

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Larry Dodson

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Dodson, Larry, 1951-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Larry Dodson,
Dates:	July 28, 2010
Bulk Dates:	2010
Physical Description:	6 uncompressed MOV digital video files (2:26:15).
Abstract:	Singer Larry Dodson (1951 -) sang with the hit soul group The Bar-Kays, and co-founded Right Now Records label. Dodson was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on July 28, 2010, in Memphis, Tennessee. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2010_090
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

R&B singer Larry Dodson was born in 1951, and started his first vocal group, called the Temprees, when he was eleven years old. The Temprees went on to sign with Stax Records and record several hit songs, but by then Dodson had left the band to sing with The Bar-Kays and recorded his first record with them, called *Black Rock* .

The Bar-Kays had been formed in 1966, and by the time Dodson joined them they were already the number-two house band at Stax Records. None of the members of the Bar-Kays were formally educated in music, but that did not prevent them from being highly successful while writing many of their own songs. They sang backup for Otis Redding, Isaac Hayes, and other popular soul singers under the Stax Record label and recorded many hit songs in their own right, including “*Soul Finger*” and “*Son of Shaft*”. They performed “*Son of Shaft*” at the Wyattstax music festival in 1972, and were featured in the Golden Globe-nominated documentary *Wyattstax* made about the concert.

After Stax Records went bankrupt in 1975, The Bar-Kays signed with Mercury Records and the band went on to have twenty-three singles on the R&B charts from 1976 to 1987. The Bar-Kays’ music has been featured in the soundtrack to several films, including *Spies Like Us* and *Superbad* . The group broke up in 1993, and reformed a year later with Dodson and one other member of the original band. They continued to tour and write songs, enjoying a renewed popularity.

Dodson is the co-founder of the Right Now Records record label, along with The Bar-Keys founding member James Alexander. Dodson is also a Downs Syndrome awareness advocate and serves on the board of directors of the Downs Syndrome Association of Memphis and the Mid-South. He wrote and helped organize the recording of the song “A Message from Memphis” by a large group of well-known Memphis-born musicians for the benefit of Haiti after the 2010 earthquake there. Proceeds from sale of the song and the short documentary about the song’s recording were donated to various charities in Haiti, including the American Red Cross.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Larry Dodson was conducted by Larry Crowe on July 28, 2010, in Memphis, Tennessee, and was recorded on 6 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Singer Larry Dodson (1951 -) sang with the hit soul group The Bar-Kays, and co-founded Right Now Records label.

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:

Dodson, Larry, 1951-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Dodson, Larry, 1951- --Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Stax Records, The Mercury Record Company

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 Larry Dodson, July 28, 2010. 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 Larry Dodson, Section A2010_090_001_001, TRT: 0:28:43 ?

Larry Dodson was born on January 22, 1951 in Memphis, Tennessee to Lois Thomas Dodson and Otis Dodson III. His maternal grandparents, Elizabeth Thomas and Madison Thomas, Sr., were sharecroppers in Eudora, Mississippi, where they raised seven children, including Dodson's mother. She eventually moved to Memphis, where she completed her education at Booker T. Washington High School. Dodson's father was also born in Eudora, to Otis Dodson, Jr. and Annie Mae Cole, who had Native American ancestry. Dodson's

paternal grandparents divorced when his father was six years old, and his paternal grandmother later married his step-grandfather, Albert Cole. Dodson's parents met and married in Eudora, and then moved to Memphis, where his father worked as a mechanic. During the day, Dodson was often left in the care of his paternal grandmother, who also relocated to Memphis. He recalls spending the summers with his maternal grandparents in Eudora; and talks about his paternal great aunt, who passed for white.

Video Oral History Interview with Larry Dodson, Section A2010_090_001_002, TRT: 0:28:49 ?

