

BALL AND CHAIN

"BIG MAMA" THORNTON



Born December 11, 1926 in Montgomery Alabama, Willie Mae Thornton only notched one national hit in her lifetime, but it was a true monster. "Hound Dog" held the #1 slot on Billboard's R&B charts for seven long weeks in 1953. Although the single sold very well, Thornton only received one check in her life for the song, a paltry \$500. Alas, Elvis Presley's rocking 1956 cover was even bigger, effectively obscuring Thornton's chief claim to immortality. That's a damn shame, because Thornton's menacing growl was indeed something special. With Pete Lewis laying down some truly nasty guitar behind her, Big Mama shouted "Hound Dog" and soon hit the road a star. Her first rendition of her song "Ball and Chain" was in 1968, but this song also became best known as someone else's (Janis Joplin) cover. Outspokenly bitter about what she perceived as the injustices done to her by the music business, Big Mama cultivated her image as a tough, outspoken eccentric, often dressing as a man on-stage toward the end of her career. She valiantly tried to recreate her past glory, but was often too drunk or too ill to perform. On July 25, 1984 paramedics, responding to an anonymous call found Big Mama dead on the floor of her Los Angeles boarding house room, penniless and alone at age 57. In the same year she was inducted into the Blues Foundation's Hall of Fame. As a female in a male-dominated profession 'Big Mama' Thornton made an indelible mark on blues music with her big blues voice and confident lyrics, while her style captured the attention of many fans. She was rough, beautiful and a bit crazy at times, but when she sang all that mattered was her amazing music.

UKULELE CLUB OF SANTA CRUZ "EARLY BLUES" MEETING June 2005

INTRO - G / / / / F / / / / C / / / / G / / / /

C F C
Sittin' by my window, and I was lookin' out at the rain,
F C
Sittin' by my window babe, and I was sittin' down lookin' out at the rain
G F C G
You know somethin' struck me, clamped on to me... (just like a) just like a ball and chain

C F C
And I say oh, oh baby Why you wanna' do these old mean things
F C
And I say oh, oh baby Why you wanna' do these old mean things to me
G F C G
Because you know I love you, and I'm so sick and tired (so sick and tired) of being in misery

C F C
I know you're gonna miss me babe, whoa yes you're gonna' miss all of those sweet things,
F C
Yes I know you're gonna miss me babe, I know you're gonna' miss all of those sweet things
G F C G
And then you'll find that your whole life will be like mine, Oh Lord, wrapped up like a ball and chain

C F C
I say oh, oh baby, why you wanna' do these old mean things to me
F C
I say oh, oh baby, why you wanna' do these old mean things to me
G F
I know my love's gonna last with you forever
F C
It's gonna last, I said it's gonna last, great God the mighty, for all eternity oh yeah! SPOKEN ... Ball and Chain



by the way, Big Mama does this song in C#