REVIEW · BLUES

Wish I Hadn't Stayed Away So Long | Guy Davis

The road promises freedom, but it leaves a door ajar behind it.

SJB SELECTION · NOVEMBER 2026

You leave. The road stretches out. The wheels go **rrr**, the distance grows. When you come back, time has passed at home without you. The journey promises freedom, but it leaves behind a door that is **ajar, silent, familiar, dusty and melancholy**, like a room nobody has dared to tidy.

Guy Davis is the son of the actors and activists Ossie Davis and Ruby Dee. He grew up close to the culture and the battles of the civil rights movement, and built a parallel career as a musician and actor. His story cracks the image of the bluesman who supposedly must come from a rural background to be authentic.

The song was born from something Pete Seeger told him. After the death of his wife Toshi, Seeger confided to Davis that he regretted the times he had been away from home. Davis recognised those words: while Ruby Dee was ill, he too spent a lot of time on tour. A story heard, a memory resurfacing: regret found a melody.

Wish I Hadn't Stayed Away So Long does not stop at nostalgia. The road is not only freedom, stages and miles eaten up. It is also a bill that arrives later: loved ones go on falling ill, growing old, living while the musician is elsewhere. Coming home cannot rewind the clock, just as you cannot call back a train that has already left.

"Home", then, does not only mean a place. It is the people you return to, if you are still in time. Davis lets the road keep its charm, but shows its cost: absence is the toll of the journey. The song pays it openly, with a voice that is **warm, aching, gathered, tender and thoughtful**.

> ***What does a life built on leaving again and again cost the relationships we leave at home?***

LISTEN

Wish I Hadn't Stayed Away So Long — Guy Davis — is in our playlist Acoustic Blues, Roots & Dust.

Guy Davis. Updated every Friday. Selected by ear.