

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Wayne Baker Brooks

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Brooks, Wayne Baker
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Wayne Baker Brooks,
Dates:	August 16, 2005
Bulk Dates:	2005
Physical Description:	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:29:10).
Abstract:	Blues musician Wayne Baker Brooks (1970 -) is a guitarist and son of the legendary blues singer, Lonnie Brooks. He is the co-author of <i>Blues for Dummies</i> , and owner of Blue Island Records, under which he released his debut album, <i>Mystery</i> . Brooks was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on August 16, 2005, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2005_198
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Wayne Baker, who performs as Wayne Baker Brooks, was born in Chicago on April 30, 1970, to Jeannine Baker and Lee Baker, Jr.—better known as legendary blues singer and guitarist Lonnie Brooks. Although he came from a musical family—his older brother, Ronnie Brooks, began performing with their father’s band in 1986—Brooks waited until he graduated from Percy L. Julian High School in 1988 to learn guitar. Brooks was able to learn from the best, as Junior Wells taught him to play his “Messin’ with the Kid.”

In November 1988, Brooks became his brother’s road manager, and he soon embarked upon a performance career of his own when he joined his father’s band. Performing in more than 150 shows a year with Lonnie and Ronnie Brooks, Wayne Brooks honed his style. He has since worked with other top Blues musicians including Buddy Guy, Otis Rush, Jonny Lang, and George Thorogood.

In 1998, Brooks co-authored *Blues for Dummies*, collaborating with his father, rocker Cub Koda, and Dan Aykroyd. The following year, he performed for Hillary Rodham Clinton at Chess Records in Chicago. In 2003, Brooks released his first album, *Mystery*, on his own label, Blues Island Records. That year, he also performed before a crowd of 52,000 at the 2003 Baseball Allstar Game in Chicago. In 2004, Brooks was a headliner at the Chicago Blues Festival.

Brooks lives and works in Calumet City, Illinois.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Wayne Baker Brooks was conducted by Larry Crowe on August 16, 2005, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Blues musician Wayne Baker Brooks (1970 -

) is a guitarist and son of the legendary blues singer, Lonnie Brooks. He is the co-author of Blues for Dummies, and owner of Blue Island Records, under which he released his debut album, Mystery.

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:

Brooks, Wayne Baker

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Brooks, Wayne Baker--Interviews

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 Wayne Baker Brooks, August 16, 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 6/7/2022 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 Wayne Baker Brooks, Section A2005_198_001_001, TRT: 0:28:40 2005/08/16

Wayne Baker Brooks was born Wayne Baker on April 30, 1970 in Chicago, Illinois. Brooks' mother, Jeannine Broussard Baker, was born on February 26, 1941 in Chicago to Lorraine Owens Broussard and Joseph Broussard, a Creole. After her parents' divorce, she lived with her mother. She worked for the IRS and as a nurse. Brooks' father, HistoryMaker Lonnie Brooks, was born as Lee Baker, Jr. on December 18, 1933 in Dubuison, Louisiana to sharecropper parents. He was inspired to play the guitar by his grandfather, banjo player Henry Jackson. Baker took the stage name Lonnie Brooks and became a world-renowned blues musician. In 1959, Brooks' parents met at one of his father's shows. Brooks grew up hearing his father play music around their home on the South Side of Chicago. He remembers parties and parades on St. Lawrence

Avenue, going to concerts and festivals with his father, and blues musicians like Eddy Clearwater, Koko Taylor, Hubert Sumlin, Wayne Bennett and Bobby Bland who visited his childhood home.

Video Oral History Interview with Wayne Baker Brooks, Section A2005_198_001_002, TRT: 0:29:30 2005/08/16

Wayne Baker Brooks swam and played basketball and softball at Washington Park in Chicago, Illinois. While attending Corpus Christi School, Brooks routinely played his father's recordings and early hip hop records for his classmates. Brooks tried learning the flute, but was drawn to the drums instead. At home, Brooks helped his father write music by using pots to play the drum lines while his brother, HistoryMaker Ronnie Baker Brooks, played bass guitar. Brooks attended Mendel Catholic High School for one year and then transferred to Percy L. Julian High School. Brooks struggled with school, and an injury prevented him from receiving the college basketball scholarship he hoped for. After Brooks graduated high school in 1989, he worked for his brother-in-law's roofing company in the summer. In the winter, he worked as a roadie for his father and brother and taught himself to play the guitar. He was encouraged by his father and practiced eighteen hours a day.

Video Oral History Interview with Wayne Baker Brooks, Section A2005_198_001_003, TRT: 0:30:00 2005/08/16

Wayne Baker Brooks performed live for the first time in 1991 while working as road crewmember for his father, HistoryMaker Lonnie Brooks, who pulled him onstage to play a guitar solo in the song 'Sweet Home Chicago.' From that point on, Brooks played music full-time. He started writing music in 1993 while on tour with HistoryMaker B.B. King. On that tour, he met blues musician Junior Wells, who became a mentor. Wells taught Brooks how to keep his own rhythm and how to play his song 'Messin' with the Kid.' Wells emphasized the importance of performing lyrics correctly to preserve their integrity. Brooks in writing his own music pulls from his own experiences, particularly of women and relationships. His album 'Mystery' is influenced by Chicago music and combines hip-hop and blues music on the song 'Nu Kinda Blues.' Brooks describes process of creating songs like 'Exiled,' 'Mystery,' 'Baby, Stop' and 'Butterfly' off of his 2004 album 'Mystery.'

Video Oral History Interview with Wayne Baker Brooks, Section A2005_198_001_004, TRT: 0:30:20 2005/08/16

Wayne Baker Brooks plays an aggressive style of blues guitar inspired by his father HistoryMaker Lonnie Brooks, HistoryMaker B.B. King, Buddy Guy and Albert King. Brooks comments on the influence of previous generations of musicians on those that follow, but notes that most young African American musicians choose to play hip-hop instead of blues. Brooks met Jam Master Jay from the hip-hop group Run-DMC at an Aerosmith concert he attended with his father in 2002. They planned to collaborate on a hip-hop/blues single, but Jay passed away shortly after their conversation. Brooks laments that many young people do not know about the history of the blues or its influence on all genres of popular American music. He got the idea for the book 'Blues for Dummies' upon visiting Muddy Waters' home, which had been brought to Chicago as a historical exhibit for the Chicago Blues Festival. Brooks also talks about how negative stereotypes about blues musicians affect his personal relationships.

Video Oral History Interview with Wayne Baker Brooks, Section A2005_198_001_005, TRT: 0:30:40 2005/08/16

Wayne Baker Brooks co-authored 'Blues for Dummies,' a collaborative reference guide on the blues, with his father, HistoryMaker Lonnie Brooks, Cub

Koda and HistoryMaker B.B. King in 1998. In 2003, Koko Taylor, Lonnie Brooks and Brooks performed at the opening of the MLB All-Star game in Chicago, Illinois. Although Brooks enjoys many musical artists, including blues, hip-hop, R&B, and soul musicians, his father is his favorite. Brooks talks about his concerns for the African American community and his goal of winning a Grammy Award. He reflects upon his life, legacy and how he would like to be remembered. Brooks concludes the interview by narrating his photographs.