

## JIMMY THACKERY Biography

Since the '70s, Jimmy Thackery has been a workhorse of fiery guitar blues and crafty songwriting. Born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in 1953, he grew up in Washington, D.C. During his high school years, he played in a band with Bonnie Raitt's brother, who turned him on to Buddy Guy. Seeing Guy perform at a small D.C. church was a turning point for the 17-year-old Thackery, but the "moment that changed my life," as Thackery recalls it, occurred quite by accident one night when he wandered into a Jimi Hendrix show in D.C. and heard Hendrix let loose in his first gig after getting kicked off the Monkees tour.

Thackery became widely known as the innovative guitarist with the Nighthawks, one of the hardest-working and most popular blues bands of the '70s and '80s. Beginning in 1974, the Nighthawks recorded more than 20 albums and constantly toured the U.S., Europe, Canada and Japan. Jimmy was the heart, soul and adrenalin of the Nighthawks' sound during his 14-year tenure with the D.C.-based band, creating a distinctively raw, powerful guitar style and establishing a reputation as a spectacular soloist.

Thackery learned his chops from some of the best possible sources. Besides Buddy Guy and Jimi Hendrix, he cites Chicago axemaster Otis Rush as a primary influence. Moreover, he learned more than a few licks from playing onstage alongside other blues legends like Muddy Waters, James Cotton and Luther "Guitar Junior" Johnson.

Thackery left the Nighthawks in 1987, needing a break from a grueling 300-night-a-year touring schedule. He also felt the need to try something new musically, so he assembled a six-piece R&B crew called the Assassins. The popular and critically-acclaimed group recorded three albums before disbanding in 1991.

His next project was a lean, three-piece unit known as Jimmy Thackery and the Drivers. Their first album, *Empty Arms Motel*, released on Blind Pig in 1992, won over legions of critics and new fans, and became one of the best-selling blues titles of the year. *CD Review* declared, "Jimmy Thackery has the tonal control, musical thought, expressive sincerity, velocity, and discipline to rank near the top of the blues-rock heavyweight division."

In the fall of 1993, Blind Pig reissued an acoustic duet album, *Sideways in Paradise*, that Thackery had recorded in Jamaica in 1985 with slide guitar master John Mooney. "Thackery shows a remarkable facility here for the acoustic setting," *Blues Access* said of *Sideways*. "There's a wealth of excellent material here. The players trade National steel guitars and mandolins, and explode the barriers of possibility for traditional acoustic music."

Thackery's second album with the Drivers, *Trouble Man* (1994), came together with the help of Grammy-winning producer Jim Gaines, whose production credits include albums by Stevie Ray Vaughan, Santana and Steve Miller. Gaines came up with a heftier guitar tone that further enhanced Thackery's fiery blues and rock-influenced guitar wizardry. *Blues Revue* said, "Thackery's heavily distorted tone is like a thunderstorm of passion and fury that just crackles and roars with conviction and power. Pure dynamite!"

Responding to the clamor among fans for a recording that would capture Thackery's power in the live context, Blind Pig released *Wild Night Out!* in 1995. Recorded in Detroit, it features more than 60 minutes of amazing guitar pyrotechnics. "Guitar god Jim Thackery's live album aptly lives up to its title," said *Blues*

*Revue*, “capturing the depth and breadth of his awesome ability.” *Guitar Player* called the album “a watershed of industrial-strength roots rock,” while the *Orlando Weekly* referred to it as “live blues-rock at its best, testimony to J.T.’s high-caliber guitar skills.”

Thackery’s fourth album with the Drivers, *Drive To Survive* (1996), reunited Thackery and Gaines. *Billboard* rated the album the eighth bestselling independent label blues release of that year. “Thackery’s scorching tone and gritty guitar work are instantly identifiable,” said *Vintage Guitar*. “His rhythm grooves are grinding and funky, his leads have a freedom that Hendrix would have envied.”

*Switching Gears*, released in 1998, was an aptly titled change of pace for Jimmy and the Drivers. It featured guest bluesmen Lonnie Brooks and Joe Louis Walker, and zydeco journeyman Chubby Carrier on a refreshing mix of material that included everything from urban and acoustic blues to Hendrix-esque rockers to a splash of contemporary zydeco. Standout tracks included Walker’s delightful acoustic number, “If This is Love,” and the mischievous and entertaining duet with Reba Russell on Jimmy’s original, “Dancing On Broken Glass.”

Thackery and Gaines collaborated again on *Sinner Street*, a 2000 release that upped the ante on Jimmy’s guitar playing and songwriting with witty, well-crafted offerings like “Lovin’ My Money,” “Hundreds Into Ones” and “Million Dollar Bill.” Newcomer saxman Jimmy Carpenter brought a new dimension to the band’s sound, and instrumental tracks like the swinging title cut and the Peter Green-like “Blues ‘Fore Dawn” were true highlights.

Thackery and the Drivers’ Telarc debut, *We Got It*, was released in June 2002. Inspired by the music of Muscle Shoals legend Eddie Hinton, *We Got It* offers shades of R&B and soul, but always with the rock-solid blues underpinnings that have made Thackery a blues guitar powerhouse for more than two decades.

Thackery teamed up with Telarc labelmate Tab Benoit for the September 2002 release of *Whiskey Store*, a blues guitar free-for-all that also features harpist Charlie Musselwhite and Double Trouble, the two man powerhouse rhythm section that backed blues legend Stevie Ray Vaughan in his heyday.

Thackery released *True Stories* on Telarc in the spring of 2003, followed in early 2004 by *Whiskey Store Live*, a high-energy reunion with Benoit in front of live audience at the Unity Centre for Performing Arts in Unity, Maine. *Healin’ Ground* followed in 2005. With the release of *Solid Ice* in May 2007, Thackery detoured somewhat from his fiery guitarslinger persona to take a more eclectic approach to writing and recording. is due at retail on May 22, 2007.

***Inside Tracks***, due in stores on October 14, 2008, follows that same exploratory path. Like its predecessor, ***Inside Tracks*** leads to a place where country, R&B and even a touch of surf music all fit seamlessly with Thackery’s trademark guitar blues.

### **Telarc Discography:**

We Got It (2002) CD-83540  
Whiskey Store (2002) CD-83559  
True Stories (2003) CD-83572  
Exile on Blues Street (2003) CD-83571  
Whiskey Store Live (2004) CD-83584  
Healin’ Ground (2005) CD-83624  
Solid Ice (2007) CD-83661  
Inside Tracks (2008) CD-83683