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B.B. King documentary 'Life of Riley' to screen at Film Bar in



By: [Kevin Wierzbicki](#) AXS Contributor Aug 26, 2014 2 weeks ago
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Courtesy of MVD Visual

[“The Life of Riley.”](#) the new documentary film about the life of blues musician [B.B. King](#), will screen at the [Film Bar](#) in downtown Phoenix on Sept. 2 and 4. King himself will be in downtown Phoenix a few weeks later when he appears in concert at [Comerica Theatre](#) on Sept. 27.

King is one of the world’s most beloved musicians, and besides his instantly recognizable voice and playing style, there are a few things that fans know about the performer; he came from hard times, his guitar is named Lucille (there have been multiple Lucilles) and, thanks to his appearances in TV spots, fans know that B.B. has a diabetic condition that he has to manage. Beyond that though, only scholars and researchers have known the full story until now.

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“The Life of Riley” is narrated by actor Morgan Freeman, but a good deal of the story is told through interview snippets with King, both new and vintage. The film begins with King’s tour bus pulling up to a rural spot in Mississippi. After disembarking the bus, King explains that the site is where he lived as a youth, in a ramshackle house adjacent to the cotton fields where he labored. The backbreaking work he did for years here gave King his work ethic, and the work songs he heard in the fields kindled his early desire to become a musician.

The film covers King’s plantation days thoroughly, but his musical career starts to pop when he visits Memphis, partly out of curiosity and partly because he had just broken a tractor on the plantation (to his credit, he later returns home to pay for the tractor.) In Memphis, King would be mentored by his cousin Bukka White (the writer of “Parchman Farm Blues” and “Fixin’ to Die Blues,” popularized by Bob Dylan). It was there he also played countless amateur nights and took on the nickname B.B. (his real name is Riley B. King, hence the film title) while DJing at radio station WDIA. King picked up a manager in Memphis, too, and began playing shows in clubs frequented primarily by African Americans, commonly called at the time the “Chitlin’ Circuit.”

King’s rise to superstardom is then chronicled through the examination of his most significant albums; luminaries commenting along the way include Bono, Eric Clapton, Ringo Starr, Dr. John, Carlos Santana, the late Bobby “Blue” Bland, John Mayall, Buddy Guy, Joe Walsh, Leon Russell and many others. The documentary ends where it began, in the cotton field, with King summarizing as he gets back on the bus.

The film is also available on DVD from [MVD Visual](#) and that package includes extended interviews and a live performance from the [Royal Albert Hall](#) as extras.



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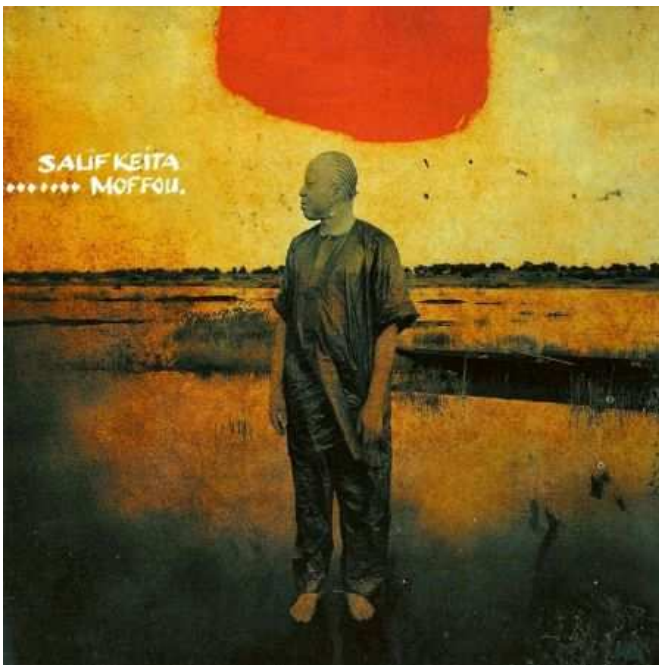
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