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Although he's not exactly a household name among casual folk and blues fans, Nashville-based guitarist, singer and songwriter James Talley is a towering talent among those in the know in these worlds of music. Through the years, Talley's songs have been recorded by the likes of Alan Jackson, Johnny Cash, Gene Clark, Johnny Paycheck, and even Moby.

Talley was born in Oklahoma, but his family moved to Richland, Washington when he was young. There, his father worked as a chemical operator at the Hanford plutonium factory. Realizing the hazards his father's employment presented, the family packed up and left for Albuquerque, New Mexico. Shortly after, his father passed from cancer that was no doubt acquired at the plutonium factory, which Talley later wrote a song about.

After he was graduated from the University of New Mexico with a degree in fine arts, Talley was encouraged by Pete Seeger to write songs that drew from the rich southwest culture in which he was raised. His early songs were released later as an album, "The Road to Torreon," released in 1992 on the Bear Family Records label. Talley moved from New Mexico to Nashville, Tenn. in 1968 in hopes

of securing a publishing deal or to record his songs himself, however, Nashville wasn't ready for this singer who played a refreshingly weird amalgamation of blues and country music.

The late John Hammond, Sr. at Columbia Records in New York championed Talley's talents as a songwriter and singer in the early 1970's. Hammond also assisted in the careers of Bob Dylan, Leonard Cohen, Bruce Springsteen and Aretha Franklin, among many others. Unable to get him a record deal at Columbia Records, he referred Talley to his friend Jerry Wexler, then at Atlantic Records. Wexler and others at Atlantic were involved in starting that label's new country division in Nashville. Along with Doug Sahn and Willie Nelson, Wexler signed Talley to Atlantic Records in 1972. Atlantic later closed its Nashville office and Talley secured a deal with Capitol Records, where he released four albums in the mid-1970's: "Got No Bread, No Milk, No Money, But We Sure Got a Lot of Love" (1975); "Tryin' Like The Devil"



(1976); "Blackjack Choir" (1977) and "Ain't It Somethin'" (1977). In the 1970's, Talley performed at the White House for President Jimmy Carter and at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. On "Blackjack Choir," Talley is joined by the blues master B.B. King, and that marked the first time King had ever recorded in Nashville. At the height of his career, he left Capitol Records because of bad business advice and got off the road. He earned his real estate license and made his living selling commercial real estate. Now, in semi-retirement, he has returned to limited touring and performing. During the 1980s, Talley recorded two albums, which were released by the German Bear Family Records, American Originals (1985); and Love Songs and The Blues (1989).

In the 1990s, Talley and Bear Family released "The Road To Torreòn" (1992); "James Talley:Live," (1994); and "Woody Guthrie and Songs of My Oklahoma Home" (2000).

In 2002 he released, Touchstones, a re-recording of some of the classic songs from his four 1970s Capitol Records albums, and in 2004 he released "Journey," an album recorded while Talley was on tour in Italy.



Through the 1980's and early 90's, he released four albums in Europe, and then re-entered domestic market in the U.S. in 2000 with "Nashville City Blues" and "Woody Guthrie and Songs of My Oklahoma Home." Like so many other artists who were taken for granted or are later lost in the shuffle at big record companies, Talley now runs his own record label and he has nearly all of his earlier recordings available from his own Cimarron Records label. Talley continues to tour, mostly regionally around his home base in Nashville.

Touchstones the Album:

<https://www.ragamuffin.biz/words/Bluesman.mp3>

<https://www.ragamuffin.biz/words/whenthefiddlerpackshiscase.mp3>