

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Samuel Gooden

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Gooden, Sam
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Samuel Gooden,
Dates:	July 28, 2005
Bulk Dates:	2005
Physical Description:	8 Betacame SP videocassettes (3:41:11).
Abstract:	Singer Samuel Gooden (1934 -) contributed bass vocals to the musical group, The Impressions. Gooden 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_172
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Samuel Gooden was born on September 2, 1934 in Chattanooga, Tennessee, the youngest of eight children. At age sixteen, Gooden began to perform at Chattanooga's Triumph Church of God in Christ, where his father George was assistant pastor. Gooden and his twelve-year-old neighbor Fred Cash called themselves the Southland Jubilee Singers. In the evenings, they joined other teenagers on their block in singing rhythm and blues. In late 1950, Gooden joined the U.S. Army, where he served in Germany until 1953.

After returning from military service, Gooden joined Cash and their friends Arthur Brooks and Emanuel and Catherine Thomas to form an R&B group, Four Roosters and a Chick. They soon began to perform at Chattanooga nightclubs. In 1957, Gooden and Brooks decided to move the Roosters to Chicago, but Cash and the Thomas siblings remained in Chattanooga. Brooks' brother, Richard, met a tenor at the YMCA in Chicago by the name of Jerry Butler. Butler 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 move to Chicago, the group gained Mayfield and Butler and called themselves the Impressions. They 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, they released the 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, Gooden, Mayfield and Cash were the Impressions, scoring a number one hit with "It's All Right" in 1963. That year, they also released their first full album, *The Impressions*. In 1964, they released the hit "Keep On Pushing," followed in 1965 with the civil rights anthem "People Get Ready." In 1968, they 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, they 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 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. Today, Cash, Gooden, and Willie Kitchens, Jr. perform as the Impressions. They are now based in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

Gooden lives in Chattanooga with his wife, Gloria, to whom he has been married since 1963. They have four grown children.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Samuel Gooden was conducted by Larry Crowe on July 28, 2005, in Chattanooga, Tennessee, and was recorded on 8 Betacame SP videocassettes. Singer Samuel Gooden (1934 -) contributed bass vocals to the musical 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:

Gooden, Sam

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Gooden, Sam--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 Samuel Gooden, 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 Samuel Gooden, Section A2005_172_001_001, TRT: 0:28:30 ?

Samuel Gooden was born on September 2, 1934 in Chattanooga, Tennessee to Ruby Satterwhite Gooden and George Gooden. His mother was born in 1900 in Wedowee, Alabama to a family of farmers. She played the piano in her church as well as the steel guitar. Gooden believes that his mother took snuff in her youth, but quit the habit after becoming a devout Christian. His father was also born in Wedowee in 1897 to Barbara Roundtree and Doc Gooden, who served in the U.S. military. Different branches of his family had many spellings for the Gooden surname, and even his parents' marriage certificate reads "Goodwin." George Gooden quit school after the third grade to begin work as a laborer. The Goodens married, had eight children, of which Samuel Gooden was the youngest, and moved to Chattanooga around 1930. There, Gooden's father became a steel worker for Southern Alloy. Gooden remembers his mother as a sweet, hardworking woman and his father as a stern taskmaster who nonetheless cared deeply for his family.

Video Oral History Interview with Samuel Gooden, Section A2005_172_001_002, TRT: 0:29:30 ?

Samuel Gooden grew up in Park City, Chattanooga, Tennessee. He attended Triumph the Church and Kingdom of God in Christ in Chattanooga, where his father, George Gooden, was assistant minister and his mother, Ruby Satterwhite Gooden, played the piano. Gooden disliked singing as a boy, because he was forced to sing in church, and preferred to draw and play baseball. He and his friends often snuck off to a creek to swim instead of paying to enter the local black swimming pool. Gooden also enjoyed watching the program 'Your Hit Parade.' A talented artist, his entry in a drawing contest led to him being offered a seat in an art school in Minnesota, but his parents lacked the money to send him. Gooden attended Park City School and then East 5th Street Junior High School in Chattanooga. After junior high, he joined the U.S. Army Reserves in 1950, trained at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, and deployed to Germany. After Gooden was discharged in 1953, he attended high school at The Howard School, but did not finish.

Video Oral History Interview with Samuel Gooden, Section A2005_172_001_003, TRT: 0:30:00 ?

