

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Fred Cash

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Cash, Fred
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Fred Cash,
Dates:	July 28, 2005
Bulk Dates:	2005
Physical Description:	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:25:25).
Abstract:	Singer Fred Cash (1938 -) performed as a member of the R & B group, The Impressions. Cash was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on July 28, 2005, in Chattanooga, Tennessee. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2005_173
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Born on October 8, 1938, in Chattanooga, Tennessee, Fred Cash was the third of four children in a musical family. Cash's mother played the piano and he and the rest of his family sang at Chattanooga's Beulah Baptist Church, which he attended "three times a day" growing up. At age twelve, Cash and his sixteen-year-old neighbor, Samuel Gooden, began to perform together at Gooden's church as the Southland Jubilee Singers. The duo was also drawn to the music of the Platters and Ray Charles, and spent their evenings singing rhythm and blues on the corner.

At age fourteen, Cash began to perform at local nightclubs with Gooden and their friends Arthur Brooks and Emanuel and Catherine Thomas under the name Four Roosters and a Chick. Cash would sneak out of his bedroom window to perform, but when the rest of the Roosters decided to move to Chicago in 1957, Cash's mother prevented him from doing so; the Thomas siblings also remained in Chattanooga. Brooks's brother, Richard, met a tenor at the YMCA in Chicago by the name of Jerry Butler, who at the time was working a day job as a short-order cook. Butler's partner in the Northern Jubilee Gospel Singers was Curtis Mayfield; when Gooden and Brooks moved to Chicago, the group gained Mayfield and Butler and called themselves The Impressions. The group released their first hit, "For Your Precious Love," on Vee-Jay Records in 1958.

In 1959, after Butler left the group, The Impressions drove to Chattanooga to lure Cash back. Impressed with their success, Cash dropped out of Howard High School in the eleventh grade to join them in Chicago. The next year, Mayfield—the songwriter and leading force behind the group—encouraged Cash, Gooden, and the Brooks brothers to come to New York and record on ABC-Paramount. There, The Impressions released their 1961 hit "Gypsy Woman." In February 1963, Mayfield, Cash, and Gooden decided to return to Chicago, while the Brooks brothers stayed in New York.

From 1963 to 1970, Cash, Gooden, and Mayfield were The Impressions, scoring a number one hit with "It's All Right" in 1963. That same year, the group also released their first full album, *The Impressions*. In 1964, The Impressions released the hit "Keep On Pushing," followed in 1965 with the civil rights anthem "People Get Ready." In 1968, the group returned to the top of the charts with "We're a Winner" and left ABC-Paramount to

join Mayfield's Curtom label headed by producer, Eddie Thomas. There, The Impressions produced two more albums before Mayfield left in 1970. Although Mayfield continued to serve as their occasional songwriter and producer, The Impressions remained on Curtom label through 1976.

The Impressions worked with many vocalists, including Leroy Hutson, Reggie Torian, Ralph Johnson, and Nate Evans, after Mayfield's departure. In 1991, The Impressions were inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. After Mayfield's tragic paralysis in 1990 and death in 1999, Cash and Gooden continued to perform, touring with Eric Clapton in 2001. At the time of this interview, Cash, Gooden, and Willie Kitchens, Jr. were still performing as the Impressions; the group remained based in Chattanooga, Tennessee, where Cash resides with his wife, Cynthia.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Fred Cash was conducted by Larry Crowe on July 28, 2005, in Chattanooga, Tennessee, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Singer Fred Cash (1938 -) performed as a member of the R & B group, The Impressions.

Restrictions

Restrictions on Access

Restrictions may be applied on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of The HistoryMakers®.

Restrictions on Use

All use of materials and use credits must be pre-approved by The HistoryMakers®. Appropriate credit must be given. Copyright is held by The HistoryMakers®.

Related Material

Information about the administrative functions involved in scheduling, researching, and producing the interview, as well as correspondence with the interview subject is stored electronically both on The HistoryMakers® server and in two databases maintained by The HistoryMakers®, though this information is not included in this finding aid.

Controlled Access Terms

This interview collection is indexed under the following controlled access subject terms.

Persons:

Cash, Fred

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Cash, Fred--Interviews

African American male singers--Interviews

Rhythm and blues musicians--United States--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Impressions (Musical group)

Occupations:

Singer

HistoryMakers® Category:

MusicMakers

Administrative Information

Custodial History

Interview footage was recorded by The HistoryMakers®. All rights to the interview have been transferred to The HistoryMakers® by the interview subject through a signed interview release form. Signed interview release forms have been deposited with Jenner & Block, LLP, Chicago.

Preferred Citation

The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Fred Cash, July 28, 2005. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

Processing Information

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 5/30/2023 by The HistoryMakers® staff. The finding aid was created adhering to the following standards: DACS, AACR2, and the Oral History Cataloging Manual (Matters 1995).

Other Finding Aid

A Microsoft Access contact database and a FileMaker Pro tracking database, both maintained by The HistoryMakers®, keep track of the administrative functions involved in scheduling, researching, and producing the

interview.

