

= Boogie Chillen ' =

" Boogie Chillen ' " or " Boogie Chillun " is a blues song first recorded by John Lee Hooker in 1948 . It is a solo performance featuring Hooker 's vocal , electric guitar , and rhythmic foot stomps . The lyrics are partly autobiographical and alternate between spoken and sung verses . The song was his debut record release and in 1949 , it became the first " down @-@ home " electric blues song to reach number one in the R & B records chart .

Hooker 's song was part of a trend in the late 1940s to a new style of urban electric blues based on earlier Delta blues idioms . Although it is called a boogie , it resembles early North Mississippi Hill country blues rather than the boogie @-@ woogie piano @-@ derived style of the 1930s and 1940s . Hooker gave credit to his stepfather , Will Moore , who taught him the rhythm of " Boogie Chillen ' " (" chillen ' " is a phonetical approximation of Hooker 's pronunciation of " children ") when he was a teenager . Some of the song 's lyrics are derived from earlier blues songs .

Hooker 's guitar work on the song inspired several well @-@ known guitarists to take up the instrument . With its driving style and focus on rhythm , it is also considered a forerunner of rock and roll . Music critic Cub Koda calls the guitar figure from " Boogie Chillen ' " " the riff that launched a million songs " . Several rock musicians have patterned successful songs either directly or indirectly on Hooker 's many versions of " Boogie Chillen ' " . These include songs by boogie rock band Canned Heat , who also recorded a well @-@ received version with Hooker . One of ZZ Top 's best @-@ known hits , " La Grange " , uses elements of the song , which led to legal action by the song 's publisher and resulted in changes to American copyright law .

= = Background = =

In 1943 , Hooker moved to Detroit , Michigan , for employment opportunities in the city 's wartime vehicle manufacturing factories . There he was attracted to the music clubs along Hastings Street in Black Bottom / Paradise Valley , the cultural center of the city 's black community . He recounts his experience in the narrative to " Boogie Chillen ' " :

By 1948 , Hooker came to the attention of Elmer Barbee , a local record shop owner . Barbee arranged to have several demos recorded . He or Hooker later presented them to Bernie Besman , who ran the Detroit area 's only professional record company . Although Hooker had played mostly with an ensemble at that time , Besman decided to record him solo . This put the attention solely on the singer / guitarist , in contrast to the prevailing jump blues style , which emphasized ensemble instrumentation . Recent hit singles by Muddy Waters and Lightnin ' Hopkins had also used this stripped @-@ down , electrified Delta blues @-@ inspired approach .

= = Composition and lyrics = =

" Boogie Chillen ' " is described by music critic Bill Dahl as " blues as primitive as anything then on the market ; Hooker 's dark , ruminative vocals were backed only by his own ringing , heavily amplified guitar and insistently pounding foot " . In an interview , Hooker how he came up with " Boogie Chillen ' " :

I wrote that song in Detroit when I was sittin ' around strummin ' my guitar . The thing come into me , you know ? I heard [my stepfather] Will Moore done [sic] it years and years before . I was a little kid from down South , and I heard him do a song like that , but he didn 't call it ' Boogie Chillen . ' But it had that beat , and I just kept that beat up and I called it ' Boogie Chillen.'

He performed the song in clubs before recording it and called it " Boogie Woogie " before settling on " Boogie Chillen ' " . According to musicologist Robert Palmer , " The closest thing to it on records is ' Cottonfield Blues ' , recorded by Garfield Akers and Joe Callicott , two guitarists from the hill country of northern Mississippi , in 1929 . Essentially , it was a backcountry , pre @-@ blues sort of music ? a droning , open @-@ ended stomp without a fixed verse form that lent itself to building up to a cumulative , trancelike effect " .

Hooker 's vocal alternates between sung and spoken sections . Commenting on Hooker 's vocal

sections , music historian Ted Gioia notes , " The song has almost no melody . Even less harmony . In fact , it is hard to call it a song . It 's more like a bit of jive steam of consciousness in 4 / 4 time . " Some of the lyrics are borrowed from earlier songs that date back to the beginning of the blues . The opening line " My mama she didn 't allow me to stay out all night long " has origins in " Mama Don 't Allow " , an old dance song . Several songs were recorded in the 1920s with similar titles . " Boogie No. 3 " by boogie @-@ woogie pianist Cow Cow Davenport has sung and spoken sections and includes the lines , " I don 't care what Grandma don 't allow , play my music anyhow , Grandma 's don 't ' llow no music playin ' in here " . Hooker 's first and second takes of the song include similar verses and the narrative about Henry 's Swing Club , but do not include the crucial mid @-@ song hook " Boogie , chillen ' ! " before the guitar break , which gives the song its lyrical identity .

