



## Jook (Juke) Joint, Clarksdale, Mississippi circa 1939

The Juke Joint – Defined

(Classic definition) *noun*<sup>(1)</sup> a bar, tavern or roadhouse featuring music on a jukebox and typically having an area for dancing.

(Historical definition) *noun*<sup>(2)</sup> - an informal establishment featuring music, dancing, gambling, and drinking, primarily operated by Blacks in the southeastern United States. Set up on the outskirts of town, often in ramshackle buildings or private houses, juke joints offered food, drink, dancing and gambling for a weary rural work force that began to emerge after the emancipation. Plantation workers and sharecroppers, barred from most white establishments by Jim Crow laws, needed a place to relax and socialize following a hard week, thus workers, musicians and many others gravitated to the juke joint. Owners made extra money selling groceries or moonshine to patrons, or providing cheap room and board. It is from these establishments that the jitterbug, finger snapping, foot tapping homegrown blues movement was born. And the rest as they say...is history.