Samuel Gooden was a member of the Southland Jubilees with HistoryMaker Fred Cash, and they sang both in church and as a pop act in Chattanooga, Tennessee. He traveled with Arthur and Richard Brooks to Chicago, Illinois, where they met HistoryMaker The Honorable Jerry Butler and Curtis Mayfield. The five of them formed a group called The Roosters with Butler singing lead and Gooden singing bass. When the group won a DuSable Hi-Jinks show, they signed HistoryMaker Eddie Thomas as their manager. Gooden played in a semi-pro baseball league and was offered a tryout with the Chicago Cubs, but turned it down to focus on music. In 1958, The Roosters auditioned at Vee-Jay Records after being spurned by Chess Records. They were signed after performing 'For Your Precious Love.' At Thomas's suggestion, the group changed its name to The Impressions. Partly due to feuds with the Brooks brothers, Butler left the group in 1960 to go solo. Gooden brought Fred Cash into the group and Mayfield mostly took over singing lead.

Video Oral History Interview with Samuel Gooden, Section A2005_172_001_004, TRT: 0:28:40 ?

Samuel Gooden explains how The Impressions adapted after HistoryMaker The Honorable Jerry Butler left to pursue a solo career in 1960. Gooden and HistoryMaker Fred Cash moved to Detroit, Michigan, where they worked odd jobs and he was briefly homeless. In 1961, Gooden returned to Chicago, Illinois, where he and The Impressions recorded Curtis Mayfield's single 'Gypsy Woman' for ABC-Paramount Records under the guidance of HistoryMaker Eddie Thomas. While Mayfield often included political statements in his songs, The Impressions' producer, HistoryMaker Johnny Pate, occasionally tempered the lyrics for commercial reasons, as he did for 'We're A Winner.' The Impressions turned down Mayfield's dance song 'The Monkey Time,' so Mayfield recorded it with Major Lance. Gooden reflects that The Impressions were often underappreciated as activists, although 'Choice of Colors' and other songs of theirs served as civil rights anthems. He describes the unusual Vestapol tuning that Curtis Mayfield used for his guitar.

Video Oral History Interview with Samuel Gooden, Section A2005_172_001_005, TRT: 0:28:21 ?

Samuel Gooden recounts the writing and recording of The Impressions' hit song 'It's Alright' in 1963. The song's title came from a favorite phrase of HistoryMaker Fred Cash, and HistoryMaker Johnny Pate's orchestration helped the song reach its full potential. Gooden and Cash had a great partnership with lead singer Curtis Mayfield because all three had the versatility to change parts within harmonies. The Impressions toured frequently with Jackie Wilson and The Upsetters. The band moved to Curtom Records in the late 1960s. In 1971, Mayfield left the band to begin a solo career, and Leroy Hutson replaced him as lead singer. In the 1970s, The Impressions released a cover of Marvin Gaye's 'Inner City Blues' as well as its biggest hit without Mayfield, 'Finally Got Myself Together,' which almost became a gold record. Gooden reflects on copyright issues in the music industry, including bogus groups performing under the name of established acts, and the difficulty of enforcing writing and publishing credits.

Video Oral History Interview with Samuel Gooden, Section A2005_172_001_006, TRT: 0:29:50 ?

Samuel Gooden released 'Sooner or Later' and 'Sunshine' with The Impressions during the 1970s. In 1990, Gooden's former bandmate, Curtis Mayfield, was paralyzed during an accident with stage lights in Brooklyn, New York. Gooden traveled with his friend and bandmate, HistoryMaker Fred Cash, to visit Mayfield after the injury. In 1999, HistoryMaker Willie Kitchens joined The Impressions. The group toured England with Eric Clapton during 2000, and provided backing vocals on Clapton's 2001 album 'Reptile.' The Impressions released their first Christmas album, 'I'm Coming Home for Christmas,' in 2009. Gooden names HistoryMaker Ramsey Lewis, Nathan East, and the Jazz Crusaders as some of his favorite musical acts. He talks about how he has tried to stay humble and hardworking during his career in show business, and describes plans for future gospel and R&B albums with The Impressions. Gooden reflects upon his decades in the music business and describes his hopes and concerns for the African American community.

Video Oral History Interview with Samuel Gooden, Section A2005_172_001_007, TRT: 0:27:30 ?

Samuel Gooden and The Impressions were touring with Jackie Wilson in 1968 when three of The Impressions' band members, Lenny Brown, Billy Griffin and Joseph Thomas, were in a fatal car accident near Winder, Georgia. Gooden and his bandmate, HistoryMaker Fred Cash, had to identify the bodies. The news media originally reported the accident as killing all the members of The Impressions, so Gooden's family thought he had died until he called his wife,

Gloria Gooden, to say otherwise. After the accident, Gooden's nephew, Joseph "Lucky" Scott, joined the band as their new bassist. Over the years, The Impressions often teamed up with Curtis Mayfield and HistoryMaker The Honorable Jerry Butler for reunion shows after those two left the group for their solo careers. Gooden offers advice to aspiring musicians, reflects upon his life and legacy, and describes his family life as well as how he would like to be remembered.

Video Oral History Interview with Samuel Gooden, Section A2005_172_001_008, TRT: 0:18:50 ?
Samuel Gooden narrates his photographs.