A key feature of the song is the driving guitar rhythmic figure centered on one chord , with " accents that fell fractionally ahead of the beat " . Music journalist Charles Shaar Murray describes it as a " rocking dance piece ... its structure is utterly free @-@ form , its basic beat is the jumping , polyrhythmic groove which he [Hooker] learned in the Delta " . In an interview with B.B. King , Hooker confirmed that he used an open G guitar tuning technique for his guitar , although he usually used a capo , raising the pitch to B (1948) , A ? (1959) , or A (1970) . He also employed hammer @-@ on and pull @-@ off techniques , which are described as " a slurred ascending bass line played on the fifth string [tonic] " by music writer Lenny Carlson . Although it is titled a " boogie " , it does not resemble the earlier boogie @-@ woogie style . Boogie @-@ woogie is based on a left @-@ hand piano ostinato or walking @-@ bass line and , as performed on guitar , forms the popular 1940s instrumental " Guitar Boogie " . Rather than being derivative , Hooker 's boogie becomes " as overwhelmingly personal a piece as anything ever done in the blues " .

= = Recording and release = =

In September 1948 , Besman arranged recording sessions for Hooker at United Sound studios in Detroit . Several songs were recorded with Hooker 's vocals and amplified guitar . To make the sound fuller , a microphone was set up in a pallet that was placed under Hooker 's foot . According to Besman 's account , a primitive echo @-@ chamber effect was created by feeding Hooker 's foot @-@ stomp rhythm into a speaker in a toilet bowl , which in turn was miked and returned to a speaker in the studio in front of Hooker 's guitar , thus giving it a " big " or more ambient sound . Three takes of Hooker 's performance were recorded , the last providing the master for " Boogie Chillen ' " .

Even though Besman had his own record label , Sensation Records , he licensed " Boogie Chillen ' " to Los Angeles @-@ based Modern Records . On November 3 , 1948 , it was released nationally and Hooker commented on its immediate appeal : " The thing caught afire . It was ringin ' all around the country . When it come out , every juke box you went to , every place you went to ... they were playing it there " . Because of the response , Nashville , Tennessee , radio station WLAC , a 50 @,@ 000 watt clear @-@ channel station that reached fifteen states and Canada , played the song ten times in a row during one broadcast night . It entered the Billboard Race Records chart on January 8 , 1949 , where it remained for eighteen weeks , and reached number one on February 19 , 1949 . It became the most popular race record of 1949 and reportedly sold " several hundred thousand " to one million copies . In an experience similar to Muddy Waters ' 1950 hit " Rollin ' Stone " , the song 's popularity allowed Hooker to give up his factory job and concentrate on music .

= = Early influence = =

Besides its commercial success , " Boogie Chillen ' " had a big impact on blues and R & B musicians . B.B. King , who was a disc jockey at Memphis , Tennessee , radio station WDIA at the time , regularly featured Hooker 's song . He recalled :

[There was] hardly anybody around who was playing at that time didn 't play ' Boogie Chillen . ' That 's just how heavy it was ... I , for one , and many others [musicians] who would go out and play ? if you didn 't play ' Boogie Chillen ' at that time , people probably look at you and wonder what

was wrong with you . It was such a big record .

Murray likens the song to " the R & B equivalent of punk rock " or superficially simple enough not to intimidate beginners . It interested the eleven @-@ year @-@ old Bo Diddley : " I think the first record I paid attention to was John Lee Hooker 's ' Boogie Chillen ' , ' ... When I found John Lee Hooker on the radio , I said , ' If that guy can play , I know I can . ' I mean John Lee 's got a hell of a style " . In an interview , Buddy Guy described learning to play " Boogie Chillen ' " at age thirteen : " that was the first thing I thought I learned how to play that I knew sounded right when someone would listen . " Guy later recorded a version with Junior Wells for their 1981 album Alone & Acoustic . Albert Collins also recalled that it was the first song he learned to play .

The success of " Boogie Chillen ' " brought numerous offers for John Lee Hooker to record for other record companies . Because he received little remuneration from the sales of his record , Hooker readily accepted the opportunities to generate income . This led to his recording using a variety of pseudonyms , including Texas Slim , Little Pork Chops , Delta John , Birmingham Sam , the Boogie Man , Johnny Williams , John Lee Booker , John Lee Cooker , and others for such labels as King , Danceland , Regent , Savoy , Acorn , Prize , Staff , Gotham , Gone , Chess , and Swing Time .

