

"Blind" Blake (born **Arthur Blake**, circa 1893, Jacksonville, Florida; died: circa 1933) was an influential blues/ragtime singer and guitarist. He is often called "The King of Ragtime Guitar".

Blind Blake recorded about 80 tracks for Paramount Records between 1926 and 1932..He was one of the most accomplished guitarists of his genre with a surprisingly diverse range of material. He is best known for his distinct guitar sound that was comparable in sound and style to a ragtime piano.

Little is known about his life. His birthplace was listed as Jacksonville, Florida by Paramount Records but that is not firmly established.^[1] On one recording he slipped into a Geechee dialect, prompting speculation that he was from the Georgia coastal region. Nothing is definitely known of his death and even his name is not certain. According to one source, his real name was **Arthur Phelps**, although concrete evidence for this claim is lacking.

The "Phelps" name theory was entirely based on a response given by Blind Willie McTell in an interview conducted in 1955 in Atlanta, where Blake has never been reported; nor did McTell ever reside in Chicago. Recent research has discovered that many of Blind Blake's recordings were copyrighted under the name 'Arthur Blake', and in his two-part recording with Papa Charlie Jackson, "Papa Charlie and Blind Blake Talk About It", the following dialogue is heard:

Jackson: What is your right name?

Blake: My right name is Arthur Blake!

Jim Bruce demonstrates the complex picking patterns of Blind Blake's ragtime guitar style - Southern Rag.

There is only one surviving photograph of him in existence.

His first recordings were made in 1926 and his records sold very well. His first solo record was "Early Morning Blues" with "West Coast Blues" on the B-side. Both are considered excellent examples of his ragtime-based guitar style and are prototypes for the burgeoning Piedmont blues.

Blake made his last recordings in 1932, the end of his career aided by Paramount's bankruptcy. It is often said that the later recordings have much less sparkle. Stefan Grossman and Gayle Dean Wardlow think its possible that only one side of Blake's last record is actually by him. "Champagne Charlie Is My Name" does not actually sound like Blake's playing or singing.

Allegedly, Blind Blake was drinking heavily in his final years. It is likely that this led to his early death at only 40 years. (The exact circumstances of his death are not known; Reverend Gary Davis said in an interview that he had heard Blake was killed by a streetcar).^[5]

His complex and intricate finger picking has inspired Reverend Gary Davis, Jorma Kaukonen, Ry Cooder, Ralph McTell, Leon Redbone and many others. French singer-songwriter Francis Cabrel refers to Blind Blake in the song "Cent Ans de Plus" on the 1999 album *Hors-Saison*.

Source: wikipedia.org

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