

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Smokey Robinson

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Robinson, Smokey, 1940-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Smokey Robinson,
Dates:	October 9, 2009
Bulk Dates:	2009
Physical Description:	uncompressed MOV digital video files ().
Abstract:	Singer and songwriter Smokey Robinson (1940-) was a founding member of the Miracles and served as vice president, producer, talent scout, and songwriter for Motown Records for three decades. Robinson was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on October 9, 2009, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2009_150
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Singer and songwriter Smokey Robinson was born on February 19, 1940 in Detroit, Michigan to Flossie Mae Smith and William Robinson. He attended Northern High School, where he graduated in 1957.

At Northern High School, Robinson formed the doo-wop group the Five Chimes, later known as the Miracles. The Miracles were one of the first groups to sign with Berry Gordy's record label Tamla Records, later incorporated into Motown Records. Here, in 1960, Robinson and the Miracles recorded "Shop Around," which became Motown's first million-selling hit record and first number one hit on the R&B singles chart. As a songwriter, Robinson subsequently wrote hits for the group including "You've Really Got a Hold on Me," "Ooo Baby Baby," "The Tracks of My Tears," "Going to a Go-Go," "More Love," "Tears of a Clown," co-written with Stevie Wonder, and "I Second That Emotion." By the mid-1960's, Robinson became vice president of Motown Records, serving as in-house producer, talent scout and songwriter. In this role, Robinson wrote and produced hits for other Motown greats including The Temptations, Mary Wells, Brenda Holloway, and Marvin Gaye, with the songs "The Way You Do the Things You Do," "My Girl," "Get Ready," "You Beat Me to the Punch," "Don't Mess with Bill," "Ain't That Peculiar," and "My Guy." A year after retiring in 1972, Robinson began his solo career, recording hits including "Just to See Her," "Quiet Storm," "Cruisin'," and "Being with You," among others. He remained vice president of Motown Records until 1990; and, following his tenure at Motown, he continued his touring career and released several solo albums: *Food for the Spirit* (2004), *Timeless Love* (2006), *Time Flies When You're Having Fun* (2009), *Now And Then* (2010), *Smokey & Friends* (2014), and *Christmas Everyday* (2017).

Robinson has received numerous awards, including receiving a star on The Hollywood Walk of Fame in 1983, induction into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in 1987, a Grammy Award for Best Male R&B Vocal Performance in 1988 for "Just to See Her," induction into the Songwriters' Hall of Fame in 1989, the Grammy Legend Award in 1990, the Heritage Award at the 1991 Soul Train Music Awards, a National Medal of Arts in 2002, and a BET Lifetime Achievement Award in 2015. In 2009, the Miracles were honored as a group with their own star on The

Hollywood Walk of Fame; and, in 2012, they were inducted as a group into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame. Robinson also holds honorary doctorate degrees from Howard University and the Berklee College of Music.

Robinson has three children, Berry, Tamla, and Trey, and is married to Frances Gladney.

Smokey Robinson was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on October 10, 2009.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Smokey Robinson was conducted by Gwen Ifill on October 9, 2009, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on uncompressed MOV digital video files. Singer and songwriter Smokey Robinson (1940-) was a founding member of the Miracles and served as vice president, producer, talent scout, and songwriter for Motown Records for three decades.

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:

Robinson, Smokey, 1940-

Ifill, Gwen (Interviewer)

N/A (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Robinson, Smokey, 1940- --Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Singer

Songwriter

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 Smokey Robinson, October 9, 2009. 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