Larry Dodson grew up in Memphis, Tennessee, where he was the oldest of four brothers born to Lois Thomas Dodson and Otis Dodson III. His mother worked as an elevator operator, and his father played the saxophone with blues guitarist B.B. King. During his childhood, Dodson often listened to his mother's record collection, which included the music of Elvis Presley, Jackie Wilson and Sam Cooke; and his father encouraged him to pursue his aspiration to become a singer. Dodson began his education at Mrs. Snell's Kindergarten, and then enrolled in the first grade at Riverview Elementary School. He completed the third grade at Florida Kansas Elementary School, and then returned to Riverview Elementary School until the seventh grade, when he enrolled at George Washington Carver High School. There, Dodson was influenced by his music teacher, DeLois Brack; and formed a vocal group called The Temprees. Dodson also talks about Elvis Presley's popularity in Memphis, and his early impressions of blues music.

Video Oral History Interview with Larry Dodson, Section A2010_090_001_003, TRT: 0:25:00 ?

Larry Dodson recruited his classmates, Deljuan Calvin, Jasper "Jabbo" Phillips and Harold H. "Scotty" Scott, to form a singing group called The Temprees at fourteen years old. The group emulated The Temptations' musical style, and performed covers of their songs at parties, talent shows and nightclubs in Memphis, Tennessee. Following the assassination of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in Memphis in 1968, Dodson was beaten by police officers for disobeying the citywide curfew. He graduated from George Washington Carver High School in 1969; and, in 1970, was recruited by music producer Allen A. Jones, Jr. and bass guitarist James Alexander to join The Bar-Kays. With the group, Dodson recorded for Stax Records alongside artists like Isaac Hayes and Elvis Presley, and collaborated on records with singer Johnnie Taylor. Dodson recalls the plane crash that killed Otis Redding and four members of The Bar-Kays in 1967, and talks about bandleader Ben Branch of the Operation Breadbasket Orchestra and Choir.

Video Oral History Interview with Larry Dodson, Section A2010_090_001_004, TRT: 0:29:49 ?

Larry Dodson joined The Bar-Kays in 1970. He served as the lead vocalist on the 'Black Rock' album in 1971; and, the following year, performed alongside Isaac Hayes and other Stax Records artists at a concert in memory of the Watts riots of 1965. The concert was filmed, and released as a documentary called 'Wattstax' in 1973. After Stax Records closed due to bankruptcy in 1975, The Bar-Kays began playing regular shows at the Family Affair Club in Memphis, Tennessee, where they wrote hit songs like "Shake Your Rump to the Funk." In 1976, the band signed a contract with Mercury Records, where they produced six gold records and the platinum record 'Dangerous.' In 1999, Dodson founded a booking agency called LaMarie's Entertainment Complex with his wife and son, Marie Dodson and Larry Dodson, Jr. In 2003, Dodson partnered with The Bar-Kays' bass guitarist James Alexander to establish the JEA Right Now Records label; and, in 2007, they created a gospel label called Testimony Records.

Video Oral History Interview with Larry Dodson, Section A2010_090_001_005, TRT: 0:22:46 ?

Larry Dodson formed the Testimony Records gospel label with his bandmate from The Bar-Kays, James Alexander, in 2007. The label represented artists like Perfection and Billy Rivers and the Angelic Voices of Faith. Following the earthquake in Haiti in 2010, Dodson recorded the album 'A Message from Memphis: A Healing Song for Haiti,' which featured over forty artists from Memphis, Tennessee; and donated the proceeds to the earthquake relief effort. Dodson remembers musician Wilson Pickett, whom he met at Stax Records. He also describes his advice for aspiring music professionals, and his concerns for the future of the music industry. Dodson reflects upon his life and legacy, his family and his hopes and concerns for the African American community; and concludes the interview by describing how he would like to be remembered.

Video Oral History Interview with Larry Dodson, Section A2010_090_001_006, TRT: 0:11:08 ?

Larry Dodson narrates his photographs.