

Throwback: Jesse Johnson: Can You Help Me



“Can You Help Me” is the second single from Jesse Johnson’s 1985 debut album, *Jesse Johnson’s Revue*. Johnson was the lead guitarist of The Time and the co-writer of their biggest songs, “Jungle Love” and “The Bird,” with Prince and Morris Day. Johnson also wrote “Bite The Beat” with Prince for Vanity Six. Johnson had very few speaking parts in *Purple Rain*, but he was labeled the sex symbol of the group despite Day’s over-the-top charisma. Johnson and Morris Day left The Time soon after the success of *Purple Rain* and Johnson scored a record deal with A&M, which was the start of his solo career. “Can You Help Me” was R&B that made its foundation with a funky synthesizer and Johnson’s enthralling guitar work descended from Eddie Hazel and Jimi Hendrix. Minneapolis vocalist Germain Brooks, who was a member of the Andre Cymone-founded group The Girls, sang backup with Johnson on the single. Promoted after “Be Your Man” and before “I Want My Girl,” “Can You Help Me” was the most popular single from the album, with it being heard on the radio, in the clubs, roller rinks, and on the street.

The success of Johnson’s first album made him one of the few members from The Time, including Morris Day, Jimmy Jam, and Terry Lewis, to make it outside of Prince’s camp. Jesse Johnson released five solo albums, with the most recent one being *Verbal Penetration*, released in 2009. In 2025 he celebrated the 40th anniversary of *Jesse Johnson’s Revue* with several online interviews. Johnson still tours and is currently working on his sixth solo project.