

Jesse "Guitar" Taylor

Best remembered as the ferocious lead guitarist behind country maverick Joe Ely, Jesse "Guitar" Taylor was born in Lubbock, Texas, in 1950. Raised by his mother, his friends growing up included a who's who of West Texas Talent: Joe Ely, Jimmie Dale Gilmore, Butch Hancock, John X. Reed, Ponty Bone, Lloyd Maines, T.J. McFarland, Jo Carol Pierce and Terry Allen, to name a few. Inspired by local boy made good Buddy Holly, Taylor began playing guitar as an adolescent, and by age 15 was serving in Jimmie Dale Gilmore's first group, the T. Nickel House Band. In 1967 Taylor joined Angela Strehli's band, playing shows on Austin's East Side. A former Golden Gloves boxer, Jesse Taylor was the first white musician to play at the original Stubb's BBQ in Lubbock, starting a series of Sunday jam sessions that prompted Stevie Ray Vaughan to drive up from Austin to sit in.

Taylor joined Ely in time for the singer/songwriter's self-titled 1977 debut LP, a cult classic bettered by its follow-up, *Honky Tonk Masquerade*. While commercial country radio wanted nothing to do with these albums, Ely won much acclaim from rock and roll audiences and critics, and while touring the U.K. in support of Merle Haggard, he and Taylor befriended the legendary punk band The Clash, whom they supported on the road in 1979. Taylor's visceral, live wire guitar work made an enormous impression on The Clash's punk audience, and a London gig later formed the basis of the 1980 concert LP *Live Shots*. Taylor nevertheless exited Ely's ranks two years later, settling in Austin and collaborating with Billy Joe Shaveer, Butch Hancock, and Townes Van Zandt. During a stint in substance abuse rehabilitation, he also began painting, and in subsequent years was the subject of several gallery exhibits. Taylor released his first solo LP, *Texas Tattoo*, in 1998. *South Side Guitar*, a project with fellow guitarist John X. Reed, followed in 2001. Jesse Taylor died from complications of hepatitis C and cirrhosis on March 7, 2006.