Detailed Description of the Collection

Series I: Original Interview Footage

Video Oral History Interview with Fred Cash, Section A2005_173_001_001, TRT: 0:30:10 ?

Fred Cash was born on October 8, 1938 in Chattanooga, Tennessee. His mother, Lola Cunningham Cash, was born in LaGrange, Georgia in 1905. Her mother was born around 1863, right before emancipation. Cash's mother was a talented pianist, playing for various churches in Chattanooga. Cash's father, James Cash, was born in Macon, Georgia in 1903. He and his siblings were raised by their father, a farmer, after their mother's death. Cash's parents met in Chattanooga where they both moved for better opportunities. Cash, the third in his family of three brothers and one sister, was raised in the mixed-race neighborhood of Park City in Chattanooga where he stole metal from the foundry near his house to sell back as scrap. As a young boy, Cash sang with HistoryMaker Samuel Gooden at Greater Beulah Baptist Church and another local church, eventually forming Southland Jubilee Singers. He was influenced by church music and the acts he saw at Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Auditorium, such as Ray Charles and The Platters.

African American male singers--Interviews.

Rhythm and blues musicians--United States--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Fred Cash, Section A2005_173_001_002, TRT: 0:30:00 ?

Fred Cash attended East Fifth Street School and Howard High School in Chattanooga, Tennessee. As a teenager, Cash started a vocal group called Four Roosters and a Chick with HistoryMaker Samuel Gooden, Emmanuel Thomas, Arthur Brooks and Catherine Thomas and snuck out of his house at night to perform with them. Arthur Brooks wanted the group to find a record label in Chicago, Illinois, but Cash's mother refused to let him go, so The Roosters left without him. The Thomas siblings also remained, though Brooks' younger brother Richard Brooks joined them. After Curtis Mayfield and HistoryMaker The Honorable Jerry Butler were added to the group, they became The Impressions and signed with Vee-Jay Records. When the group's tour hit Chattanooga, Cash was amazed at their success and sound. When Butler left the group, Cash was selected as a replacement for his vocal range. After he joined, The Impressions released 'Man oh Man,' written by Benjamin Krass, a clothing store owner they knew in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Video Oral History Interview with Fred Cash, Section A2005_173_001_003, TRT: 0:29:00 ?

Fred Cash moved to Chicago, Illinois in 1959 to join The Impressions and found the city less restrictive than the South, but still subtly segregated. After Cash performed several times in lieu of HistoryMaker The Honorable Jerry Butler, the group changed names to The Impressions. Cash's first big show was at Ellis Auditorium in Memphis, Tennessee. Many of the group's hits, such as 'Amen,' show the influence of gospel music, and 'It's Alright' came from one of Cash's favorite sayings. Cash admired Curtis Mayfield's songwriting abilities and HistoryMaker Johnny Pate's arrangements of Mayfield's work. Many of the group's songs spoke to the Civil Rights Movement, and 'Keep on Pushing,' became an anthem for SNCC. When The Impressions' band were killed in a tragic car accident, Cash lost the chance to meet Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Cash sang backup for other notable musicians that Mayfield wrote

songs for, such as Major Lance, until The Impressions' record company insisted he stop.

Video Oral History Interview with Fred Cash, Section A2005_173_001_004, TRT: 0:29:00 ?

Fred Cash and The Impressions had to wash dishes in a friend's restaurant during the early stage of their career to earn money. By the mid-1960s, the group became well-known for hits such as 'People Get Ready,' and sustained this success for another decade in part by continuing to produce the types of songs audiences associated with their sound. The Impressions were very popular with black U.S. soldiers in Vietnam, who especially loved 'Keep on Pushing.' In 1969, Curtis Mayfield left to pursue a solo career. He was replaced by Leroy Hutson for a year, then Ralph Johnson and Reggie Torian. After moving back to Chattanooga, Tennessee in 1976, Cash continued performing. The Impressions were inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in 1991. At the time of the interview, Cash and The Impressions were still touring, and had performed in England with Eric Clapton and in South Africa. Cash remembers the accident that left Curtis Mayfield paralyzed and the songwriter's death in 1999 as well as the group's rapport.

Video Oral History Interview with Fred Cash, Section A2005_173_001_005, TRT: 0:27:15 ?

Fred Cash was told by his father to get a real job when he first started with The Impressions, but eventually his father joined his mother in supporting Cash's musical career. While on tour in Italy, Cash was invited to visit Africa, a longstanding dream of his, which he enjoyed. At the time of the interview, he was anticipating the release of The Impression's first Christmas album, produced by HistoryMaker Willie Kitchens in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Cash believes his biggest contribution to The Impressions is his role in coordinating logistics and serving as the anchor of the group. His return to Chattanooga, Tennessee has made him appreciate the historical heritage present in the surrounding area. Cash talks about his family and his hopes for the African American community, noting that the sense of unity fostered by The Impressions might serve as a guide. He reflects upon his life, legacy and how he hopes to be remembered. Cash concludes by narrating his photographs.