

Jesse Thomas 1948 – 1958 (1994)

Written by bluesever

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Jesse Thomas - 1948-1958 (1994)



01 - Same old stuff 02 - Double due love you 03 - Zetter blues 04 - Mountain key blues
05 - Melody in C 06 - You are my dreams 07 - I wonder why 08 - Another friend like me 09
- Guess I'll walk alone 10 - Let`s have some fun 11 - Gonna write you a letter 12 - Meet me
tonight along the avenue 13 - Tomorrow I may be gone 14 - Texas blues Jesse Thomas -
Guitar, Vocals Lloyd Glenn - Piano William K. "Billy" Hadnott - Bass Conrad Johnson –
Baritone Saxophone Lonnie Lyons - Piano Nunu Pitts - Bass Allison Tucker - Drums

The brother of Texas bluesman Willard "Ramblin'" Thomas, Jesse "Babyface" Thomas never had the success of his more famous sibling. Born in the hamlet of Logansport, LA, near the Texas border in 1911, Jesse Thomas and his brother were personally close growing up, often working in the fields together, and he also aspired to a music career -- the two performed together. He moved to Dallas in 1929, at a time when Blind Lemon Jefferson and Lonnie Johnson were in their heyday; Thomas made his first recordings that year, at age 18, for Victor. He cut four sides, but found little success coming from those efforts. Whether by design or a simple process of selection, he decided not to emulate his more famous brother's slide guitar-based sound, instead playing in a fingerpicking style closer to that of Blind Blake, Lonnie Johnson, or Blind Lemon Jefferson himself.

In the early '40s, Jesse Thomas relocated to Los Angeles, losing contact in the process with both his sibling and the itinerant musician's life he'd led in the previous decade. He also got to hear and play with musicians who were more influenced by jazz, and the more sophisticated varieties of blues that had taken root in the big cities. These influences soon became clear when he resumed his recording career in the late '40s in Los Angeles; he also demonstrated his songwriting prowess. He tended to write and sing about more upbeat and romantic subjects than his brother, and favored a highly rhythmic and animated style on his instrument. "Double Do Love You" recalled T-Bone Walker at his best, and anticipated the work of Chuck Berry by six or seven years. Jesse Thomas also worked well in a band setting, playing his instrument off against piano accompaniment by Lonnie Lyons and Lloyd Glenn, amongst others, and also

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saxmen such as Sam Williams and Conrad Johnson. He recorded for Milltone, Freedom, Modern, Swing Time, Hollywood, Specialty, and Elko between 1948 and 1958, and briefly had his own label, Club Records, at the end of the '40s.

It may have been Thomas' sheer versatility that hurt him as a recording artist, at least in terms of commercial success. Unlike his brother, who never evolved too far out of his rural life or roots, Jesse Thomas was always adding strings to his bow, so that by the late '40s he was doing what amounted to R&B rather than pure blues, as both a singer and guitarist, and altering his sound with almost every release, working in different group contexts -- all effective, but all different. He was doing what would later be defined as rock & roll years before it got that name, and was cutting perfectly fine, Chess Records-style rock & roll music in the mid-'50s. He was back in Shreveport from 1957 on, cutting sides of Hollywood Records. He kept working at least into the '70s and '80s, even founding another label, Red River. He cut his last session in 1992, at age 81, working once more in a country-blues vein and a small group setting, and showed his playing skills still intact. Thomas died in 1995 at the age of 84, after a 60-year career in music. ---Bruce Eder, allmusic.com

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