

UP002660_Clipper Detroit Musicians Oral History Project

Detroit, MI

Jackie C. (Jackqueline Clipper)

Interviewed by

Amber Harrison

Thursday, December 7, 2017

Detroit, Michigan

As part of the Oral History Class in the School of Information Science

Kim Schroeder, Instructor

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Brief Biography

Jackqueline Clipper, preferring to use her stage name Jackie C., is a Detroit singer and songwriter. Born and raised in Detroit, Michigan, Jackie C. is known for singing blues music, in addition to a variety of other styles and genres (funk, jazz, r&b, etc.). She is also a member of the Detroit Metro Area Musicians & Entertainers Association (D.M.A.M.E.A.). Last year, Jackie C. won 2016's Blues Artist of the Year award at the Detroit Black Music Awards (with nominations in 2014 and 2015 as well). Today, she can be found singing with her band Jackie C.

and the Detroit Rhythm at the Raven Lounge in Detroit, Michigan, and can also be found performing at other music engagements throughout the Detroit area.

Interviewer

Amber Harrison, current graduate student at Wayne State University enrolled in the Public History MA program.

Abstract

On Thursday December 7, 2017 Detroit vocalist Jackie C. (narrator) meets with Amber Harrison (interviewer), current graduate student in the Public History program at Wayne State University, in an interview at Wayne State University's Purdy-Kresge Library to discuss Jackie C.'s life. The interview focuses on Jackie C.'s musical career and contributions to Detroit's vibrant music community and Detroit's music legacy. This interview is a part of a wide-reaching local oral history project focusing on the history of Detroit music and its musicians, how they have shaped and helped create Detroit's unique music legacy.

Restrictions

No restrictions

Original Format

.wav audio file

Transcription

Harrison: Good afternoon. Today, Thursday December 7, 2017, I am here at Wayne State University's Purdy Kresge Library with Detroit musician Jackie Clipper, Jackie C.

Clipper: I love it!

Harrison: We will be talking about Jackie's music, musical career, and how it intersects with Detroit's music history and current music scene. Thank you again for joining me today and taking time out of your busy schedule to talk about your story with us.

Clipper: You're more than welcome!

Harrison: Are you ready to get into the questions?

Clipper: Absolutely.

Harrison: Okay, let's start off with an easy one.

Clipper: Okay

Clipper: Okay.

Harrison: When, and if you don't want to tell me when that's okay, but when and where were you born?

Clipper: Detroit, Michigan at Detroit Memorial Hospital. It's no long here. They tore it down some years ago, but 1965 is when I was born.

Harrison: Okay. And how old were you when you started becoming interested in music, listening, performing?

Clipper: Eight. And what got me, and this is really weird cause I tell the story to people sometime. What actually got me was Star Trek, the music to Star Trek; when it's coming on, I used to mimic that music and Star Trek when I was a little girl. So, that's what started me to really liking music and went to church with my mom and I saw the choir and that was it.

Harrison: I have a video to show you when we're done.

[Laughter]

Harrison: That's Star Trek, I was not ready!

Clipper: Not expecting that, was you?

[Laughter]

Clipper: I wasn't either!

Harrison: But I'm with you!

Clipper: That's what did it.

Harrison: So, how did you...when did you start performing music, how did that, once you were inspired by the Star Trek music, how did you begin to get into music? Singing, did you play any instruments?

Clipper: In elementary school I took up the violin and I put it back down. I did not do well with it at all. And I always wanted to play the keyboards but the only thing I've ever learned to play was "Lean on Me" [starts humming/singing the tune].

Harrison: [Laughter]

Clipper: I said, that was my musical talent [Laughs].

Harrison: I mean that's a good song!

Clipper: As far as playing, you know, that was it. But once I got to church and got put in the choir, I was about nine then, I've been listening to the choir, they didn't put me in until about a year later. And I led my first song and that was it. "God's Goodness" was the first song that I ever led in church. And everybody went crazy. I was like "wow really?" And I still do that song to this day. I still do it.

Harrison: That's so nice to hear, that you're keeping in touch with what got you into it.

Clipper: Oh yeah!

Harrison: What did music and Detroit music, if you have any thoughts about that, but what did that mean to you as a child?

Clipper: Hearing Diana Ross and the Supremes, Marian Webbs, Smoky Robinson, oh my god. Just hearing them on the radio and knowing they were from where I am, that was everything. That was everything in black radio, just hearing it. And at that time we didn't have very many choices in radio stations. So you listened to whatever... But just to hear us on the radio and see different shows, and to actually see them performing, that was everything. That was everything. That's all you wanted to do. Anything musical, I was...any other kind of program, the Grammy's, the American Music Awards that came later, but anything, I would sit and look at it.

Harrison: Nice! Same!

[Laughter]

Harrison: Was and or is anyone in your family musical?

