

EARL THOMAS AND THE KINGS OF RHYTHM

BLU * RO * SO * FUNK - a combination of Blues, Rock, Soul & Funk.

In 1971, Earl Thomas became the lead singer of the Kings Of Rhythm, famed backing band formed by legendary musician and bandleader Ike Turner. The only trouble was, the band did not find out until 2008.

It was in a small theatre on the island of Guam where Earl's father had brought his son to see the movie Soul To Soul. A career naval officer and amateur musician, he wanted to impress an appreciation of soul music on his young boy. During the opening credits, Ike and Tina Turner appear with the (original) Kings of Rhythm performing the movie's theme song of the same name and it was at that moment, the young Earl turned to his father and said, "Daddy, that's what I'm gonna be when I grow up. I'm gonna be a singer in a band!" Apparently a father's gentle nudge had turned into a shove.

And, from that moment on, Earl lived the idea that he fronted the band. He pretended that he was the lead singer of the band. The family living room was turned into an imaginary stage where, everyday after school, the couch became the drummer, lamps were the horn section, a shelf the bass, an end table was the guitarist, and right in the middle was Earl, with his dinner candle microphone channeling Ike & Tina Turner. "All I knew was that I wanted to do what I saw those people doing on the screen," remembers Thomas. "I didn't know anything about the music business. It just looked like everyone was having such a good time."

And Earl Thomas did become "a singer in a band" and since his world stage debut at Switzerland's renowned Montreux Jazz Festival, he has enjoyed a successful recording career with 12 records to his credit, has toured extensively throughout Europe and America, has had several songs in feature films and major television shows, and has written songs for legends, Etta James, Solomon Burke and Tom Jones. But Earl was not satisfied.

One day, movie producer David Peck asked him to perform a small part in an indie movie remake he was working on. Negotiations dragged on until they came to a tentative agreement. Only then did the producer mention that the movie he was remaking was Soul To Soul for DVD release and Earl would be singing an updated version of the movie theme song to be played over the closing credits; the song Ike & Tina perform in the opening scene from the movie that had changed the course of his life. And not only was he going to perform the part he had mimicked for three decades, he would also get to meet Ike Turner.

They met in 2004 at the movie premier in Hollywood. Ike was impressed with Earl's vast knowledge of his and Tina's work from the '70s and came to quickly respect Earl's innate ability to sing their songs with such precision, so much so, that he agreed to write the liner notes for Intersection, Earl's 2005 Memphis International Records release and donated "Working Together" a song he penned in 1971.

Earl remained in contact with Ike and some of the Kings of Rhythm band ever since. On December 12, 2007 looking to put together a band for an upcoming date, Earl decided to take a shot and call the Kings of Rhythm to see if they might be free. As he was making the call on his landline, a text came in on his cell phone from the Kings guitarist. Ike Turner had just died.

While a sad moment in all their lives, it was also pivotal as it allowed Earl to work with The Kings Of Rhythm throughout 2008 and record a new CD entitled Earl Thomas & The Kings Of Rhythm Live At Biscuits & Blues an homage to the early Ike & Tina Turner live records.

Seth Blumberg, the Kings of Rhythm guitarist, suggested that Ike had actually "willed the bill" of lead singer to Earl because for about a month prior to Ike's death, they had spent every day working on a "particular" guitar riff. When he question his bandleader as to why they were going over the same part for hours on end, Ike just responded that the riff is called "Working Together" and they needed to keep playing it. Seth believed it was a message that Ike once delivered a song to Earl, and now it was time to cede the band to his heir apparent.

No longer the furniture in the living room, this Grammy Award winning band makes their European debut and begins a full tour schedule in 2010, kicking off in London. Earl Thomas is the singer in the band. It just took him 37 years to do it.



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