

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Eddie Thomas

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Thomas, Eddie, 1931-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Eddie Thomas,
Dates:	August 21, 2000
Bulk Dates:	2000
Physical Description:	6 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:43:17).
Abstract:	Music promoter Eddie Thomas (1931 - 2021) began his career at the Washburne Trade School in Chicago in 1957, where he saw The Roosters. He convinced them to change their name to The Impressions and their first single was a huge hit. Thomas continued to promote music for decades, and started Curtom Records with Curtis Mayfield, who was a member of The Impressions. Thomas is also an acclaimed poet. Thomas was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on August 21, 2000, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2000_033
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Born on November 5, 1931, Eddie Thomas was destined to succeed. In 1957, while attending a local talent show at the Washburne Trade School in Chicago, he met and was asked to manage two vocal groups, The Medallionaires and The Roosters. Moved by their unique sound, Thomas convinced members of The Roosters to change their name to The Impressions and the group's career skyrocketed with the release of their first single, "For Your Precious Love."

Thomas would also find another great talent in the person of Curtis Mayfield, with whom he enjoyed a long association. Together they formed Curtom Records and produced many hit records, including "Keep on Pushing," "Amen" and "It's All Right." The multitalented Thomas continued to produce new artists and shepherded groups, such as The Independents, to fame. Their first release, "Leaving Me," sold more than 1 million records.

In the mid-1970s, he created Thomas Associates, a successful record promotion business whose elite list of clients included Ray Charles, Barry White, Quincy Jones, the Stylistics and Johnny Taylor. Later, he formed A-1 Creative Productions company, which produced the video and wrote the theme song for the 1987 NFL World Champion New York Giants. In 1994, Thomas was bestowed broadcasting's highest honor, the prestigious George Foster Peabody Award, for his role in the music documentary, *The Rise and Fall of Vee-Jay Records*. In 2003 Thomas was twice honored, receiving an Award of Honor at the 22nd Annual Chicago Music Awards and a Black Heritage Award from the DuSable Museum.

In February 2005 and July 2006, Thomas was awarded Outstanding Achievement in Poetry from the highly prestigious International Society of Poets. Held at Walt Disney World in Orlando, Florida, Thomas presented some of his poetry to critical acclaim. He is also the recent recipient of the National Newspaper Publishers Association

Music Legacy Award. On August 19, 2005, Thomas received the “Portrait of Achievers” Award from the Probation Challenge, and on October 27, 2006, Thomas was inducted into Wendell Phillips Academy High School’s Hall of Fame. Thomas is featured in the 2008 edition of *Who’s Who in America*.

Thomas passed away on July 26, 2021.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Eddie Thomas was conducted by Julieanna L. Richardson on August 21, 2000, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes. Music promoter Eddie Thomas (1931 - 2021) began his career at the Washburne Trade School in Chicago in 1957, where he saw The Roosters. He convinced them to change their name to The Impressions and their first single was a huge hit. Thomas continued to promote music for decades, and started Curtom Records with Curtis Mayfield, who was a member of The Impressions. Thomas is also an acclaimed poet.

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:

Thomas, Eddie, 1931-

Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)

Bieschke, Paul (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Thomas, Eddie, 1931---Interviews

Promoters--Interviews

Music trade--Vocational guidance

Chicago (Ill.)--Social life and customs

Children of alcoholics--Illinois--Chicago

Child caregivers--United States

Music trade--Management

Rock music--United States--Social Aspects

Rhythm and blues music--1950-1970

Mayfield, Curtis

Popular music--1950-1970

Soul music--1950-1970

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Music Promoter

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 Eddie Thomas, August 21, 2000. 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 Eddie Thomas, Section A2000_033_001_001, TRT: 0:29:23 ?

Record promoter Eddie Thomas shares memories of growing up on the South Side of Chicago in the 1930s and 1940s, and describes his alcoholic father, his beloved mother and his stepfather, a blues singer. The young Thomas kept busy with school, odd jobs, Boy Scouts and ROTC and dreamed of a military career -- a dream he abandoned when his stepfather died and he was needed to care for his mother, who suffered from athsma. Thomas stayed in Chicago where he was employed as a postal worker and a car park attendant at a nightclub. During this time he began managing two young vocal groups, The Medallionaires and The Roosters.

Promoters--Interviews.

Music trade--Vocational guidance.

Chicago (Ill.)--Social life and customs.

Children of alcoholics--Illinois--Chicago.

Child caregivers--United States.

Music trade--Management.

Rock music--United States--Social aspects.

Rhythm and blues music.

Mayfield, Curtis.

Popular music--1951-1960.

Soul music.

Popular music--1961-1970.

Video Oral History Interview with Eddie Thomas, Section A2000_033_001_002, TRT: 0:30:31 ?

Eddie Thomas discusses his career as a rhythm and blues music promoter in the from the late 1950s through the mid-1970s, managing The Impressions, working for ABC-Paramount, forming a record label with his friend Curtis Mayfield, and then starting his own eponymous record label and independent promotions company.

Video Oral History Interview with Eddie Thomas, Section A2000_033_001_003, TRT: 0:29:36 ?

Music promoter Eddie Thomas recalls his experiences with The Impressions on the road and in the studio and his friendship and business relationship with Curtis Mayfield. He also talks about his love for music promotion, comparing the stages from songwriting to hit record with watching your baby grow up.

Video Oral History Interview with Eddie Thomas, Section A2000_033_001_004, TRT: 0:30:05 ?

Music promoter Eddie Thomas talks about his career since the 1970s, including his split with Curtis Mayfield and his successes with his own label, Thomas Records, with independent record promotion for many of the top soul acts of the 1970s, and with the Dogs of War record pool for club deejays. He also discusses changes in technology and in legal awareness that make it less easy for record companies of today to cheat their artists in the way they did in earlier decades.

Video Oral History Interview with Eddie Thomas, Section A2000_033_001_005, TRT: 0:30:50 ?

Music promoter Eddie Thomas discusses his love of music, his religious faith, and his thoughts about several well known musicians he has met. Then Thomas narrates a series of photos related to his career in the music industry.

Video Oral History Interview with Eddie Thomas, Section A2000_033_001_006, TRT: 0:12:52 ?

Various photos of the life of Chicago music promoter Eddie Thomas are presented. There is no audio except at the end, where Thomas narrates the last photo, of himself with members of the band The Independents.

Video Oral History Interview with Eddie Thomas, Section A2000_033_Thomas_Eddie_06_MED_001, TRT: 0:32:58

Video Oral History Interview with Eddie Thomas, Section A2000_033_Thomas_Eddie_06_MED_005, TRT: 0:32:53