

FACT SHEET

TITLE: **ERIC CLAPTON – SESSIONS FOR ROBERT J**
[TV-G] [CC] [Stereo] [Letterbox]

LENGTH: 1/41; 1/60

FORMAT: Pledge version in two segments
Standard version – SD and HD (1/60 approx.)

NOLA CODE: ECSR

CATEGORY: Music & Entertainment

OFFERED: Premium Service 16 offer, May 2005

RELEASE DATE: August 1, 2005

CONTRACT TERMS: 8 releases through August 31, 2008

PROGRAM SUPPLIER: Marshbrook Ltd.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION: Intimate and raw, **ERIC CLAPTON – SESSIONS FOR ROBERT J** is Eric Clapton’s tribute to blues legend Robert Johnson. The program was filmed during tour rehearsals in London and Dallas. It also features scenes from a recording session at 508 Park Avenue, the Dallas warehouse where Johnson made some of his final recordings. Clapton performs classic Johnson songs including “Kind Hearted Woman Blues,” “Terraplane Blues,” “Me and the Devil Blues” and “Love in Vain” and discusses Johnson’s influence on his career.

PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS: Use the above program description for guide listing. A press kit, including fact sheet, press release, biography and song list will be posted to PBS Connect and APTonline.org. Color photos will be available via email and on APTonline.org.

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PRODUCTION CREDITS: Editor: Henry Stein
Producers: Eric Clapton
Hiroshi Fujiwara
Stephen Schible
Director: Stephen Schible

BROADCAST HISTORY: U.S. Television Premiere

RELATED MERCHANDISE: Individual viewer purchase: Recordings by Eric Clapton are available in retail outlets nationwide.

Pledge:
Program DVD (w/ additional material and bonus CD), related CD: “Me and Mr. Johnson.”

VIEWER INQUIRIES: American Public Television
Viewer Services
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PRESS RELEASE

Eric Clapton Pays Tribute to His Musical Inspiration In Public Television's New Pledge Special ERIC CLAPTON – SESSIONS FOR ROBERT J

Legend has it that famed Delta blues musician Robert Johnson met the devil at a crossroads and sold his soul in exchange for an uncanny ability to write, sing and play the blues. His seemingly sudden guitar prowess helped fuel this myth. Known for an inventive slide style and playing the boogie base on the guitar, Johnson took the blues into new directions. These sensational guitar skills combined with his vivid lyrics and deep melancholic voice created an intense, mesmerizing sound.

Despite having just a few known recording sessions in the 1930s, Johnson's small collection of recorded work has had a profound influence on an array of modern musicians including celebrated rock guitarist Eric Clapton. In American Public Television's new Premium Service pledge special, **ERIC CLAPTON – SESSIONS FOR ROBERT J**, Clapton pays tribute to his musical inspiration.

Set to air on public television stations nationwide beginning August 1, 2005, this program builds on Clapton's Grammy-nominated *Me and Mr. Johnson* – an album that includes 14 covers of Johnson songs. When considering video projects for this album, director Steven Schible thought he “could extend this into a larger, longer format DVD project or TV program, something that would describe not only the musical aspects of it, but give [the] opportunity to explore the story behind Eric's life-long admiration for Robert's material.” The result is a 97-minute DVD from which the public television special **ERIC CLAPTON – SESSIONS FOR ROBERT J** borrows selected highlights.

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This television special features Clapton, a 16-time Grammy winner, in intimate recording sessions playing a collection of Johnson songs including “Kind Hearted Woman Blues,” “They’re Red Hot” and “Terraplane Blues.” In several performances, Clapton is accompanied by his touring band, while others feature Clapton in acoustic duets with guitarist Doyle Bramhall II. In between these classic sessions, Clapton discusses Johnson and his influence. “Robert was interesting to me because he came across as a kind of isolated guy and it wasn’t good times [he was singing about]. He was singing out of despair and loneliness a lot of the time. I was a deliberate loner so I really identified with Robert Johnson,” says Clapton.

Clapton’s acoustic set with Bramhall is a highlight of the program. These two musicians revisit 508 Park Avenue, the Dallas warehouse where Johnson made some of his final recordings. This setting helps Clapton and Bramhall tap Johnson’s spirit while playing classic Johnson songs including “Hell Hound on My Trail” and “Me and the Devil Blues.”

The program was filmed during tour rehearsals in London and Dallas. It provides background information on Johnson and integrates memorabilia including the few photographs and documents that were left behind. With raw performances that capture Clapton’s passion for these classic blues songs, **SESSIONS FOR ROBERT J** invites fans to learn more about Clapton’s musical roots and reintroduces a blues icon.

ERIC CLAPTON – SESSIONS FOR ROBERT J is a Marshbrook Ltd./Hellhound production. The program is produced by Eric Clapton, Hiroshi Fujiwara and Stephen Schible, directed by Stephen Schible and edited by Henry Stein. APT’s Premium Service distributes the program to public television stations nationwide.

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About American Public Television

For 44 years, American Public Television (APT) has been a prime source of programming for the nation's public television stations. APT distributes more than 10,000 hours of programming including *JFK: Breaking the News*, *Simply Ming*, *Globe Trekker*, *Rick Steves' Europe*, *Julia and Jacques Cooking at Home*, *Battlefield Britain*, *Jungle*, *America's Test Kitchen*, *Lidia's Italian Table* and classic movies. APT is known for identifying innovative programs and developing creative distribution techniques for producers. In four decades, it has established a tradition of providing public television stations nationwide with program choices that enable them to strengthen and customize their schedules. Press should contact Donna Hardwick at 617-338-4455 ext. 129 or via email to Donna_Hardwick@APTonline.org. For more information about APT's programs and services visit APTonline.org.

