

Elmore James - I Need You (1965)

Written by bluesever

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A1 Make My Dreams Come True A2 Got To Move A3 I Need You A4 Something Inside Of Me A5 Look On Yonder Wall B1 Shake Your Money Maker B2 Strange Angels B3 Early One Morning B4 She Done Moved B5 Baby Please Set A Date Elmore James, voc, g; saxes; prob. Johnny Acey, p; Jimmy Spruill, g; Homesick James, b-g; Sam Myers, dr, hca; Johnny 'Big Moose' Walker, p; Sammy Lee Bully, b; King Mose Tayler, dr

Elmore James is known as the “King of the Slide Guitar.” He was inspired by the local performances of Robert Johnson to take up the guitar. It was, in fact, a number by Johnson (“Dust My Broom”) that became James’ signature song and laid the foundation for his recording career. First cut by James in August 1951, “Dust My Broom” contains the strongest example of his stylistic signature: a swooping, full-octave opening figure on slide guitar. His influence went beyond that one riff, however, as he’s been virtually credited with inventing blues rock by virtue of energizing primal riffs with a raw, driving intensity.

Elmore James was born on a farm in Richland, Mississippi, on January 27, 1918. By the time he was 12, he was playing a one-string, wall-mounted “guitar” that was common to the region. The music of Robert Johnson and Kokomo Arnold had drawn him to music. He eventually moved to Jackson, Mississippi, where he ran a radio repair shop and played guitar at night and on weekends. One account has him playing with a band that included drums as early as 1939. If correct, that would place him several years ahead of Muddy Waters in blending Delta Blues with electrical amplification and percussion.

James went into the Navy in 1943. After his discharge, he teamed up with Sonny Boy Williamson (Rice Miller), the harmonica player he had performed with on and off since the Thirties. They performed all over the South, but eventually split up in New Orleans. James returned to Mississippi, where he was briefly hospitalized with heart problems. On August 5,

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1951, James backed Williamson on eight tracks recorded for Trumpet Records. At the end of the session, James came forward and sang "Dust My Broom." Trumpet released the song, credited to "Elmo James," in late 1951, and it was moving into the R&B Top 10 as 1952 arrived.

The following year, James moved to Chicago, where he was able to participate in the birth and flowering of electric blues. He ended up cutting several different versions of "Dust My Broom" under different titles. His most successful was "I Believe (My Time Ain't Long)," which reached Number Nine in 1953. He also had several other hits that featured his impassioned singing and playing, including "Look On Yonder Wall," "Shake Your Money Maker," "Talk to Me Baby (I Can't Hold On)," "It Hurts Me Too" and "The Sky Is Crying."

Throughout the rest of the Fifties, James bounced back and forth between Chicago and Mississippi. Unfortunately, heavy drinking and chronic asthma complicated his heart trouble. He made a detour to New York City in 1959 to record for the Fire label – sessions that yielded some of his finest recorded work. In 1961, the musicians' union blacklisted him for non-payment of dues. He returned to Mississippi and played local gigs until May 1963, when he went back to Chicago for a recording session with deejay Big Bill Hill. But on May 24, the night before the session, James died of a heart attack. He was 45 years old.

James left behind a raft of classic blues songs that include "Shake Your Money Maker," "Talk to Me Baby," "It Hurts Me Too" and "The Sky Is Crying." James' distinctive style has influenced a legion of Chicago slide players, and his songs have been cut by the admiring likes of the Allman Brothers Band, Canned Heat, Fleetwood Mac and the Paul Butterfield Blues Band. "You can hear his signature riff at least once a night from every slide guitarist working," music historian Tony Glover has written, "but no one has ever quite matched that vocal intensity, which transformed the lonesome moan of the Delta into a Chicago scream." --- rockhall.com

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[back](#)