

# Eddie's Original Blues

Eddie mostly played covers of popular songs, including blues tunes, with hundreds memorized in his repertoire. He did, however, compose a few of his own. Eddie didn't give official names to any of his songs, so for clarification they are referred to here by their first lines, aside from "Eddie Bowles Blues." In typical blues fashion, the lyrics are simple and emotional, evoking loneliness, poverty and troubled relationships.

His song "Eddie Bowles Blues" describes trying to comfort a depressed lover when he "doesn't have a dime to [his] name." It reflects the reality of poverty Eddie was familiar with and how being poor can dim your perception of the future. However, true to his unshakeable nature, the song ends on an optimistic note. His other songs, including "You stayed all night last night in the streets," "Everything I do dissatisfies with you" and the tune "I sat up all night" express the pain of unrequited love. When Eddie croons "If I don't got what you need, Mama, then get on down the road" in his gentle, rolling rhythm, you feel his emotion.

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A common theme throughout all the songs is an absent lover who stays up all night in the streets. Unlike some other blues songs, Eddie isn't overly angry because of this—in "Everything I do," he appeals to her, saying "Tell me, baby, what's bugging you?" Like in his self-titled song, he

reveals his sensitivity by wanting to share in his lover's distress.

A few of his blues have a similar theme and even share lines, but this isn't a drawback—it echoes the improvisational and communal aspect of blues music. Eddie's music was always a communal experience.

When he first started playing, he went around to see different blues musicians in New Orleans and learn from their unique musical styles, incorporating them into his own repertoire.

In an interview for the *Waterloo Courier*, he reflects on how lyrics were built together: "You'd sing a piece and say something, and somebody else would say something and put something else in there—that's the way the blues was incorporated." Later in his life, he continued to share his music with his community in Cedar Falls. He taught young folk musicians his finger-picking technique and drew large crowds with free concerts.



Scan here to listen to Eddie Bowles's original composition, "Everything I Do" (2:51)