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SONG LIST

ERIC CLAPTON – SESSIONS FOR ROBERT J

41 minute pledge version

Segment One

“Kind Hearted Woman Blues”

“They’re Red Hot”

“Sweet Home Chicago”

Segment Two

“Terraplane Blues”

“Hell Hound on My Trail”

“Me and the Devil Blues”

“From Four until Late”

“Love in Vain”

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SONG LIST

ERIC CLAPTON – SESSIONS FOR ROBERT J

60 minute standard version

“Kind Hearted Woman Blues”

“They’re Red Hot”

“Sweet Home Chicago”

“Terraplane Blues”

“Hell Hound on My Trail”

“Me and the Devil Blues”

“From Four until Late”

“Love in Vain”

“Ramblin’ on My Mind”

“Stones in My Passway”

“Love in Vain”

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INTERVIEW

Following is an excerpt from an interview with Stephen Schible, director of ERIC CLAPTON – SESSIONS FOR ROBERT J. To read more of the interview, please visit APTonline.org.

Q: How was it to work with such a legendary musician, Eric Clapton and watch as he paid tribute to another legendary musician?

When I arrived in London, we didn't have too many meetings or discussions about how we were going to shoot the material. We were allowed an opportunity to visit Clapton during his rehearsal sessions for his European tour which later on led to the U.S. tour that he had last year. It was just quite amazing to be able to watch him as he performed and rehearsed with his fellow musicians, to really just sit and absorb and see what their process was.

A few musicians would be playing pool in a side room at the studio they were working at. Eric would start working on a riff or something and Steve Gadd would return back into the studio and he'd start playing drums to Eric's riff. Then Nathan East, the bassist, would return and he'd start playing bass. Then Chris Stainton, the pianist, would show up. One-by-one they would just kind of add on to a riff Eric was working on. Without speaking to one another, they would make a transition into a song and just play right through it.

When you see artists of that caliber in a concert situation you really don't get to see the way in which they communicate with one another and the way they work off of each other as musicians. Since we were blessed with the opportunity to join them during a private rehearsal session, we were able to absorb these things that non-musicians typically don't get to see and enjoy. As a filmmaker, I tried to capture how they work and how they perform their music and how they work on their craft. And try to do it in a manner that is as organic and natural as possible – try to convey that through my medium which is film and video.

Q: In the film you travel to four different locations. Tell us about those trips – what kind of experience was it?

Initially, I started this project to just shoot in one location, a place called Hook End studios in a suburb of London called Checkendon. This is the place where we filmed the first session that you see in the program. We filmed a set of five songs, knowing that we would pull one or two from the set as music videos that would initially be released with the album. When I first got into this project, I knew for certain that there was some traveling involved and that I would go to England

and assemble a crew over there to film this one rather spontaneous, free blues session that Eric would do covering Robert Johnson material. Afterwards, Eric, me and our co-producer Hiroshi, discussed the ideas of continuing the process and filming more sessions. Once we finished the London segment, we learned that perhaps we'd be able to join Eric during his United States tour and film in Dallas and also perhaps Los Angeles at the very end of his tour. Initially, I thought this project would be one journey to England. I guess you have to be careful what you wish for, because fortunately Eric did enjoy the process of filming the initial session very much and actually called me up and he said, "take this more seriously." That meant it would turn into nearly a full year of traveling for me.

Q: What about the time spent in Dallas, TX?

As soon as I learned we would be filming in Dallas, I became very excited about the possibility of being able to re-visit the actual place where Robert made many of his key recordings with Eric. The first thing I did was hire a team of researchers, and we found out about what happened to the place. We learned that the building had been abandoned for some years but it was now owned by a liquor distributor called Glazer's Distributors. We managed to get in touch with the owner of the building and we were able to work out the arrangements to film at the actual recording site. The building hadn't been accessed for a long time, so we had to clean it out a bit, let some fresh air in because it was pretty stuffy inside.

We started to set things up for Eric's visit. We brought in our camera equipment and a remote audio recording rig. During the day of shooting, we pretty much captured everything real-time, starting with Eric and Doyle's arrival at the warehouse until the point that they felt that they were done with their session. You can see the sky outside the windows behind them change colors as they play, since we filmed as the sun was setting – going from blue to a deeper and deeper blue and finally night. Our director of photography, Tom Richmond, did an amazing job capturing everything that went on in there. He's a very gifted movie cinematographer who has worked with people like Robert Altman before. It was a pretty intense shooting experience for my crew, since we had 4 HD cameras in a very small space, and Eric and Doyle were playing their hearts out right in front of them. There was very little space for moving around. Yet we had Tom tiptoe around and shoot his coverage hand-held, since we felt we needed to get that kind of coverage to convey the intensity of the moment. God forbid, if any of the camera operators knocked over anything, a precious recording would be ruined! So it felt like we were walking on thin ice. All the while the light outside was changing minute by minute ... so there was a lot going on behind the scenes.

Q: What has been the reaction to the DVD?

So far, I think the reaction has been quite positive from what I've been able to see on the blogs and online reviews. These are essentially studio recordings or location recordings if you will. They are also "live" enough in the sense that none of the materials are re-recorded. Most contemporary material is done with so many overdubs – where people record the drum beat first, then the vocalist will come into the studio and record the vocal and guitar riffs over and over again until everything is polished and perfect. In this project we don't have a live, concert situation and yet everything was recorded in one shot. So you have the tension and intensity of a live performance and yet you also have a very private and closed setting. You feel like you're watching the material and you're in the same room with these musicians, experiencing it like a virtual experience – yet you're not in a big concert crowd situation. People were very drawn to the way in which we were able create this project and share the material with them.

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