

T BONE BURNETT ROBERT REDFORD JACK WHITE

PRESENT

AMERICAN EPIC



FEATURING PERFORMANCES BY

ALABAMA SHAKES
THE AMERICANS
THE AVETT BROTHERS
BECK
FRANK FAIRFIELD
ANA GABRIEL
RHIANNON GIDDENS
MERLE HAGGARD
BOBBY INGANO
ELTON JOHN
AUNTIE GERI KUHIA
POKEY LAFARGE
BETTYE LAVETTE
LOS LOBOS
LOST BAYOU RAMBLERS
TAJ MAHAL
STEVE MARTIN &
EDIE BRICKELL
FRED MARTIN &
THE LEVITE CAMP
ASHLEY MONROE
NAS
WILLIE NELSON
CHARLIE KALEO OYAMA
BLIND BOY PAXTON
RAPHAEL SAADIQ
JACK WHITE

A HISTORY OF MUSIC RECORDING IN AMERICA

→ WITH 2.5 HOURS OF SESSION PERFORMANCES ←



PBS

INTERNATIONAL

3 x 60 and 1 x 150 

AMERICAN EPIC



3 x 60 and 1 x 150 HD

CONTACT

Tom Koch, Vice President
PBS International
10 Guest Street
Boston, MA 02135 USA

TEL: 617-300-3893
FAX: 617-779-7900

jt Koch@pbs.org
pbsinternational.org

“This is America’s greatest untold story. It’s an account of the cultural revolution that ultimately united a nation. It is the story of when America first heard itself.”

—Robert Redford, Executive Producer



“These musicians we profile are the real American heroes. They set out from the darkness with nothing but a guitar on their backs, put out their thumbs, and conquered the world.”

—T Bone Burnett, Executive Producer



“In *American Epic* we can examine how important the fact is that when phonograph records were invented, for the first time ever, women, minorities, poor rural men, and even children were given the opportunity to say whatever they wanted in song, for the whole world to hear, shockingly without much censorship. What they were allowed to say on phonograph recordings, they were not allowed to speak in public or in person. That is an astounding thought.”

—Jack White, Executive Producer and Performer

In the late 1920s, record company scouts toured America with a recording machine, and for the first time captured the raw expression of an emerging culture, democratizing music and giving a voice to the poorest in the nation. *American Epic* follows the recording machine’s trail across the United States to rediscover the families whose music was recorded—music that would lead to the development of blues, country, gospel, Hawaiian, Cajun and folk music, and without which there would be no rock, pop, R&B or hip hop today. Over three episodes, the remarkable lives of these seminal musicians are revealed through previously unseen film footage, unpublished photographs and exclusive interviews with some of the last living witnesses to that era, when the musical strands of a diverse nation first emerged, sparking a cultural revolution whose reverberations are felt to this day. A fourth episode—the *American Epic Sessions*—is a feature-length performance film showcasing musicians such as Alabama Shakes, The Avett Brothers, Ana Gabriel, Merle Haggard, Los Lobos, Ashley Monroe, Nas, Willie Nelson, Jack White, and many more, playing the music of their predecessors and recording it on the original equipment used in the 1920s. From Executive Producers T Bone Burnett, Robert Redford and Jack White.

The Big Bang (Episode 1)

At the height of the Roaring Twenties, music scouts armed with cutting-edge recording technology set out across America to capture the unsung voices of everyday folk. As told by music pioneers, their families and eyewitnesses, we travel back in time to the Big Bang of modern popular music—the first time America hears itself.

Blood & Soil (Episode 2)

Episode Two shines a light on the origins of two of America’s most popular genres of music. Poor indentured servants struggling to survive inside the engine room of America—cotton field slaves, mine workers, sharecroppers—find freedom through music, creating gospel, protest songs and Delta Blues.

Incredible Journeys (Episode 3)

Exotic cultures spanning America are captured on record for the first time—venting new instruments, new genres of music and new cultural identities. This extended episode explores how disparate voices come to harmonize in a musical melting pot, forming a more perfect union.

American Epic Sessions (Episode 4—A Feature-Length Performance Film)

For the *American Epic Sessions* the filmmakers have re-assembled the machine that allowed America to first hear itself. They have replicated the atmosphere of America’s seminal 1920s field recordings down to the smallest detail, with top artists recording straight to wax, using all the original microphones, amplifiers, and other equipment from that era. This is the first time that any performer has been able to use this machinery for over 80 years. Aided by Jack White and T Bone Burnett, today’s legends are given a once-in-a-lifetime chance to relive the experience of the founding mothers and fathers, their idols, and remake the music that changed America and changed the world. The *American Epic Sessions* features performances by Alabama Shakes, The Americans, The Avett Brothers, Beck, Frank Fairfield, Ana Gabriel, Rhiannon Giddens, Merle Haggard, Bobby Ingano, Elton John, Auntie Geri Kuhia, Pokey LaFarge, Bettye LaVette, Los Lobos, Lost Bayou Ramblers, Taj Mahal, Steve Martin & Edie Brickell, Fred Martin and The Levite Camp, Ashley Monroe, Nas, Willie Nelson, Charlie Kaleo Oyama, Blind Boy Paxton, Raphael Saadiq and Jack White.

CREDITS

Writers: Bernard MacMahon, Allison McGourty, Duke Erikson

Director: Bernard MacMahon

Producers: Allison McGourty, Duke Erikson, Bernard MacMahon, Anthony Wall, Bill Holderman

Executive Producers: T Bone Burnett, Robert Redford, Jack White

Executive Producer for BBC Arena: Anthony Wall

Executive in Charge for WNET: Stephen Segaller

Executive Producer for WNET: Julie Anderson

Photo: Third Man Records and Lo-Max Films

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