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Examination session (May or November)	May	Year	2015

Diploma Programme subject in which this extended essay is registered: MUSIC  
(For an extended essay in the area of languages, state the language and whether it is group 1 or group 2.)

Title of the extended essay: STEVIE RAY VAUGHAN: "THE SUN" OF  
THE BLUES

### Candidate's declaration

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The extended essay I am submitting is my own work (apart from guidance allowed by the International Baccalaureate).

I have acknowledged each use of the words, graphics or ideas of another person, whether written, oral or visual.

I am aware that the word limit for all extended essays is 4000 words and that examiners are not required to read beyond this limit.

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*Please comment, as appropriate, on the candidate's performance, the context in which the candidate undertook the research for the extended essay, any difficulties encountered and how these were overcome (see page 13 of the extended essay guide). The concluding interview (viva voce) may provide useful information. These comments can help the examiner award a level for criterion K (holistic judgment). Do not comment on any adverse personal circumstances that may have affected the candidate. If the amount of time spent with the candidate was zero, you must explain this, in particular how it was then possible to authenticate the essay as the candidate's own work. You may attach an additional sheet if there is insufficient space here.*

### Extended Essay Report

As an enthusiastic guitarist and a conscientious student, \_\_\_\_\_ approached this essay with genuine keenness. He was most often ahead of the game with regards to deadlines in the process and wanted to make sure he 'got it right'. We had many impromptu meetings or discussions beyond those that were scheduled.

He was cautioned to keep it about music and not sociology which he succeeded in doing even in the draft.

One of the issues we discussed after the draft however was the lack of evidence for his claim of the Blues genre being about breaking rules. I advised him to find a stronger tack and, although he kept some aspects of the former he was able to identify and back up SRV's unique voice and contribution in other ways.

Ultimately I feel that this should have been pursued further, with perhaps fewer analyses of songs. \_\_\_\_\_ seemed a tiny bit reluctant to let go of what he had done. I do know that before the final he had much to cut to keep the size manageable so I presume he delivered the best he had. However, this is why I awarded less on his reasoned argument and why an otherwise excellent undertaking does not score full points on holistic.

*This declaration must be signed by the supervisor; otherwise a grade may not be issued.*

I have read the final version of the extended essay that will be submitted to the examiner.

To the best of my knowledge, the extended essay is the authentic work of the candidate.

I spent 6 hours with the candidate discussing the progress of the extended essay.

Supervisor's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: May 21 '14

# **Assessment form (for examiner use only)**

Candidate session number	<b>0</b>		
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## **Achievement level**

Criteria	Examiner 1	maximum	Examiner 2	maximum	Examiner 3
A research question	<input type="text" value="2"/>	2	<input type="text"/>	2	<input type="text"/>
B introduction	<input type="text" value="1"/>	2	<input type="text"/>	2	<input type="text"/>
C investigation	<input type="text" value="4"/>	4	<input type="text"/>	4	<input type="text"/>
D knowledge and understanding	<input type="text" value="3"/>	4	<input type="text"/>	4	<input type="text"/>
E reasoned argument	<input type="text" value="3"/>	4	<input type="text"/>	4	<input type="text"/>
F analysis and evaluation	<input type="text" value="3"/>	4	<input type="text"/>	4	<input type="text"/>
G use of subject language	<input type="text" value="3"/>	4	<input type="text"/>	4	<input type="text"/>
H conclusion	<input type="text" value="2"/>	2	<input type="text"/>	2	<input type="text"/>
I formal presentation	<input type="text" value="4"/>	4	<input type="text"/>	4	<input type="text"/>
J abstract	<input type="text" value="2"/>	2	<input type="text"/>	2	<input type="text"/>
K holistic judgment	<input type="text" value="3"/>	4	<input type="text"/>	4	<input type="text"/>
Total out of 36	<input type="text" value="30"/>		<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>

Name of examiner 1: \_\_\_\_\_ Examiner number: \_\_\_\_\_  
(CAPITAL letters)

Name of examiner 2: \_\_\_\_\_ Examiner number: \_\_\_\_\_  
(CAPITAL letters)

