

'Raindrops Keep Fallin' on My Head' Singer BJ Thomas Dead at 78

B.J. Thomas, Grammy Hall of Fame inductee and award-winning country, pop and gospel singer behind hits including "Raindrops Keep Fallin' on my Head" and "Hooked on a Feeling," died on May 29, 2021, at his home in Arlington, Texas, representatives confirm. He was 78 and died of complications of stage 4 lung cancer, diagnosed in March.

Born in Hugo, Oklahoma and reared in Houston, Billy Joe Thomas had a breakthrough hit in 1966 with a gospel-styled cover of Hank Williams' "I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry" and went on to sell millions of records and have dozens of hits across genres. He reached No. 1 with pop, adult contemporary and country listeners in 1976 with "(Hey Won't You Play) Another Somebody Done Somebody Wrong Song." The same year, his "Home Where I Belong" became one of the first gospel albums to be certified platinum for selling more than 1 million copies. He went on to win a total of five Grammys and sell more than 70 million records.

Thomas' iconic hit "Raindrops" from *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* won an Academy Award for Best Original Song. He later said the song's success exacerbated an addiction to pills and alcohol which dated back to his teens, when a record producer in Houston suggested he take amphetamines to boost his energy levels, per . Touring and recording constantly, he took dozens of pill a day. By 1976, while "(Hey Won't You Play) Another Somebody Done Somebody Wrong Song" was hitting No. 1, he said he felt like he was "No. 1,000."

"I was at the bottom with my addictions and my problems," he said in 2020 on *The Debby Campbell Goodtime Show*. But when his

wife, Gloria, became a born-again Christian, Thomas experienced a spiritual turnaround, coming to Christ himself in 1976 and expressing his faith via gospel music. He quit drugs immediately, signed with Myrrh Records and released the album *Home Where I Belong* in 1976. The project, which won a Grammy and became the first of his two Dove Award wins, also became the first gospel record to sell a million copies.

Thomas went on to continued success in multiple genres and, although he stopped recording exclusively for the Christian market, performed in a church setting as recently as 2019. He sang the theme song, “As Long As We’ve Got Each Other,” for the popular TV series *Growing Pains* and was also heard on numerous commercials, including campaigns for Coca-Cola and Pepsi. As an actor, he also appeared in the films *Jory* and *Jake’s Corner*. Thomas wrote two books, including his autobiography, *Home Where I Belong*, co-authored with *New York Times* bestselling author Jerry B. Jenkins.

Multiple artists expressed their condolences via social media. Dionne Warwick, who collaborated with Thomas, shared her thoughts:

My sincere condolences to the family of one of my favorite duet partners, BJ Thomas. I will miss him as I know so many others will as well. Rest In Peace my friend. ☹☹

– Dionne Warwick (@dionnewarwick) May 30, 2021

Gospel artist Steven Curtis Chapman also expressed his sadness

Saddened by the news of the passing of a great artist and a brother who inspired and influenced me as a Home BJ Thomas.

– Steven Curtis Chapman (@StevenCurtis) May 30, 2021

And Burt Bacharach, co-writer of “Raindrops,” offered a simple but profound tweet:

BJ – thank you for everything, BB
#BJThomas

– Burt Bacharach (@BurtBacharach) May 30, 2021

Thomas leaves behind Gloria, his wife of 53 years; their three daughters, Paige Thomas, Nora Cloud and Erin Moore; and four grandchildren, Nadia Cloud, Keira Cloud, Ruby Moore and Billy Joe Moore. Funeral arrangements will remain private.

“I’ve had a wonderful life, I’ve been a husband and a father who cherishes his children and now I’m a grandfather, and I’m motivated like all these teachers and preachers and mothers and fathers to help my kids grow up with character and self-respect,” Thomas shared on his website. “I hope that doesn’t sound too grandiose, but that’s what it comes down to. It’s what I’ve tried to do with my music and with the majority of my life.” {eo}

Please join the Charisma News staff in praying for Thomas’ family, friends and others touched by his life and his artistry. {eo}

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