

SISTER ROSETTA THARPE

Complete Recorded Works
1938-1944
In Chronological Order

VOLUME 1

1938-1941



document
RECORDS
DOCD-5334

Flamboyant, histrionic, magnetic, and precocious – Rosetta Tharpe brought gospel music to the attention of the average listener in 1938 with her New York performances at the recently relocated Cotton Club on Broadway and at Cafe Society Downtown. If Thomas A. Dorsey was the force that codified and laboriously planted the seeds of the burgeoning gospel movement throughout the black churches, it was Sister Rosetta Tharpe who became gospel's first national star and helped make it a household topic a decade before the mass popularity of Mahalia Jackson.

Born in Cotton Plant, Arkansas on March 20, 1915, Rosetta Nubin was already standing in church beside her mother, the traveling evangelist Katie Bell Nubin, before she was a year old. By six, Rosetta had mastered the guitar and her experience on the road in the Holiness churches with her mother had left her a seasoned veteran who could "tear up" a congregation with mature performances of "**The Day Is Past And Gone**" and "**I Looked Down The Line**". Around this time the pair was based at the 40th Street Church of God in Christ near State Street in Chicago, where Bishop Roberts would stand Rosetta on a table for better visibility. By 1934 she had met and married Pastor Thorp, an elder in the Holiness church in Pittsburgh, and mother, daughter, and husband formed a trio that became popular in the storefront churches in Florida up until the time of Rosetta's relocation to New York in 1938.

This was the point in time when gospel music entered the show business world via the New York nightclubs. Rosetta began performing in the Cotton Club Revue with Cab Calloway and his Orchestra and the growing interest in jazz and its roots culminated in the historic "Spirituals To Swing" concert at Carnegie Hall on December 23, 1938. This was the first exposure most white listeners had to black vernacular music and Rosetta was present along with the Golden Gate Quartet and Mitchell's Christian Singers to insure a sampling of several religious styles. Her first recordings were done less than two months prior to the concert with Rosetta accompanying herself on guitar in her familiar "vestapol" down to B-flat tuning. Thomas A. Dorsey's "**Rock Me**" led the session, followed by a sophisticated rewrite of Washington Phillips' "Denomination Blues" (see DOCD-5054) titled "**That's All**", and two songs with secular lyrics that sound uncannily like the gospel numbers. Enough interest was generated for a follow-up session in January 1939, which included her

first recorded version of a song that would become a staple in her repertory: "**This Train**", as well as the song she used to "tear up" the churches as a child ("**I Looked Down The Line**"), and the popular gospel standard "**God Don't Like It**".

1939 was a busy year for Sister Tharpe. The Cotton Club kept her for their next show which opened on March 24 and featured Bill Robinson. The show was later revised to broaden her role in it and ended up running through the summer with Rosetta performing with Andy Kirk's band featuring Mary Lou Williams on piano. *Life* magazine ran a feature story on her "moving the saints on Sunday and entertaining the big spenders on Monday". With all the additional activity it was over two years before she recorded again. This session, in March 1941, produced another of Rosetta's signature tunes: "**Stand By Me**", but it was the following session at the end of June that really caused a stir. This featured Sister Tharpe backed by Lucky Millinder and his Orchestra on the blues standard "**Trouble In Mind**" (first recorded by Bertha "Chippie" Hill in 1926) and a swinging spiritual: "**Rock Daniel**". Her new downtown audience loved it, but a number of ministers in Harlem expressed their displeasure with Rosetta "for putting too much motion as well as emotion into her singing". Still, her plunge into show business continued unabated, and she was a smash at the Apollo theater with Cab Calloway's band. Some time in mid-1941 she even made three short films with the Lucky Millinder Orchestra for the Soundies Distributing Corporation of America, for use in visual juke-boxes. Her recordings with Millinder were very popular, and later in 1941 she cut new versions of "**Rock Me**" and "**That's All**" with the orchestra, the latter featuring hot solos by Rosetta on a guitar that had been electrified. She closed the year by recording four solo numbers, including a couple of ballads and a spirited remake of Blind Willie Johnson's "**Nobody's Fault But Mine**". Perhaps the session was an attempt to regain the good graces of her churchgoing listeners.