Name of examiner 3: \_\_\_\_\_ Examiner number: \_\_\_\_\_  
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**Stevie Ray Vaughan: “The Sun” of “The Blues**

**IB1 Extended Essay, 2014**

**Word Count: 3962 (excludes citations)**

## **ABSTRACT**

This essay explores Stevie Ray Vaughan's creative impact on the Blues, by examining how and why his musical talents, infused by his life experiences, translated to the revival and popularity of a genre. What accounts for Vaughn's unique role not as a composer and player but a "catalyst" for his adopted genre? The research question is explored with reference to formative historical influences on the Blues and Vaughan's life and career to situate his place in the development of the modern Blues. The essay analyses four of Vaughan's compositions to understand his playing and writing style and to show how his unique, intuitive "connection" to the Blues revolutionized the genre and its appeal to a more mainstream audience putting Blues in the forefront of the public eye. The "tools of Vaughan's trade", guitars, "set up," and other "gear", are explained as they had a significant impact on Vaughan's playing and tone. This essay concludes that Stevie Ray Vaughan did indeed shape the Blues, and more generally popular music, through his unique styles of playing and writing. He achieved historical prominence that still continues today, with his music and style still being very popular among music lovers and musicians of all ages. Vaughan revolutionized the Blues, giving way to its rebirth and place in mainstream music.

RQ

**Word Count 215**

an effective summary

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## Introduction

Stevie Ray Vaughan (1954 - 1990), arguably one of the greatest Blues guitarists of all time challenged musical convention to revive transform and reshape the Blues. A nonconformist, Vaughan pushed the Blues beyond traditional limitations both in his playing and composing and refashioned this genre establishing it in mainstream music. His enduring influence on the Blues continues to be heard in the Blues, Jazz, Rock and Funk styles of.

Academic  
Context?  
Existing  
Knowledge

This essay will explore the following question: What accounts for Stevie Ray Vaughan's unique role not just as a composer and player but as a "catalyst" (Gregory 40) in the revival of the Blues? The thesis explanation will be developed through a brief examination of the history of the Blues and its basic structure, followed by a study of Vaughan's life and influences on his "sound". Finally, four Vaughan compositions will be analysed in detail to illustrate his transformative impact on the Blues.

Some more  
detail on his  
significance in  
being appropriated

## Roots of the Blues

The Blues is fundamentally rooted in late 19th century African-American history and experiences in the southern U.S. It emerged from the expressive African spirituals, chants, "field hollers" and work songs (Kopp). Sung for comfort, inspiration, distraction and emotional release (Kopp), this An oral tradition passed down through the generations.

✓

The early Blues originated in the Mississippi Delta, upriver from New Orleans, the "birthplace of Jazz" (Kopp). This close geographical and cultural connection, resulted in each genre having significant influences on the development of the other. For example, I,

\* pp numbers ?

IV, V chord progressions are found in both Jazz and Blues, though it is primarily a Blues progression. A Jazz version shares the same chord progressions as a typical I, IV, V twelve bar Blues line. However the melody or solo takes on a Jazz style using chromatic runs and different scalar notes and patterns which one would associate with Jazz and the richer chord interpolations connected to Jazz.

The 20th century witnessed the migration of large numbers of African-Americans from the rural South to urban centres of the North and West. (Rasmuson). Several factors contributed to this migration, including; the "boll weevil" infestation that wiped out the cotton crop, the Depression and the rising labor demand in war-related industries (Rasmuson). As people moved in search of work they took their musical traditions with them. The Blues spread geographically, and across social, cultural and economic boundaries. During the World Wars, black soldiers shared their music traditions, spreading the Blues demographically and numerically across ranks. Interestingly the Blues during this time provided release from reality just as its antecedents had on plantations.

The "rural Blues" became the "urban Blues". Recording companies began signing and recording Blues artists to tap the growing market (Rasmuson). "A decade or so later the Blues gave birth to rhythm n' blues and Rock n' blues." (Kopp).

