, Louisiana, in 1933. He twanged a diddley bow before picking up a guitar around age 11, and his preacher father knew enough about a harmonica to pass along a few riffs to his progeny. The family relocated to Pine Bluff, Arkansas, in 1948.

While still a teenager, Rush became a professional blues musician, adopting his stage name so as to not disrespect his devout dad. To sneak into clubs and juke-joints, the underage Rush fashioned a moustache out of matchstick ash. In Pine Bluff, the young bluesman befriended legendary slide guitarist Elmore James and played around the Deep South with him and harmonica ace Little Walter, among others. Their travels introduced Rush to other blues greats of the era, including Howlin' Wolf and Muddy Waters.

Inspired by their tales of the booming Chicago blues scene, in 1951 Rush headed north to the Windy City. There he assembled a band with a young Freddie King on guitar. (Luther Allison would join the group later.) For years, Rush gigged steadily around the West Side and in the southern suburbs of Chicago, but it wasn't until 1964 that he made his recording debut with the tough downbeat blues "Someday," on the small Jerry-O label.

After "You're the One for Me" — a single for the Palos imprint that is so obscure a copy couldn't be found for Rush's 2015 career-spanning box set — Bobby's recording of "Sock Boo Ga Loo" on the tiny Starville label was picked up by Chess Records in 1967, propelling the singer into the big leagues of R&B. "Gotta Have Money," his funk-drenched '68 single for ABC, and the Sonny Thompson-produced "Wake Up" the next year for Salem Records showed Rush had what it took and then some. (Another of his Salem sides from this period, the rousing "Just Be Yourself," was recently featured in a memorable TV commercial for clothing manufacturer Bonobos.)

In 1971, Rush broke through on the national charts with the lowdown funk grinder "Chicken Heads" for Galaxy Records. In recent years the song has been featured in the **Samuel L. Jackson** film ***Black Snake Moan*** and the HBO series ***Ballers***. "Chicken Heads" producer Calvin Carter put out Rush's '72 follow-up "Gotta Be Funky" on his own On Top logo and then sold Bobby's contract to Stan Lewis' Jewel Records in Shreveport, La. Lewis issued several Rush singles before Bobby made the major label leap in 1974 with "Get Out of Here Part 1" for Warner Bros.

***Rush Hour***, a 1979 album for Kenny Gamble and Leon Huff's Philadelphia International Records, should have made Bobby a huge star but didn't receive its proper due until the 2000s, when ***Rolling Stone*** recognized it as one of the best blues albums of the '70s. An encore LP was summarily shelved, and before long Rush moved back south to Jackson, Mississippi, which was fast becoming a last bastion of Southern soul-blues.

In 1983, Rush's lascivious "Sue" on the LaJam imprint sold over a million records despite little mainstream airplay. During this period Rush established his reputation as King of the Chitlin' Circuit, playing a minimum of 200 shows a year. He also cut a series of memorable albums for LaJam, Urgent!, Waldoxy, and his own Deep Rush Records.

In the new millennium, Rush made a late-career grab for mainstream recognition. He earned his first Grammy nomination for his 2000 album ***Hoochie Man***. He was nominated in 2014 for ***Down in Louisiana*** and again in 2015 for ***Decisions***. In 2017, Rush earned his first Grammy win for his 25th studio album, ***Porcupine Meat***, produced by Scott Billington for Rounder Records/Concord Music with guest artists Dave Alvin, Joe Bonamassa, Vasti Jackson, and Keb' Mo'.

That same year Rush accomplished the rare feat of winning two Blues Music Awards for different albums: Album of the Year for ***Porcupine Meat*** and Historical Album of the Year for ***Chicken Heads: A 50-Year History of Bobby Rush***. The latter, a career-spanning four-CD collection encompassing 74 recordings on 20 labels that he made between 1964-2014, also won the 2016 ***Living Blues*** magazine award for Best Historical Release.

In 2006, Rush was inducted into the Blues Hall of Fame. He is also a member of the Rhythm & Blues Music Hall of Fame and the Mississippi Musicians Hall of Fame. In 2008, he was honored with a marker on Mississippi Blues Trail. In 2019 a street "Rush Way" was named after him in Pine Bluff, Arkansas.

Thanks to his long memory and quick wit, Rush has long ranked as one of the blues' best storytellers, a quality often on display in his live show as well as in interviews. Inspired by his first solo acoustic album, *Raw*, and performing more shows in recent years solo, which incorporate his masterful storytelling, humor, prolific guitar and harmonica playing, and soulful vocals, Rush introduced ***Bobby Rush: An Intimate Evening of Stories and Songs***, a stripped-down performance that continues to provide a counterbalance to his bawdy full-band shows.

The bluelman's charisma and way with an anecdote have also made him a go-to subject for filmmakers. In 2003, he starred in "The Road to Memphis," an episode of the Martin Scorsese-produced documentary series ***The Blues*** that aired on PBS stations nationwide. He appeared in the 2014 documentary ***Take Me to the River*** alongside **Terrence Howard, Snoop Dogg, and Mavis Staples**; that same year, he joined **Dan Aykroyd** on ***The Tonight Show With Jimmy Fallon*** to perform two songs backed by **The Roots**, marking his first late-night television appearance. In 2015, he appeared in the documentary ***I Am the Blues***. In 2019 came the aforementioned ***Dolemite Is My Name***.

Rush's performance itinerary has encompassed some of the biggest music events around the world, from Chaifetz Arena in St. Louis to Byron Bay Bluesfest in Australia, countless European engagements, the Fuji Rock Festival in Japan, and closer to home, Bonnaroo and the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival. Rush was the first bluesman to perform at the Great Wall of China, attracting an audience of more than 40,000 and earning him the title of "China's Ambassador of the Blues."