Wallace, Sippie (1898-1986) Encyclopedia Article

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Born Beulah Thomas in Texas, Sippie Wallace began her professional singing career as a teenager. After moving to Chicago in 1923 with her husband and brothers (with whom she wrote and performed), she won a recording contract with OKeh Records. Known for her risqué lyrics ("I'm a Mighty Tight Woman"), black-and woman-centered subjects ("Women, Be Wise"), and rough phrasing, Wallace recorded much of her best music for OKeh between 1923 and 1927. Her music, like much of the blues of the 1920s and 1930s, articulated the experience of being female, black, and poor, offering not only entertainment but also understanding and recognition to black listeners (though, ironically, these differences were often exploited in marketing aimed at whites). She disappeared from the blues scene for nearly 40 years, but made a comeback during the 1960s blues revival, recording several new albums between 1966 and 1986. As one of the blues most stirring voices, Wallace helped to write, sing, and shape twentieth-century American popular culture. She especially influenced singer songwriter Bonnie Raitt, who has recorded many of Wallace's songs.

Further Reading:

Davis, Angela Y. *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism.* New York, Pantheon Books, 1998.

Harrison, Daphne Duval. *Black Pearls: Blues Queens of the 1920s.* New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 1988.

Sippie—Sippie Wallace, Blues Singer and Song Writer (videotape), produced by Michelle Paymar and Roberta Grossman. N.p., Rhapsody Films, 1982.

Wallace, Sippie. *Complete Recorded Works, Vol. 1 (1923-25) and Vol. 2 (1925-45)* (recording). Document, 1995.