Curiously in a musical genre rooted in African-American culture, Vaughan, of Anglo Saxon heritage was crucial to the popularization and spreading of the Blues in modern culture and society, bridging the gap between cultures and breaking race barriers. Vaughan was the first white man to win the W.C Handy National Blues Award for Entertainer of the Year (Hopkins 97), showing not only his prominence but also his



importance as a leader of the racial and social evolution of the Blues.

### **“Blues” Basics**

In a modern Blues progression, the I7, IV7 and V7 chords of the scale are used in a 12 bar pattern, as shown in figure 1. Variations in form or chord structure, such as a 16 bar Blues do occur and are still considered Blues progressions.

(Shuffle)	Blues - Simple			Exercise	
$\frac{4}{4}$    A <sub>7</sub>	D <sub>7</sub>	A <sub>7</sub>		⋈	
D <sub>7</sub>		⋈	A <sub>7</sub>		⋈
E <sub>7</sub>	D <sub>7</sub>	A <sub>7</sub>		⋈	

Figure 1 (ireal pro application)

### **Stevie Ray Vaughan’s Creative Roots**

Vaughan was born October 3, 1954, in Dallas, Texas. Originally, Vaughan wanted to play the drums, possibly a sign of the rhythmic sense of his Blues guitar playing. Without access to a drum kit, Vaughan began playing his brother Jimmie’s guitars. He received his first guitar for his seventh birthday (Hopkins 7). When it would not stay in

tune, he “reinvented it”, stripping it down to three strings. With three strings he began playing bass lines to accompany Jimmie in a mix of characteristic percussive yet rhythmic bass playing. Vaughan’s early interest in bass playing and interest in drumming were crucial to the development of his playing style, which featured heavy percussive rhythmic undertones.

Self taught, Vaughn played in bands throughout his youth, often alongside Jimmie. At seventeen, Vaughan dropped out of school and joined Jimmie in Austin, Texas to be a musician. In 1977, he formed the band Triple Threat Revue (Hopkins 109) which eventually became Double Trouble (Williamson 347) the band which Vaughan would play with for most of his career.

In 1982, while playing at the Montreaux Jazz Festival, Vaughan was noticed by David Bowie and invited to play on Bowie’s ‘Let’s Dance’ album (Williamson 347) providing a boost to his career. In 1983, Vaughan and Double Trouble signed with Epic Records and released to much acclaim their debut album ‘Texas Flood’ to much acclaim. The album “crossed over into the national charts where it climbed into Top 40 and remained there for about six months” (Gregory 77), Vaughan received Best New Talent, Best Electric Blues Guitar Player and Best Guitar Album awards from Guitar Player Magazine (Marshall 8). “*Texas Flood* kick-started a Blues boom in the States, the like of which had not been witnessed since the mid-1960s...” (Gregory 77). Vaughan and Double Trouble were nominated for four Grammy awards, winning Best Rock Instrumental and Best Traditional Blues (Marshall 8). Double Trouble continued to tour, and release albums including ‘Couldn’t Stand the Weather’ which “went platinum” (Gregory 87) with its video “running on heavy rotation on MTV throughout the summer “

(Gregory 87). The success of these albums, the awards and the air time on MTV exposed Vaughan, and his Blues style to a younger mainstream audience.

Vaughan meanwhile struggled with drug and alcohol abuse, used as an escape and inspiration for his music, as seems the case for other artists including Vaughan's close counterpart legendary guitarist Jimi Hendrix, one of Vaughan's greatest influences. Vaughan entered "rehab" after collapsing on tour. On becoming 'clean', Vaughan returned to touring in 1989, the same year the band released the album 'In Step'. In an interview with Guitar World Vaughan expressed his concern with playing clean "Oh God, now I'm straight - can I still play?"(Kitts 91). His worries were unfounded as 'In Step' won the Grammy Award for Best Contemporary Blues Performance (Hopkins 238). Double Trouble continued to tour worldwide and released albums until Vaughan's tragic death in a helicopter accident August 27, 1990 following a performance with legendary guitarist and British Blues master Eric Clapton (Hopkins 263).

Vaughan's mainstream success, awards and the attention he received from popular culture and media (MTV and magazines) reflect his impact on the Blues and society, and how he was able to repopularize the Blues in mainstream culture.

