

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Charles Connor

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Connor, Charles
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Charles Connor,
Dates:	October 13, 2019
Bulk Dates:	2019
Physical Description:	8 uncompressed MOV digital video files (3:35:59).
Abstract:	Musician Charles Connor (1935- 2021) was the original drummer for Little Richard's road band, The Upsetters. He performed with Sam Cooke, James Brown, Jackie Wilson, The Coasters, Big Joe Turner, Larry Williams, Don Covay, George Lightfoot, and Dee Clark. Connor was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on October 13, 2019, in Los Angeles, California. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2019_107
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Musician Charles Connor was born on January 14, 1935 in New Orleans, Louisiana to Viola and William Connor. He began playing drums at age five. His first professional work as a drummer came in 1950 when he was hired by Roy Byrd (“Professor Longhair”) to play with him at a New Orleans Mardi Gras program.

He went on to perform with Smiley Lewis, Guitar Slim, Jack Dupree, and Shirley and Lee. At age eighteen, Connor became the drummer of Little Richard's road band, The Upsetters. Connor was a drummer for Little Richard throughout the 1950s, on records such as "The Girl Can't Help It", "Keep A-Knockin'", "Ooh! My Soul", and popular feature films as *Don't Knock the Rock* and *Mr. Rock 'n' Roll*. He was credited for creating the unique "Choo Choo Train" style of successive eighth notes with a loud back beat used by nearly all subsequent Rock 'n' Roll drummers. When Connor was not working with Little Richard, he worked with James Brown and The Famous Flames. In 1957, he toured with performer Sam Cooke. He also performed with other artists like Jackie Wilson, the original Coasters, and “Big” Joe Turner. He recorded with “Champion” Jack Dupree, Larry Williams, Don Covay, “Papa” George Lightfoot, Christine Kittrell, Larry Birdsong, and Dee Clark.

In 1994, Connor received a Certificate of Special Recognition from Congresswoman Maxine Waters (D-CA). In 2010, Connor was inducted into the Louisiana Music Hall of Fame. Connor released his second album in 2013, “Still Knockin’”, which debuted an original song written and sung by him, "Beginning of Rock n' Roll," including new recordings featuring the voice of Kate Flannery. Connor was featured in the 2015 documentary miniseries for BBC Music TV’s *Rock N Roll America* “Episode 1: Sweet Little Sixteen,” exploring the genesis, explosion and legacy of rock 'n' roll in America. He published his autobiography, *Keep A Knockin the Story of a Legendary Drummer,* in August 2015 with Waldorf Publishing. Connor is also featured in *BBC Four's* 2017 documentary *Sharon Osbourne Presents Rock 'n' Roll's Dodgiest Deals*. Connor’s drumsticks are on display at the Rock 'n' Roll Hall of Fame Museum in Cleveland, Ohio.

Charles Connor was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on October 13, 2019.

Connor passed away on July 31, 2021.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Charles Connor was conducted by Larry Crowe on October 13, 2019, in Los Angeles, California, and was recorded on 8 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Musician Charles Connor (1935- 2021) was the original drummer for Little Richard's road band, The Upsetters. He performed with Sam Cooke, James Brown, Jackie Wilson, The Coasters, Big Joe Turner, Larry Williams, Don Covay, George Lightfoot, and Dee Clark.

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:

Connor, Charles

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Connor, Charles--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Musician

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 Charles Connor, October 13, 2019. 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 Charles Connor, Section A2019_107_001_001, TRT: 1:26:44 ?
- Video Oral History Interview with Charles Connor, Section A2019_107_001_002, TRT: 2:28:30 ?
- Video Oral History Interview with Charles Connor, Section A2019_107_001_003, TRT: 3:31:45 ?
- Video Oral History Interview with Charles Connor, Section A2019_107_001_004, TRT: 4:29:09 ?
- Video Oral History Interview with Charles Connor, Section A2019_107_001_005, TRT: 5:28:33 ?
- Video Oral History Interview with Charles Connor, Section A2019_107_001_006, TRT: 6:30:06 ?
- Video Oral History Interview with Charles Connor, Section A2019_107_001_007, TRT: 7:27:09 ?
- Video Oral History Interview with Charles Connor, Section A2019_107_001_008, TRT: 8:14:03 ?