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Rosetta Reitz, liner notes to *Sister Rosetta Tharpe, Gospel Blues-Jazz, Foremothers*,
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Ken Romanowski, January 1995

1. Rock Me	64727-A-De 2243	(A)	2:30
2. That's All	64728-A-De 2503	(A)	2:32
3. My Man And I	64729-A-De 2505	(A)	3:00
4. The Lonesome Road	64730-A-De 2245	(A)	2:32
5. Bring Back Those Happy Days	64881-A-De 2558	(B)	2:52
6. This Train	64882-A-De 2558	(B)	2:40
7. I Looked Down The Line (And I Wondered)	64883-A-De 2528	(B)	2:51
8. God Don't Like It	64884-A-De 2528	(B)	2:47
9. Beams Of Heaven	64885-A-De 5254	(B)	3:06
10. Saviour Don't Pass Me By	64886-A-De 5254	(B)	2:46
11. The End Of My Journey	68815-A-De 8538	(C)	3:06
12. Sit Down	68816-A-De 8538	(C)	2:19
13. There Is Something Within Me	68817-A-De 8548	(C)	2:23
14. Stand By Me	68818-A-De 8548	(C)	2:51
15. Four Or Five Times	Soundie No. 3608	(D)	2:29
16. Shout, Sister, Shout	Soundie No. 3701	(D)	2:48
17. The Lonesome Road	Soundie No. 4106	(D)	2:47
18. Trouble In Mind	69437-A-De 4041	(E)	2:32
19. Rock Daniel	69440-A-De 3956	(E)	2:52
20. Shout Sister Shot	69707-A-De 18386	(F)	2:40
21. Rock Me	69709-A-De 18353	(F)	2:45
22. That's All	69910-A-De 18496	(G)	2:34
23. Just A Closer Walk With Thee	69980-A-De 8594	(H)	2:45
24. Precious Lord Hold My Hand	69981-A-De 8610	(H)	3:01
25. I'm In His Care	69982-A-De 8594	(H)	2:53
26. Nobody's Fault But Mine	69983-A-De 8610	(H)	2:55

PERSONNEL:

- A: Rosetta Tharpe, vcl/gtr. _____ New York City, 31 October 1938
 B: Rosetta Tharpe, vcl/gtr. _____ New York City, 30 January 1939
 C: Rosetta Tharpe, vcl/gtr. _____ New York City, 13 March 1941
 D: Lucky Millinder And His Orchestra: William "Chieffo" Scott, Archie Johnson, Nelson Bryant, tp; George Stevenson, Donald Cole, Eli Robinson, tb; George James, Billy Bowen, as; Stafford Simon, ts; Buster Bailey, cl/s; Ernest Pace, bar; Bill Doggett, pno; Trevor Bacon, gr; Abe Bolz, sb; Panama Francis, d; Rosetta Tharpe, vcl/gtr; Lucky Millinder, dir; members of the orchestra, vcl chorus on 15, 16, 19. _____ Film Soundtracks, New York City, ca. mid-1941
 E: same as for D _____ New York City, 27 June 1941
 F: Lucky Millinder And His Orchestra: William Scott, Archie Johnson, Nelson Bryant, tp; George Stevenson, Floyd Brady, Edward Moran, tb; Ted Barnet, George James, as; Stafford "Pazzano" Simon, ts; Ernest Pace, bar; Bill Doggett, pno; Trevor Bacon, gr; Abe Bolz, sb; Panama Francis, d; Rosetta Tharpe, vcl; Lucky Millinder, dir; members of the orchestra, vcl chorus on 20. _____ New York City, 5 October 1941
 G: Lucky Millinder And His Orchestra: Archie Johnson, Freddie Webster, Nelson Bryant, tp; George Stevenson, Edward Moran, Sandy Williams, tb; George James, Ted Barnet, as; Stafford Simon, ts; Ernest Pace, bar; Bill Doggett, pno; Sterling Marlow, gr; George Daviner, sb; Panama Francis, d; Rosetta Tharpe, vcl/gtr; Lucky Millinder, dir; members of the orchestra, vcl chorus. _____ New York City, 6 November 1941
 H: Rosetta Tharpe, vcl/gtr. _____ New York City, 1 December 1941

NOTE: This is the first of 2 volumes.

Original recordings from the collections of Dr. Michael Arié, Joe Bassard, Dr. David Evans, Bob Graf, Daniel Gugob, Dr. Fritz Hühldner, Roger Moisiwicz, Johnny Park.