### **Vaughan and The Blues: A Natural Connection**

Breaking boundaries characterizes the Blues culturally and historically as a musical genre. It also defines Vaughan's musical life. The elemental "purity" of the Blues "sound" propelled by Vaughan was adopted and adapted in Jazz, Funk and Rock.




“Spirituality” – emotion -- and spontaneity feature prominently in the Blues and in Vaughan’s creative writing and playing.

It is not surprising that the revival of the Blues and Vaughan are so closely linked. Solid, persistent “lines” – in Vaughan’s life, compositions and playing -- awaken the Blues’ intricate textures. A famous Canadian thinker, Marshall McLuhan, said: “The medium is the mess age ... the sensory effect of the environments created by innovations... The content of writing is speech; but the content of speech is mental dance, non-verbal ESP.” (McLuhan 23) Vaughan’s and the Blues’ “environments” were deeply sensory; these and Vaughan’s composing and playing merged to revitalize a genre.

### **Vaughan “Plays the Blues”**

The imaginative, nonconformist tendencies of “Vaughan’s Blues” are well illustrated by an analysis of four notable original compositions as steps along Vaughan’s revival of the Blues.


“Pride and Joy,” “Riviera Paradise,” “Telephone Song,” and “Tightrope” will be examined to show the diversity of Blues styles that Vaughan incorporates in his music, ranging from the Jazz-like Blues of Riviera Paradise to Funk Blues exemplified by Telephone Song and Rock Blues in Tightrope and Pride and Joy. These works punctuate different points in Vaughan's short-lived but musically profound career, showing his progress not merely as a performer but a transformative exponent of a musical genre. Each song is analysed with reference to rhythm, playing elements and solos to show how Vaughan’s innovation revitalized a “new” mainstream genre.



### ***Pride and Joy***

Pride and Joy released June 13, 1983 on the debut album Texas Flood is one of Vaughan's best known songs. "Pride and Joy' became the track favoured by radio stations, and was accompanied by a video on the fledgling MTV." (Gregory 79) helping to solidify Vaughan's career as well as cultivate "mainstream" popularity of Vaughan and the genre so closely identified with him. This song and album were critical in Vaughan's career and Blues history as they revitalized the Blues cultivating it's newfound place in mainstream music and establishing Texas Blues as it's own genre.

Pride and Joy, a Texas Rock Blues song followed the traditional twelve bar Blues form. It's written in the key of E, like many or most of Vaughan's songs. Due to Vaughan's "detuning" of his guitar by half a step the piece is actually in E flat. The chords used are I – Eb, IV – Ab, and V – Bb. The chords are repetitive in a foundational way – reflecting a strong and continuous compositional "origin" akin to the simplicity and honesty of the Blues' heritage and Vaughan's rhythmic sense. Despite this simple progression, Vaughan maintains interest through many fills and heavy percussive trademark bass-like tonal lines, following the chord progression. These lines release the inherent texture and complexity in ways that become primary to the music. Like any well designed structure, the strong foundation presents the opportunity for creative, spontaneous, emotional enhancement. Listeners can grasp the progression while exploring its complexity through the many intricate lines.



The song opens with a cutting, edgy riff, a bold confrontation with convention, in contrast to the rest of the piece. This riff consists of two highly voiced “climbing” chords, Eb and Ab, moving into a fill beginning on an Ab “bent” up a step to a Bb . Therefore, all of the chordal roots from the progression are found in the riff, setting the tone for the rest of the piece, in which very similar chordal climbs are found in both guitar solos, this makes this riff a motif. This riff idea is shown below.

The image displays a musical score for the opening riff of 'Pride and Joy' by Stevie Ray Vaughan. The notation includes a guitar staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (Bb). The riff is composed of two measures of a climbing chord sequence (Eb and Ab) followed by a fill starting on Ab and bending up to Bb. Below the staff are three tablature lines labeled T, A, and B, showing the fret numbers for each string.