= = Later Hooker versions = =

The demand for " Boogie Chillen ' " remained high enough for Hooker to re @-@ record the song several times . In 1950 , he recorded a faster version with different lyrics as " Boogie Chillen ' # 2 " for Bernie Besman 's Sensation label (also issued by Regal) . Modern Records released an edited version in 1952 titled " New Boogie Chillun " . After Hooker began his association with Vee @-@ Jay Records , he recorded " Boogie Chillun " in 1959 , which closely follows the original single . Because of the similarity , the 1959 version is sometimes misidentified as the 1948 version and vice versa (at 2 : 36 , the Vee @-@ Jay version is about a half a minute shorter than the original) .

The first two takes from the September 1948 Detroit recording session began appearing on various compilation albums in the 1970s , sometimes with the titles " John Lee 's Original Boogie " and " Henry 's Swing Club " . Meanwhile , Modern and its associated labels including Kent and Crown reissued the song several times .

From the 1960s onwards , Hooker recorded several studio and live renditions of " Boogie Chillen ' " , with guest musicians such as Eric Clapton and the Rolling Stones . In 1970 , he recorded an updated version of the song , titled " Boogie Chillen ' No. 2 " , with the blues rock group Canned Heat for their joint album , Hooker ' n Heat . Blues historian Gerard Herzhaft describes the performance as a " memorable one " . It combines Hooker 's vocal and Canned Heat 's signature boogie rock backing , as heard in the group 's jam song " Fried Hockey Boogie " (itself an adaptation of " Boogie Chillen ' ") . Despite being over eleven minutes long with extended guitar and harmonica solos , it remains as " full of the same swagger as the original " .

= = Recognition and legacy = =

In 1985 , Hooker 's 1948 recording of " Boogie Chillen ' " was inducted into the Blues Foundation Hall of Fame . Writing for the Foundation , blues historian Jim O 'Neal noted it was " the first down @-@ home electric blues record to achieve No. 1 chart status and its success , together with that of the Hooker hits that followed , inspired record companies to search out the new electric generation of country bluesmen " . In 1999 , it received a Grammy Hall of Fame Award and is included in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame list of the " 500 Songs That Shaped Rock and Roll " . " Boogie Chillen ' " was added to the U.S. National Recording Registry in 2008 , which noted that " the driving rhythm and confessional lyrics have guaranteed its place as an influential and enduring blues classic " . Authors Jim Dawson and Steve Propes included it in their 1992 book What Was the First Rock ' n ' Roll Record ? , identifying it among the precursors of rock and roll .

" Boogie Chillen ' " has inspired several songs , beginning in 1953 , when Junior Parker recorded his interpretation titled " Feelin ' Good " . It became Parker 's first hit for Sun Records and was subsequently recorded by James Cotton in 1967 and by Magic Sam as " I Feel So Good (I Wanna

Boogie) " for his influential 1967 album West Side Soul . A version by Slim Harpo , titled " Boogie Chillun " , appeared on his 1970 album Slim Harpo Knew the Blues using a similar arrangement to his 1966 hit " Shake Your Hips " .

Other songs that borrow from " Boogie Chillen ' " or " Boogie Chillen ' No. 2 " , either directly or indirectly , include the radio hits " On the Road Again " by Canned Heat in 1968 , " Spirit in the Sky " by Norman Greenbaum in 1970 , and " La Grange " by ZZ Top in 1973 .

= = Copyright issues = =

In 1991 , Bernie Besman , as the song 's publisher , La Cienega Music , brought legal action against ZZ Top for copyright infringement for their song " La Grange " . Writer Timothy English notes that of the various Hooker recordings of " Boogie Chillen ' " , the one released in 1971 with Canned Heat " has the most elements in common with ' La Grange ' , including the guitar pattern and the ' howl , howl , howl ' vocal line " . The case wound its way through the American legal system (including an appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court) . When the ruling did not favor the publisher , the U.S. Congress was persuaded to amend the Copyright Act in 1998 to protect many songs recorded before 1978 from entering the public domain . ZZ Top settled out of court in 1997 , but Hooker again gained no financial reward from his song ? Besman had obtained Hooker 's rights to the song years earlier . However , Gioia noted , " Nonetheless , his [John Lee Hooker 's 1948] spontaneous performance in a recording studio had led to a substantial change in U.S. intellectual property law " .