

Celestial Solstice: Black Artists in Rock and Roll

A 45-Minute Performance Set List

This set list celebrates the rich history and ongoing presence of African American artists in rock and roll music. Each song represents a different era and sub-genre of rock, showcasing the diverse contributions of Black musicians to this American art form. All selected songs are accessible for performance by a standard band (lead guitar, rhythm guitar, bass guitar, drum kit, keyboard, and vocalist) with limited rehearsal time.

1. Strange Things Happening Every Day - Sister Rosetta Tharpe (1944)

Sister Rosetta Tharpe is often called the "Godmother of Rock and Roll" for her pioneering fusion of gospel and secular music. Her 1944 recording "Strange Things Happening Every Day" is considered one of the first rock and roll records, predating what many consider the birth of rock by a decade. Tharpe's innovative guitar playing and charismatic performance style influenced countless rock musicians including Elvis Presley, Little Richard, and Chuck Berry. This song represents the gospel roots of rock and roll and showcases how Black religious music traditions contributed to the development of popular music.

YouTube Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OKkZ47UHIwg>

2. Road Runner - Bo Diddley (1959)

Bo Diddley was a foundational figure in rock and roll whose distinctive "Bo Diddley beat" became one of the genre's most recognizable rhythms. "Road Runner" exemplifies his innovative approach to rhythm and guitar work. The song's driving beat and call-and-response structure draw from African musical traditions while creating something entirely new. Bo Diddley's influence can be heard in the work of Buddy Holly, The Rolling Stones, The Who, and countless others. His contributions to rock and roll were so significant that he was among the first inductees into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

YouTube Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UdlvYLQeN-M>

3. The Wind Cries Mary - Jimi Hendrix (1967)

Jimi Hendrix revolutionized electric guitar playing and expanded the sonic possibilities of rock music. "The Wind Cries Mary" showcases his more melodic and introspective side compared

to his more explosive performances. As a Black artist in the predominantly white psychedelic rock scene of the late 1960s, Hendrix broke barriers and redefined what was possible on the instrument. His innovative use of feedback, distortion, and effects pedals created a new vocabulary for guitarists across all genres. Hendrix remains one of the most influential musicians in rock history.

YouTube Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=24RoTTOEIdM>

4. Proud Mary - Tina Turner (1971)

Tina Turner, the "Queen of Rock and Roll," transformed Creedence Clearwater Revival's "Proud Mary" into a dynamic showcase of her powerful vocals and electrifying stage presence. Her version begins slow and soulful before exploding into an energetic rock arrangement that became her signature performance style. Turner's career spanned over five decades, during which she broke racial and gender barriers in the rock industry. Her influence on performance style and vocal delivery continues to inspire artists across genres.

YouTube Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TTfYnRQgKgY>

5. Cult of Personality - Living Colour (1988)

Living Colour emerged in the late 1980s as a groundbreaking Black rock band that blended hard rock, funk, jazz, and hip-hop elements. Their Grammy-winning hit "Cult of Personality" features virtuosic guitar work by Vernon Reid and socially conscious lyrics that critique celebrity culture and political leadership. The band challenged assumptions about who could play rock music and expanded the boundaries of the genre. Living Colour's success paved the way for greater diversity in rock music and demonstrated the continued vitality of Black innovation in the genre.

YouTube Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7xxgRUyzgs0>

6. Fistful of Flyers - rex (Original Song)

"Fistful of Flyers" is an original composition by rex, the vocalist of our performing band. This song represents the contemporary continuation of Black artists in rock music, connecting the historical legacy explored in this performance to present-day creativity. By including an original work, we acknowledge that the story of Black artists in rock and roll is ongoing and evolving, with new voices adding to this rich tradition.

YouTube Link: <https://open.spotify.com/track/1YaoMHt5vsHUw3vAOVWhp3>

Performance Notes

- Total runtime: Approximately 45 minutes - All songs have been selected to be accessible for performance by a standard band with limited rehearsal - No explicit lyrics are included in any of the selected songs - The set progresses chronologically through rock history, from the 1940s to the present day - Transitions between songs should include brief spoken introductions highlighting the historical context