(<http://guitaralliance.com/2012/08/pride-and-joy-by-stevie-ray-vaughan/>)

The song then moves into a very heavy, percussive walking bass type line structured over the twelve bar Blues format, consisting of a repeated pattern played off of each of the chords roots as they change in accordance to the Blues form. It also has high accents between every note of the bass line, balancing the booming line with the high accents of the open strings. The accents set the tone for the rest of the piece where the emphasis is primarily on the upbeat where these accents fall. After the introduction, Vaughan begins singing, leaving the bass effects entirely to the bass line, continuing only to play the accents amongst melodic cutting fills using the Eb pentatonic scale which

lends itself particularly well to the Blues on the guitar, and is the scale that he primarily used throughout his career in any key.

Pride and Joy was pivotal in Vaughan's career. His innovative style is heard throughout the piece. It “opened ears” to a new way of musical thinking that released depths of musical spirit that even the simple underlying chord progression and line offered only as potential, making this piece crucial to Vaughan’s impact on the Blues.


### ***Tightrope***

Tightrope was released in 1989 on the album “In Step”, Vaughan's last solo album. Tightrope is an extremely well known Vaughan composition in contemporary musical culture especially among guitarists. It is a Rock Blues styling with a catchy “hook” and “driving feel,” meaning it reflects an urgency and inertia that propel the song to continue moving onwards and forward.

Tightrope begins with a swift arpeggiated descending line based on the root of each of the chords in the 12 bar Blues progression, I, IV and V, in the key of E flat. This is like most of Vaughan’s songs, due to Vaughan’s half step detuning. The arpeggiated chords lead into a classic Vaughan fill, based off of an Ab chord, the IV, immediately followed by an F#, the II, creating tension, then an Eb to resolve “home.” A signature Vaughan trill on Ab and A again land on the Eb where the riff begins for the second and final time on an Eb before being repeated numerous times as motif bridge section between choruses throughout the song. The song then proceeds instrumentally to rely only on chords underneath of Vaughan's vocals.

The chords become increasingly interesting, releasing harmonic potential and melodic opportunities as Vaughan adapts the Blues progression to suit a specific style of Rock and Funk delivered in this song. He begins on the Bb chord, the V rather than the I, essentially creating an “edge” and “driving” feel as it “wants” to resolve to the I chord. He plays the V chord for six bars, then a G chord for a bar to create tension as it is the flat IV; then he resolves on the I chord for a bar leading into the opening motif to break up the verses, rounding out the progression to twelve bars. The progression used is different from a classic Blues, especially the tension filled passing G chord. The chords used in this piece are for the Bb, a Bb9, for the G, a Gminor7 and finally for the Eb and Eb9. These chords, especially the 9 chords, create a Funk tone and characteristic. He also uses a typical “slappy” high end even brittle tone, and percussive Funk strumming pattern to achieve a Funk feel. The 9 chord consists of the chord tones i, iii, v, and a flat vii, the flat 7 creates the tension in the chord, often used for Funk along with other chords like what is known as the Funk chord or the "Hendrix Chord" which is the same as the dominant 7#9 chord, the same as the 9 chord but with the sharpened 9.

This upbeat Funk style Blues helped to evolve contemporary Blues with a “new” expressive direction attractive to a younger audience, at a time of Funk popularity in mainstream music. This is where the Blues would find the core of its revitalization. Vaughan catered to these stylistic Funk interpretations while staying true to the roots of Blues.





# Tightrope

Written by Stevie Ray Vaughan and Doyle Bramhall

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## Intro

Moderately slow ♩ = 98

NC|E| (D) B7 A NC|G| (E)

*allegretto*

1. Caught up in a

## Verse

B9

can't catch up to death... Knew - deep... in - hot

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(<http://www.sheetmusicplus.com/title/tightrope-digital-sheet-music/19416934>)

### ***Riviera Paradise***

Riviera Paradise, also released on “In Step”, contrasts stylistically with all the other compositions. It shows Vaughan's expansive capacity for different styles and his playing and writing versatility. Riviera Paradise is a soft slow Jazz-type Blues number but not a traditional Jazz Blues composition stylistically. Like other Vaughan offerings it uses the Blues progression for which Vaughan is so well known, however it is used simply and gently in a way that is still very Jazz oriented in technique.

