

Sippie Wallace's Women Be Wise

Written by bluesever

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In 1965 a young blues buff named Ron Harwood discovered that Sippie Wallace was living in his hometown of Detroit, once again in obscurity. Besides becoming the historical expert on her career, Harwood, now an electrical contractor, gently lured Sippie back to performing and became her manager. In 1966 Wallace recorded an album on Halloween night, Copenhagen, Denmark, "**Women Be Wise**", with Roosevelt Sykes and Little Brother Montgomery sharing the piano stool.

Bonnie Raitt had been impressed by Wallace's picture on a record she happened to pick up in a London store in 1968. (

"I saw the rhinestone glasses and the tiger-striped vest and said to myself, 'This woman really knows how to dress.' "

) When she heard of Sippie's recovery, Bonnie urged that she be invited to perform at the Ann Arbor Blues and Jazz Festival. Their duet on "Women Be Wise" sealed their friendship.

Women Be Wise

Sippie Wallace adapted an earlier blues song "Don't Advertise Your Man" written by **Jimmy Foster**.

The first known recording of "Don't Advertise Your Man" was in 1924 by **Clara Smith**

(Porter Grainger on piano and Sterling Conaway on ukulele). Clara Smith was a part of the great migration from the south, moving from her home in South Carolina to Harlem in the early 1920s, where she became a popular blues singer. She actively recorded throughout the 1920s, including performances of other Jimmy Foster's songs: "My doggone lazy man", "He's mine, all mine" and "Down home bound blues".



Clara Smith - Don't Advertise Your Man

Clara Smith was one of the most popular and best selling artists of the 1920s. She toured the ethnic theater circuits very extensively but her main forte were the speakeasies, nightclubs and cellar establishments where her risque brand of blues and jazz went over big with home-folk and blue-bloods the same. She was also one of the most well paid and fashionable entertainers of the period. Her voice has been quoted as having the ability to tear the blood from ones heart.



Clara Smith

Sippie Wallace (Beulah "Sippie" Thomas) was one of 13 (yikes!) children, born November 1, 1898 in Plum Bayou, Arkansas – a place no doubt whose name sounds much more pleasantly pastoral than the reality. By her mid-teens, Sippie and her brothers Hersal and George were playing and singing the Blues in tent shows throughout Texas. In 1915, she moved to New Orleans with Hersal. Two years later, she married Matt Wallace. In 1923, Sippie, Hersal, and their older brother George moved to Chicago, where Sippie became part of the city's jazz

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scene. By the end of the year, she had earned a contract with OKeh Records. Her first two songs for the label, "Shorty George" and "Up the Country Blues," were hits, and Sippie soon became a star.



Sippie Wallace - "Women Be Wise"

In the early '30s, Wallace stopped recording, only performing the occasional gig. In 1936, both George Thomas and her husband Matt died. Following their deaths, Sippie joined the Leland Baptist Church in Detroit, where she was an organist and vocalist; she stayed with the church for the next 40 years. Between 1936 and 1966, Wallace was inactive on the blues scene -- she only performed a handful of concerts and cut a few records. In 1966, she was lured out of retirement by her friend Victoria Spivey, who convinced Sippie to join the thriving blues and folk festival circuit. Wallace not only joined the circuit, she began recording again.



Sippie Wallace - "Sings the Blues"

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In 1966 she recorded the solo project "Sippie Wallace Sings the Blues" for the Danish Storyville label. She lay down several blues tracks with the Otis Spann and Jim Kweskin Jug Band in 1967, although these session would not be released until the early 1990s. With Raitt's help, Wallace signed with Atlantic and recorded "Sippie." With backing vocals by Raitt, the album was nominated for a 1983 Grammy award for best traditional blues and earned the W.C. Handy Award for best blues album of 1983 the following year. In 1995 Document records released a two-volume Complete Recorded Works, which encompasses the years 1924 through the late 1940s.



Sippie Wallace - "Sippie", album

Wallace's "Women Be Wise" was her signature song. The album "Sippie Wallace Sings the Blues" helped inspire blues-pop singer Bonnie Raitt to take up the blues in the late 1960s. In 1971 Raitt recorded a rendition of Sippie Wallace's "Women Be Wise" on her self-titled album "Bonnie Raitt." Wallace toured and recorded with Raitt in the 1970s and 1980s, while continuing to perform on her own. The bond between Wallace and Raitt helped bridge the gap between two generations of blues queens.



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Bonnie Raitt - "Bonnie Raitt", album

In March 1986, following a concert in Germany at Burghausen Jazz Festival, Sippie Wallace suffered a severe stroke, returned to the US, and died on her 88th birthday in Detroit, Michigan.



Bonnie Raitt & Sippie Wallace

Women Be Wise (Don't Advertise Your Man) lyrics

Now Women be wise Keep your mouth shut Don't advertise your man Don't never sit around explaining Just what your good man really can do For these women nowadays They ain't no good They'll laugh in your face Then try to steal your man from you Now Women be wise Keep your mouth shut And don't advertise your man Dont' be no fool Don't advertise you man Now Women be wise Keep your mouth shut And don't advertise your man Don't never sit around girls Explaining to your girlfriends just how good your man really is to you For these women nowadays They ain't no good They will laugh in your face Then try to steal your man from you Now Women be wise Keep your mouth shut And don't advertise your man Women be wise Take my advice And don't advertise your man Don't be no fool Don't advertise your man



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