

## **B.J. THOMAS**

He owns one of the most distinctive voices in American pop music—a reassuringly masculine timbre conveyed with a smattering of unique embellishments that represent a distillation of the most influential genres in pop culture.

Nothing about the identifiable sound of B.J. THOMAS' voice has changed, but there's a re-energized commitment behind it. Recognizing the continued loyalty of his fans, an anthology package of the original Scepter recordings as eight LPs to be reissued on four individual CDs with never before released bonus tracks. The project was brought together by music historian Jim Pierson. Interviews were compiled from all of the original writers and producers involved in making this music. Each CD includes a booklet that contains historical documentation of each particular album. This package is put together in a way that has made B.J. Thomas proud to be a part of it.

B.J. has also recently acted in as well as contributed six songs to the soundtrack of the independent picture JAKE'S CORNER; the songs were produced by acclaimed producer Steve Dorff. The film will be released March 2<sup>nd</sup> 2010 by Monterey.

B.J. has also been in production with Allan Swartsburg and Bob Mann of NY Deep Diner on a Brazilian album in which B.J. lends his voice in an exciting new style. The album has been released in Brazil on Universal records and will be released in the United States in 2010.

"We've always tried to do the right thing as far as getting our music out and encouraging people with positive music," B.J. reflects.

Indeed, many of B.J.'s signature hits—the Oscar-winning Raindrops Keep Fallin' On My Head, the million-selling (Hey Won't You Play) Another Somebody Done Somebody Wrong Song and his career-igniting cover of Hank Williams' I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry—invariably find the plots' protagonists employing some level of positivity to overcome the universal battle with loneliness.

Continuing his supportive inclinations, a series of positive-themed discs were embraced by the gospel community, giving him the first four platinum albums in gospel history. A brief-but-successful foray into country music—dotted by Whatever Happened To Old Fashioned Love and New Looks From An Old Lover, written by his wife, Gloria, Red Lane and Latham Hudson—emphasized classic family ideals and commitment, as did the still-familiar theme to Growing Pains, As Long As We Got Each Other, sung on the tube with Jennifer Warnes.

His lyrics aren't just words to B.J. THOMAS. He's lived out his musical ideals, turning down career opportunities for years when he thought they might interfere with the home life he established in the Dallas area with Gloria and their three daughters: Paige, Nora and Erin.

"We weren't really silent," he observes, "but we weren't really chasing the prize, so to speak."

But an interesting confluence of events helped to recharge B.J.'s career commitment. The girls grew up and left home. The surprise emergence of Raindrops in a key scene in Spider-Man 2 underscored his continued place as an identifiable cultural touchstone. And he discovered through technology just how deep and loyal his fans' commitment runs.

"One of the real catalysts behind this is I did an interview with an online disc jockey," B.J. explains. "He interviewed me and then put some music together for a one-hour package that could be accessed on the Internet, and he had 3.5 million downloads in three days. So we said, 'Hey, our people are sitting right there. We just gotta figure out a way to reach them.'"

"Gloria and I actually sat down after I finished Jory, and she wanted to know if I wanted to pursue being an actor," he notes. "At that time, I was on the road almost 300 days a year. The music was very successful, and both of us kind of agreed that movies would take too much time—that I would just pay attention to my music."

Music certainly "got" B.J. Thomas from a very early age. Born in rural Hugo, Oklahoma, just north of the Texas border, his family soon moved to Houston, where he was attracted to the country of Ernest Tubb and Hank Williams (one of his strongest memories is of attending a Hank concert with his father) and the soul of Jackie Wilson and Little Richard, whose Miss Ann was the first single B.J. ever bought.

In fact, the embellishments, repetitions and melisma that have become a trademark of B.J.'s identifiable style were adapted from one of those mentors. "I got that from Jackie Wilson," B.J. says. "What he could do was amazing. If you do it the right way, it puts a lot of sincerity and meaning into the word that you're singing. I always try to use it where it emphasizes the emotion of the song."

After his initial successes on a small Southern label, B.J. signed with New York's Scepter, where the roster also included The Shirelles and Dionne Warwick. In fact, it was Warwick who introduced B.J. to songwriter-producer Burt Bacharach, leading to his performance of Raindrops Keep Fallin' on My Head for Butch Cassidy & the Sundance Kid.

The song has shown an amazing resilience—it was featured in Forrest Gump when Tom Hanks' character encountered President Lyndon B. Johnson; it made the soundtracks for Clerks II, The In-Laws and Charlie's Angels: Full Throttle; and it appeared almost in its entirety during Spider-Man 2.

B.J. has shown a comparable resilience. He married Gloria at the Chapel of the Bells in Las Vegas just weeks before Hooked on a Feeling hit the Top 10. Their relationship remains intact nearly 40 years later, a tangible sign of his sincerity in his find-the-silver-lining musical themes. "We've always had each other, even through the hard, wild,

stupid, crazy times," he says. "She was just right there for me, and I've been there for her, too. If there's anything that got me to today it was having her."

She's still there, running their management company as B.J. reinvigorates his public persona, one that very much reflects his desire to convey some basic meaning to both his daughters and his fans.

"That's been a real positive, wonderful thing that's a part of the music that I've been a part of—making someone lift their head up or making someone feel OK," he says.

"All I am is just another guy. I've been very lucky. I've had a wonderful life, I've been a husband and a father who cherishes his children and now I'm a grandfather, and I'm motivated like all these teachers and preachers and mothers and fathers to help my kids grow up with character and self-respect. I hope that doesn't sound too grandiose, but that's what it comes down to. It's what I've tried to do with my music and with the majority of my life."

That he has succeeded at home and still maintained a place as one of music's most recognizable voices is truly remarkable.

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