Riviera Paradise is in the nature of a traditional Blues composition, adopting pentatonic scalar notes for soloing throughout. However the predominant tone and “feel” are those of Jazz. Vaughan uses a smooth clean tone to achieve the Jazz “feel” while also keeping the heavy high and low end “bite and twang” for which he is very well known, which unwinds through the song as its creative energy rises and is released. This escalation in persistent energy gives a signature shape to the song as it incorporates a breadth of styles and “feels” all in one composition, using Jazz, traditional Blues, and soft Rock styles. Riviera Paradise is essentially a solo guitar song, featuring guitar playing to express Vaughan’s creative inspiration complemented by a clean piano solo. Although this song is essentially a solo, meaning there are often no clear motifs, Vaughan grounds everything he plays by using familiar styles and techniques. Often seen in Vaughan's music is a musical idiom formulated through climbing or descending scales in a common pattern to connect sections of the music or to lead into different sections. (3:09, 3:03) Vaughan uses this technique effectively, where he uses a scale to lead into the piano solo, whilst also dynamically and stylistically changing his playing to set the tone for a soft



Jazzy piano solo, another trademark soloing technique throughout this song (5:36) that lends itself particularly well to its Jazz feel, a heavy use of chords within solos. In this case there is a chord section that gives a Jazz chord melody feel, as it is filled with chords commonly associated with Jazz.

Riviera Paradise was a ground breaking composition, reflecting which redefined the Blues of the time. Its fusion of Blues and Jazz influences helped to spread the Blues to a new group of listeners favouring “soft” Blues or Jazz.



# Riviera Paradise

Transcribed & Edited  
by STEVIE RAY VALCHAN

By STEVIE RAY VALCHAN

Intro

Rubato

Dm9 C#m9 Bbm9 F#m9 C F#m9 C#m9 Bbm9

Very Slowly ♩ = 58

Dm9 A#m C Dm9 C Dm9 C Dm9 C Bbm9

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(<http://www.sheetmusicplus.com/title/riviera-paradise-digital-sheet-music/19576896>)

### ***Telephone Song***

Telephone Song was released in 1990 on Vaughan's last album "Family Style," recorded by Vaughan and brother Jimmie. It is in the style of Funk Blues, and again follows the traditional Blues progression and form, with an up tempo light Funk style often detected in Vaughan's music. The most notable and distinct features of Vaughan's playing are the tone and "Funk feel" – a direct but layered expression of creative spontaneity even beyond the internal boundaries of Vaughan's own music. The tone is clear, clean and light with lots of vibrato that lends itself to the Funk style. In order to emphasize the Funk feel of the song, Vaughan liberally uses accents on the chords in the rhythm guitar part. These are prominent and even dominant helping to add texture to an otherwise very persistent underlying Blues form. Also contributing to the alluring musical complexity are fills, which he uses seamlessly to break up the vocals seamlessly while keeping the listener engaged, something at which he excelled and was well known for.

Telephone Song also has a characteristic Vaughan guitar solo noteworthy for its smooth sweeping melodic lines and heavy use of repetition. Vaughan often falls on the same held "bent" note to create tension before resolving it and coming home to the tonic of the key each time. This builds tension with expectation, a creative and unconventional technique that "bends," or shapes, musical limits and lines. With this held note as a motif, he fills openings with signature fast melodic pentatonic lines very desirable to the ear; this attracted listeners with a revitalized Blues awareness. Vaughan also uses his very effective technique of climbing and descending scales which can be found as a common motif across his entire discography both live and studio recorded, making this not only a

reliable and notable compositional technique for Vaughan's Blues but also a comfortable motif that he uses frequently across all his music.

Telephone Song was significant to Vaughn's legacy and to the Blues, broadening the scope of the Blues into a Funk style, which Vaughan was very well known for, but this also being his first pure venture into Funk, making it particularly special to his style and exploration, and his role on promoting and reviving the Blues.

