

Janis Joplin Rarities (1998)

Written by bluesever

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CD1 1. *Ball & Chain* 10:50 2. *Codine* 4:22 3. *Janis Last Cavett Interview* 8:59 4. *Bye Bye Baby* 2:41 5. *Misery'n* 4:08 6. *So Sad To Be Alone* 5:01 7. *Catch Me Daddy* 4:54
8. *Hesitation Blues* 4:10 9. *Flower In The Sun* 3:04 10. *Typewriter Talk* CD2 1.
Daddy, Daddy, Daddy 4:00 2. *Nobody Knows You When You're Down And Out* 4:35 3.
Trouble In Mind 3:18 4. *Farewell Song* 4:23 5. *Kansas City Blues* 3:12 6. *Long Black Train Blues* 2:32 7. *Easy Once You Know How* 3:53 8. *Roadblock* 5:31 9. *Summertime* 4:06

The blues-influenced rocker had one of the most powerful voices of the Sixties. Her voice is equal parts tough and vulnerable, a shout into the void that resonated with a generation.

Janis Joplin brought her powerful, bluesy voice from Texas to San Francisco's psychedelic scene, where she went from drifter to superstar.

She has been called "the greatest white urban blues and soul singer of her generation." Joplin's vocal intensity proved a perfect match for the high-energy music of Big Brother and the Holding Company, resulting in a mix of blues, folk and psychedelic rock. Joplin's tenure with Big Brother may have been brief, lasting only from 1966 to 1968, but it yielded a pair of albums that included the milestone *Cheap Thrills* (1968). Moreover, her performance with Big Brother at 1967's Monterey International Pop Festival, a highlight of the film documentary *Monterey Pop* (1968), is among the great performances in rock history.

In the words of biographer Myra Friedman, "It wasn't only her voice that thrilled, with its amazing

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range and strength and awesome wails. To see her was to be sucked into a maelstrom of feeling that words can barely suggest.” She was a dynamic singer who shred her vocal cords on driving psychedelic rockers like “Combination of the Two” and then delivered a delicate, empathetic reading of George Gershwin’s “Summertime.”

Joplin was born in 1943 in Port Arthur, Texas, an oil-refining town on the coast. Growing up, she was a social outcast who found an outlet in music. Joplin was drawn to blues (Odetta, Leadbelly and Bessie Smith) and soul (Otis Redding, Tina Turner and Etta James). She performed folk blues on the coffeehouse circuit in Texas and San Francisco before hooking up with Big Brother—guitarists James Gurley and Sam Andrew, bassist Peter Albin and drummer David Getz—at the suggestion of Chet Helms, a hip entrepreneur and fellow Texan. The chemistry came as a revelation even to Joplin. “All of a sudden, someone threw me in front of this rock and roll band,” she said. “And I decided then and there that was it. I never wanted to do anything else.”

Big Brother were loud, explosive and somewhat deliberately crude in their mélange of blues and psychedelia. Helms, one of a group of event organizers who called themselves the Family Dog, booked the group on some of the earliest bills on the nascent San Francisco scene. Big Brother became regulars at Helm’s Avalon Ballroom in the mid-to-late Sixties. It was at the Avalon where much of Cheap Thrills—an album that topped the album charts for eight weeks in 1968—was recorded. That explosive showcase of psychedelic soul featured Joplin’s raw, impassioned readings of Willie Mae Thornton’s “Ball and Chain” and “Piece of My Heart.” The latter song, which had been a Top Ten R&B hit in 1967 for Erma Franklin (Aretha’s younger sister), was co-written by Jerry Ragavoy, a favorite songwriter of Joplin’s. As a solo artist, she would record other songs of his, including “Cry Baby,” “Get It While You Can” and “Try (Just a Little Bit Harder).”

Joplin left Big Brother in December 1968, taking guitarist Sam Andrew with her. Her first solo album, I’ve Got Dem Ol’ Kozmic Blues Again Mama!, appeared in 1969, and she toured extensively with her Kozmic Blues Band. By mid-1970, however, she dissolved that outfit and formed a superb new one, Full-Tilt Boogie. They gelled over the course of several months of touring and entered the studio to record what would turn out to be Joplin’s swan song. Joplin had often sought refuge in drugs and alcohol, and she was found dead of a heroin overdose in a Hollywood hotel room on October 4, 1970. The posthumously released Pearl (1971)—the title was her nickname—comprised nine finished tracks and one instrumental to which she was supposed to have added vocals on the day she died. It was prophetically titled “Buried Alive in the Blues.”

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Pearl became Joplin's biggest seller, holding down the Number One spot for nine weeks in 1971. It included "Me and Bobby McGee," a song written for her by ex-lover Kris Kristofferson. A quixotic portrait of a countercultural love affair, sung by Joplin as an affectionate, road-weary country blues, "Me and Bobby McGee" perfectly captured the bohemian spirit of the times. The powerful performances on Pearl, including "Move Over," "Half Moon" and "Get It While You Can," hint at what might have come from Joplin had she not died at 27.

Janis Joplin has passed into the realm of legend: an outwardly brash yet inwardly vulnerable and troubled personality who possessed one of the most passionate voices in rock history. It could be argued that her legacy has as much to do with her persona as her singing. Music journalist Ellen Wills asserted that "Joplin belonged to that select group of pop figures who mattered as much for themselves as for their music. Among American rock performers, she was second only to Bob Dylan in importance as a creator-recorder-embodiment of her generation's mythology."

Rock critic Lillian Roxon summed up her influence with these words: "[Janis Joplin] perfectly expressed the feelings and yearnings of the girls of the electric generation—to be all woman, yet equal with men; to be free, yet a slave to real love; to [reject] every outdated convention, and yet get back to the basics of life." ---rockhall.com

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