

JIMMY THACKERY RIDES HIS OWN TRACK ON NEW TELARC RECORDING

Inside Tracks due at retail on October 14, 2008

After more than thirty years, guitarist Jimmy Thackery has learned that the smartest career track is the one that tunes out all the distracting noises and follows the sound of his own muse. Although still a gritty hard-rocking blues guitarist when the occasion demands, he has spent recent years exploring some of the more nuanced corners of the American roots music spectrum.

Inside Tracks, the new release from Jimmy Thackery and the Drivers, is due in stores on October 14, 2008. The album is a continuation of the creative shift that began in 2007 with his previous Telarc recording, *Solid Ice*. 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.

While some of this may be uncharted water for both Thackery and his fans, *Inside Tracks* is another step in his realignment of artistic priorities. The focus now is a little more on substance and a little less on flash.

"It's about the writing now," Thackery explains. "It's not just about the hot dawg guitar player. For a long time, that was the thing that everyone assumed would be the selling point. Everybody likes a revved-up blues guitar player, but how many records can you make like that? I've done forty or something. I lost count back in the '90s of the exact number. I think I've proved that I can do that, so I figured it was time to do some real writing, regardless of whether it was consistent with people's expectations. Fortunately, Telarc has taken a very hands off approach and given me room to do just that."

With the help of Drivers Mark "Bumpy" Bumgardner (bass) and Mark Stutso (drums), the set kicks off with the swampy "All Because of You," a track inspired by the catchy pop backbeat of longtime cult favorites New Rhythm and Blues Quartet. "I'm a big NRBQ fan, always have been," says Thackery. "If there's such a thing as an American version of the Beatles, they're it. They have a certain style and feel that comes largely from the drummer, Tom Nardolino. I wanted to try to capture that kind of rhythm. Nothing heavy about the lyrics. I was just trying to capture that NRBQ groove."

A bouncy cover of Chuck Berry's "The Promised Land" features Stutso on vocals. "I've always loved the song, and Mark did a great job on it," says Thackery. "When you look at that song really closely under a microscope, it's about racism in America back in the '50s. It's all about a poor boy who decides to leave everything behind and go to a place where the racism is less pronounced. The song is about all the trials and tribulations he has to go through to get there."

The midtempo surf track "Landlocked" is based on – of all things – a melody from Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 6. "I have a buddy in Appalachia with a surf band called Landlocked," says Thackery. "I told him I would write a song for the band, but it probably wouldn't be the typical surf tune. I named it after the band so they could use it as their theme song. It was one of those many instances where a song started to evolve once I brought it into the studio and showed it the guys. In the end, I really love the way that one came out on the record."

Stutso reappears on lead vocals for "Blinking of an Eye," a heartwrenching ballad that is, unfortunately, based on a true story. "I had an old friend whom I lost touch with for a long time," Thackery explains. "He'd had some problems, but he got his life together, got married and was pretty happy. He got up one

day, kissed his wife goodbye and went to work. He walked back in the house that evening and discovered she had died. He was a mess after that. He asked me if I would write a song for her. I tried to put myself in the position of that guy, getting up one day just like any day, kissing my wife goodbye, and walking back in the house that evening and realizing that she's gone. What would I do? What would I say?"

The instrumental "(You Got Me) Now What You Gonna Do?" is a honky-tonk-flavored Chet Atkins/Les Paul tribute that came together organically, almost as an afterthought. "It was something I'd just been fiddling around with," says Thackery. "Then a friend of mine heard it and said, 'Man, that's a great little tune. You should record it.' It hit him so hard that I figured I would put it on the record. Sometimes that's how it works. The best songs can take just a few minutes to write. Not hours or days or week. Just minutes. The ones that are effortless are the ones that always seem to stand out."

For Jimmy Thackery, there's much more to the blues than the standard 12-bar shuffle punctuated by a flashy guitar solo. In the end, it's much more about the heart and soul and less about formulas and preconceived notions.

"A lot of people who are making blues records are just trying to make another T-Bone Walker record or another George Thorogood record," he says. "Those are a couple of fine guitar players and songwriters, but I've pretty much done that, many times over. I'm at a point where I'm going to record the kind of music that I want to play and I want to listen to. If you're writing stuff to please yourself, it's going to translate to the people you're trying to reach."

Inside Tracks is Thackery's chosen mode of transportation on the journey of self-discovery. Hop on the rails and take the ride with him.

Jimmy Thackery and the Drivers' *Inside Tracks* (CD-83683) is due at retail on October 14, 2008.

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