

Ramblin' Thomas - Hard Dallas (2001)

Written by bluesever

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01. *So Lonesome* (2:45) 02. *Hard To Rule Woman Blues* (3:03) 03. *Lock And Key Blues* (2:36) 04. *Sawmill Moan* (2:55) 05. *No Baby Blues* (2:49) 06. *Ramblin' Mind Blues* (2:50) 07. *No Job Blues* (3:11) 08. *Back Knawing Blues* (3:02) 09. *Jig Head Blues* (3:17) 10. *Hard Dallas Blues* (3:03) 11. *Hard Dallas Blues* (2:59) 12. *Ramblin' Man* (3:07) 13. *Poor Boy Blues* (2:28) 14. *Good Times Blues* (3:06) 15. *New Way Of Living Blues* (3:04) 16. *Ground Hog Blues* (2:54) 17. *Shake It Gal* (2:42) 18. *Ground Hog Blues No. 2* (3:14) 19. *Little Old Mama Blues* (3:05) 20. *Down In Texas Blues* (3:09) 21. *My Hearts Like A Rolling Stone* 22. *Blue Goose Blues* (2:35) 23. *No Good Woman Blues* (2:55) Performer - Ramblin' Thomas

The rediscovery of bluesman Jesse "Babyface" Thomas in the '70s was the equivalent of a blues archivist's two-for-one sale. It turned out that the mysterious and up-til-then totally obscure '20s recording artist known as Rambling Thomas was the brother of Jesse Thomas, and the latter man was able to spill the beans on just who the rambling man with the fascinating guitar style really was. The Thomas clan, which also included the guitar picking older brother Joe L. Thomas, were sons of an old-time fiddler and were raised in Louisiana close to the Texas border. The boys got into playing guitar after looking with admiration at various models in a Sears catalog. Jesse Thomas has recalled that the mail-order guitar purchased by his brother, Willard "Rambling" Thomas, came equipped with a metal bar for playing slide; indicating the tremendous popularity of country blues at the time or the possibility that someone at Sears knew the guitar was headed into the arms of a Southern bluesman.

Thomas rambled, indeed he did. He was discovered by recording scouts playing in Dallas, but prior to that had performed in San Antonio and Oklahoma. His style also seemed influenced by the double threat of blues guitarist and pianist Lonnie Johnson, suggesting a possible St. Louis sojourn as well. Thomas played quite a bit in the key of E, making him harmonically quite a typical Delta bluesman. His picking style is curious, however, and even more interesting is his timing. His rhythmic variations suggest that his nickname might have been handed out by a musician attempting to accompany him, and not just relate to his geographical roaming. On

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some of his recordings for Paramount and Victor, such as "Ground Hog Blues," he plays it a little straighter, going for an imitation of then current hitmaker Tampa Red. The Document label is among several blues record companies that have released collections of Thomas' material, usually in the form of either a compilation or a collection of several artists; since Thomas was apparently too busy rambling to record a full album's worth of material. Thomas reportedly died of tuberculosis in Memphis, circa 1945. --- Eugene Chadbourne, Rovi

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