**The Medium Is Also Music** [Adapted from Marshall McLuhan, "The medium is the mess age..."]

Vaughan's unique "gear set up" contributed to his signature "sound," a voice of creative inspiration and release from convention which have not been recreated but are key to his Blues' popularity but not since recreated. "Gear" is an intrinsic dimension of Vaughan's music, like a rare violin that allows a composer's music to "speak" as conceived. Although most guitarists would agree that tone and "sound" are "in the fingers," undeniably the "set up" enhances -- "amplifies" -- them.

An instrument is the creative "translator" for any composer and stylist. Vaughan was known for using many different guitars including Gibson ES-335s and other ES series guitars. However, for most of his career he spoke through the Fender Stratocaster, used also by Eric Clapton, Buddy Guy and Jimi Hendrix. Stratocasters have three single coil pickups contributing to a "slappy" sound, unlike guitars with Humbucking pickups like the ES-335. This "sound" was uniquely compatible not only with Vaughan's creative inspiration and challenge to convention but also the inherent origins of the Blues. It was captivating and compelling; it could not go unnoticed even if its tonal insistence

challenged the expectations of listeners by sharpness and expressiveness at the same time.


His guitar had many Vaughn-made modifications and set up changes also contributing to his signature tone, including a left handed tremolo on his right-handed guitar and bass fret wire -- very thick, affecting the feel of the guitar. Vaughan also preferred "high action" on his guitars. The strings were set to be higher above the fret board or neck than in the case of a traditional set up. Perhaps Vaughan's most well known departure from instrument convention was the string gauge he used: 0.013 to 0.060 gauge, known by guitarists as "13s." This gauge is uniquely and uncharacteristically very heavy, typically used only by Jazz players who do not need to "bend" any notes. However Vaughan did "bend" notes, a key feature of how he shaped the basic Blues progression and drew from it is creative spirit. He did this with 13s even in ways foreign to the possibilities of lesser gauges. Vaughan's 13 gauge was custom made with wound G strings, necessary for the signature "bends" that voiced "his Blues". To put this into perspective, a beginner typically uses "9s" and experienced players and professionals "10s". Occasionally "11s" then "12s" find their way into the hands of some players who "tune down" their guitars significantly, decreasing the tension in the strings making them more manageable. For most players, trying to play even rudimentary lines with "13s" would be like trying to play with coaxial cable.

Vaughan employed certain effects pedals and amplifiers to infuse his music with its resistance to convention. He used an Ibanez Tube Screamer overdrive pedal, giving his tone a jagged, distorted edge. He also used a "cry-baby wah" pedal to modulate tone, famously prominent in Voodoo Child, an original Jimi Hendrix song "covered". Vaughan

used many amplifiers, combining them to draw out the tonal possibilities of “his Blues,” including a Fender Super Reverb, Marshall Plexi 100 watt, Marshall JCM800, and a very high wattage Dumbles (150 – 200 watts). The combination of these vastly different amps, allowed Vaughan to achieve a wide array of tonal possibilities, as well as, practically, volume control especially when using high wattage Dumbles with much more headroom for clean tones at high volumes. All of this contributed to Vaughan’s music, and his signature heavy, earthy, full tone with plenty of low and high-end bite that made his sound urgently spiritual, even bitingly ethereal.

### **Conclusion**

Vaughan, a “player – creator,” was one of the greatest guitarists of all time, making his mark in the Blues. His artistic creativity compositions changed the “feel” and scope of contemporary music. Vaughan spoke through the Blues genre he regenerated with a voice that echoed the Blues’ its historical origins– not only its spiritual and emotional spontaneity but also the creative release for which from the beginning it was an outlet. Vaughan’s unique playing style, his writing ability and his continually evolving musical style so changed the course of the Blues that he remains influential. His popularity pushed the Blues into a mainstream spotlight when it most needed it to survive. The thesis holds true that Stevie Ray Vaughan did change and revolutionize the Blues giving way to it's rebirth and place in mainstream music. “Stevie always had respect for the Blues tradition and the music but he never lost the idea that he had something to say within that context. He wanted top pay respect to the tradition, but do so while expressing his own creativity.” – Chris Layton (Kitts 70 – 71





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