Overview of the Collection

Repository: The HistoryMakers® 1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator: Mhoon, Jun, 1954-
Title: The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Jun Mhoon
Dates: July 19, 2004
Bulk Dates: 2004
Physical Description: 6 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:48:20).
Abstract: Music producer Jun Mhoon (1954 - ) was a touring drummer with Staples Singers, became vice president of A&M Records, and then founded his own record label, I AM Records, in 1987. He also serves as an adjunct professor at Harold Washington College and Columbia College, both in Chicago Mhoon was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on July 19, 2004, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification: A2004_099
Language: The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Music producer Jun Mhoon was born on June 10, 1954, and grew up on Chicago’s West Side. As a child, Mhoon stuttered, but he overcame that obstacle. While attending Grant Elementary School, Mhoon joined the drum and bugle corps, and found a mentor in Ms. “Satch” Finch.

In 1968, at the age of twelve, Mhoon had his first major breakthrough in the entertainment industry, when he became the first drummer to begin touring with
the Staple Singers. Over the next ten years, Mhoon would tour and perform with many other notable artists, including trumpeter Thad Jones, Jessy Dixon and Paul Simon, and he was the first drummer to sit in with the Count Basie Orchestra. Hoping to learn more about the music industry, Mhoon took a job as a warehouse clerk at Warner Brothers Records, and quickly rose to director of Midwest Local Marketing. From there, Mhoon joined RCA Records as their Midwest regional director, and he enrolled at Columbia College in Chicago. While a student at Columbia, Mhoon founded AEMMP Records, Columbia’s student-run record label. After earning his bachelor’s degree, Mhoon became vice president of A&M Records.

In 1987, Mhoon struck out on his own, creating I AM Records, which specializes in hip hop, jazz, gospel and inspirational music, as well as spoken word albums. Recently, the label has changed its name to I AM Music, and Mhoon has forged ahead into the digital word through contracts to supply digital music to Apple’s iTunes, Napster, Rhapsody Digital Music and RealNetworks.

In addition to his work both as a musician and a recording executive, Mhoon has been involved in television, serving as the first African American to produce a TV dance show in Chicago, Steppin’ at Club 7. He also serves as an adjunct professor at Harold Washington College and Columbia College, both in Chicago.

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**Scope and Content**

This life oral history interview with Jun Mhoon was conducted by Larry Crowe on July 19, 2004, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes. Music producer Jun Mhoon (1954 - ) was a touring drummer with Staples Singers, became vice president of A&M Records, and then founded his own record label, I AM Records, in 1987. He also serves as an adjunct professor at Harold Washington College and Columbia College, both in Chicago.

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**Restrictions**

**Restrictions on Access**

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

**Restrictions on Use**
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:

Mhoon, Jun, 1954-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Mhoon, Jun, 1954---Interviews

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

African American businesspeople--Illinois--Chicago--Interviews

Music trade--Illinois--Chicago
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Kennedy-King College (Chicago, Ill.)

**Organizations:**

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

**Occupations:**

Music Producer

**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**


**Processing Information**

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 2/5/2020 by The HistoryMakers® staff. The finding aid was created adhering to the following

### 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 Jun Mhoon, Section A2004_099_001_001, TRT: 0:30:00 2004/07/19*

Music producer Jun Mhoon begins by describing his family background and talking about the lives of his mother and father. He shares stories of his parents on and off relationship, their difficult childhoods and efforts to raise a family. Mhoon richly details his hardscrabble childhood in Gary, Indiana and Chicago, where his family struggled to make ends meet. Mhoon also recalls several stories from his youth involving his uncles' involvement in the mob.

African American musicians--Illinois--Chicago--Interviews.
African American businesspeople--Illinois--Chicago--Interviews.
Music trade--Illinois--Chicago.
African American sound recording executives and producers--Illinois--Chicago--Interviews.
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Bee Gees.
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Music and technology.
Digital divide--Economic aspects--United States.
Kennedy-King College (Chicago, Ill.).

Video Oral History Interview with Jun Mhoon, Section
A2004_099_001_002, TRT: 0:29:40 2004/07/19

Jun Mhoon shares richly detailed stories of childhood misadventures on the South Side of Chicago, and also shares amusing anecdotes about his uncles and other extended family members. Mhoon describes his neighborhood and his mischievous personality, saying that he always seemed to be getting into trouble. He also talks about his education and explains how he became interested in the drums at an early age.

Video Oral History Interview with Jun Mhoon, Section
A2004_099_001_003, TRT: 0:31:17 2004/07/19

Jun Mhoon recalls in vivid detail his early years as a professional drummer. Mhoon tells of how he got his first break with the Staples Singers, and explains how Purvis Staples and Pops Staples mentored him and influenced him throughout his career. Mhoon also discusses touring with notable groups such as the Bee Gees and the Doors as a youth. He also discusses getting married at an early age and shares lessons he learned from touring.

Video Oral History Interview with Jun Mhoon, Section
A2004_099_001_004, TRT: 0:31:13 2004/07/19

Jun Mhoon discusses his transition from working as a musician to working for a music label, explaining how Pops Staples taught him about the music industry. After running Staples' recording studio in the early 1970s, Mhoon talks about his work for Warner Brothers Records.
Mhoon then details the inside story on the rise and fall of his music label, I AM, originally started as a joint project with Rev. Jesse Jackson Sr.

Video Oral History Interview with Jun Mhoon, Section A2004_099_001_005, TRT: 0:29:00 2004/07/19

Jun Mhoon discusses education at Columbia College and Kennedy King College and shares a story about playing drums with Count Basie. Mhoon details his entry into the digital music industry, transforming his old record label into I AM Music, which provides digital music to major online music stores. Mhoon discusses and the effect of the technology on black musicians and addresses the impact the internet and digital media have had upon the consumption of music and the music industry. He also discusses the consolidation of major record labels and talks about the lack of black-owned digital music companies.

Video Oral History Interview with Jun Mhoon, Section A2004_099_001_006, TRT: 0:17:10 2004/07/19

Jun Mhoon discusses the rapid changes in communications and technology, and expresses his concerns that African Americans will be left behind as paradigms shift. Finally, Mhoon reflects on his life and career, discusses the successes of his family, and considers his legacy.