

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Eddy Clearwater

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Clearwater, Eddy
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Eddy Clearwater,
Dates:	September 2, 2004
Bulk Dates:	2004
Physical Description:	4 Betacame SP videocassettes (1:40:40).
Abstract:	Blues musician Eddy Clearwater (1935 - 2018) began performing in Chicago in 1953, and toured around the world with many blues legends. Clearwater recorded and produced his own records on his record label, Clear Tone. Clearwater was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on September 2, 2004, in Charlotte, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2004_157
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Born Edward Harrington on January 10, 1935, in Macon, Mississippi, Eddy "The Chief" Clearwater has become one of blues music's most enduring and original performers. As a child, Clearwater worked on the family farm and spent many hours listening to music ranging from country to gospel to the blues. While still in his teens, the family moved to Birmingham, Alabama, where Clearwater first learned to play the guitar and began backing various gospel groups in the area.

At the bidding of his uncle Houston, Clearwater traveled north to Chicago and the blossoming blues scene in September of 1950. Working by day, Clearwater spent his evenings in blues clubs, listening to such legends as Muddy Waters and Sunnyland Slim. By 1953, Clearwater was performing in clubs in Chicago, including the Happy Hope Lounge and Mel's Hideaway. In 1958, Clearwater cut his first single, and the following year he made his television debut on *Bandstand Matinee*. His star quickly rose, and he continued to record and perform throughout the 1960s and 1970s, fulfilling his childhood dream of being able to play guitar full-time. In the mid-1970s, Clearwater embarked on his first European tour, traveling with fellow blues men Buddy Guy, Junior Wells and Jimmy Johnson. In 1987, Clearwater was picked by the U.S. government to do a diplomatic tour of performances in Africa.

Since then, Clearwater has continued to tour, returning to Europe on several occasions, as well as performances in South America and throughout the United States. He also continues to record and self-produce albums on his record label, Clear Tone. Throughout the course of his career, Clearwater has performed with many of the legends of blues, and he continues to break new ground with his own sounds.

Clearwater passed away on June 1, 2018.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Eddy Clearwater was conducted by Larry Crowe on September 2, 2004, in Charlotte, Illinois, and was recorded on 4 Betacame SP videocassettes. Blues musician Eddy Clearwater (1935 - 2018) began performing in Chicago in 1953, and toured around the world with many blues legends. Clearwater recorded and produced his own records on his record label, Clear Tone.

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:

Clearwater, Eddy

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Clearwater, Eddy--Interviews

African American musicians--Illinois--Chicago--Interviews.

Blues musicians--Illinois--Chicago--Interviews.

African American guitarists--Illinois--Chicago--Interviews.

African American families--Mississippi.

Fatherless families--Mississippi.

Country life--United States--Anecdotes.

Blues (Music)--Illinois--Chicago.

Gospel music.

Five Blind Boys of Alabama.

Johnson, Robert, d. 1938.

Blues musicians--Mississippi--Interviews.

Music--Economic aspects.

King, B. B. Anecdotes.

Concert tours.

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Blues Musician

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 Eddy Clearwater, September 2, 2004. 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 Eddy Clearwater, Section A2004_157_001_001, TRT: 0:28:20 ?

Blues musician Eddy Clearwater begins by describing his family background, sharing memories of his mother and the grandfather who raised him after his father left home. Clearwater details his childhood in Mississippi, explaining his experience living the rural life. Clearwater then discusses his early love for music, talking about the influence of Robert Johnson and explaining how gospel music and blues music shape and inform each other.

African American musicians--Illinois--Chicago--Interviews.

Blues musicians--Illinois--Chicago--Interviews.

African American guitarists--Illinois--Chicago--Interviews.

African American families--Mississippi.

Fatherless families--Mississippi.

Country life--United States--Anecdotes.

Blues (Music)--Illinois--Chicago.

Gospel music.

Five Blind Boys of Alabama.

Johnson, Robert, d. 1938.

Blues musicians--Mississippi--Interviews.

Music--Economic aspects.

King, B. B.--Anecdotes.

Concert tours.

Video Oral History Interview with Eddy Clearwater, Section A2004_157_001_002, TRT: 0:30:10 ?

Eddy Clearwater remembers his childhood in the South and his early introduction to the blues through the Five Blind Boys of Alabama. He then details his transition to Chicago's booming blues scene, where he started to

perform and record his own albums. Clearwater shares several anecdotes about his first gigs, and explains how he developed as a songwriter and a performer while playing in Chicago. Clearwater also lists other blues musicians with roots in Mississippi, and explains their influence on the genre.

Video Oral History Interview with Eddy Clearwater, Section A2004_157_001_003, TRT: 0:28:40 ?

Eddy Clearwater recounts his rise as an internationally successful blues musician, discussing memorable performances and the financial risks involved with being a musician. He then laments the lack of enthusiasm for the blues within the black community, while British and other white musicians incorporated it into the rock genre. He shares his hopes that musicians can rekindle interest in the blues as an important piece of black history and culture, and discusses his own efforts to preserve the blues. Finally, Clearwater reflects on his life and career.

Video Oral History Interview with Eddy Clearwater, Section A2004_157_001_004, TRT: 0:13:30 ?

Eddy Clearwater considers his legacy and discusses his recordings, his blues club, and his support for young musicians. He also shares several stories about B.B. King, describing the times they performed together.