Clipper: That's weird because my dad used to say that he was years ago in a group in church. And my mom was a missionary in church so she would lead off songs sometimes for the congregation to sing along with her. But nobody ever was really singing. When I went to singing in church, my family would come see me sing in church. When I started singing professionally, I started with different groups in the city; this was about 2009 or somewhere up in there. Different groups in the city I would sing with. The first band that I remembered singing with was the Terry Street Band. And we had such a great sound I thought. But there's always something that the band broke up and there you have it. So you find somebody else to sing with, and then I sang with Pure Pleasure. They too were an awesome band. But what I didn't know is one of the actual members from Pure Pleasure, the actual original member from the band was the bass player. And he's the one that was in this band that was calling ourselves Pure Pleasure. I didn't realize there was an original Pure Pleasure. So he and I are great friends still to this day, he's my bass player, that's Chuck CJ Styles Jackson So yes, great guy, wonderful performer, great musician. And I've had the pleasure of actually being under his thumb for years without even realizing that he was who he was. So that was pretty cool. Once I realized and I saw the whole original band playing together, and the song that they had a radio hit on, I actually sang it in the band and I didn't realize that that was their music, you know. That was cool.

Harrison: That's a good surprise, more than welcome.

Clipper: That was really true.

[0:07:43.4]

Harrison: At what point did you realize that music was becoming a fundamental aspect of your life? Were you went to just, you know, enjoying it maybe, I don't want to say hobby, but you know like listening, performing, but how did you go from that?

Clipper: After church, I had brothers and sisters; I'm the youngest of ten. So I had other siblings that I would sit down and just sing songs for them. I would just sing and they sit there and just listen and then play when I was done and that was just

and they sit there and just listen and then clap when I was done, and that was just what no music, no nothing, a cappella. So it was really cool just having them there supporting me in that way. When I started to really go places, we'd all gotten grown then. Everybody had their own life and their own children. They had busy lives so they couldn't come and support me in that way. But knowing that I had it then that it was ok. You can't make everything, and every now and again, some of them come when I'm performing. Maybe not as often as I would like, but they come, that's good enough.

Harrison: That's so good to hear! Because it's important for us to have somebody, you know...

Clipper: To support you. My husband, oh my god, since day one, he's always and we've been married for 33 years-

Harrison: Congratulations!

Clipper: Thank you, he's always supported me. He supported my dream forever. I mean, anything I wanted to do, he'd be tired. Even to this day, he works five days a week; I drag him out with me on Friday night. You may see him in the corner sleep somewhere some time cause he's dog-tired, but he's right there supporting me. And I can't ask for anything better than that, you know. I try and put it on the minimum how much I drag him out like that.

Harrison: Aw.

Clipper: But on the weekends it's a little better. On Saturday, he went and got a little rest. But Friday night that's...and he be right there. I love him to death.

Harrison: I'm here for that! I've seen and heard now a lot of your music. In your music there's so many different genres that are present such as blues, R&B, funk. Which genres do you like performing in and why?

Clipper: I like all genres. I don't want to be stuck in a box anywhere. I do country, I do jazz, I do a little bit of everything, whatever, rock [laughs]. The latest song that I'm adding to my repertoire is "I Hate Myself For Loving You." [starts singing/humming the tune]

[Laughter]

Clipper: I just like, I've always loved this song. So I said "Hey, why not do it? Why not?" You know, so I gave it sheets to my band and I was like "Hey, learn that cause that's our next one.

[Laughter]

Clipper: That's the next one...I have so many songs that I do that I've been doing for so many years. My catalogue is huge. I'm starting original music now. I've written so many songs. I perform three original songs that we're doing. One song that was written by a friend of mine but I recorded it in studio and the two original songs that we're doing is a song Chuck and myself wrote called, oh my goodness. I can't think of the name of the song, oh shoot...The latest song that we're working on that I wrote all by myself is "Detroit Wake Up." But the other one that me and Chuck wrote...I sing it all the time and right now I'm having a brain lapse.

Harrison: That's okay.

Clipper: I can't even think of the name of the song.

Harrison: What's it about?

Clipper: It's about us, "I Gotta Be Me." That's the name of the song, "I Gotta Be Me." We're saying we don't care what nobody say, we gonna do things our way. Don't care what nobody else do, we not gonna be no fool, we gonna do it our way, you know, we gonna be us, and that's what the whole song is pretty much about. When we wrote that song, we were down in the basement of Walt's record store and we called it "The Underground" and we just came up with the whole premise of it and played it right there. And it was really really cool. Everybody did their thing, they wrote, they did the music to it, but we all wrote the lyrics, and it was really cool. That was "I Gotta Be Me."

Harrison: Going off on what you said, because that was actually my next question about song writing, what is that process like for you, and anyone else you're writing songs with?

Clipper: It could be anything from a girlfriend calling me complaining about situations that she's going through and the advice I may give her is the song. The advice I may give; it happens just like that. It gets you thinking about what would I do or what would I say in this situation and that situation. When you really get it where your thoughts just start...my thoughts, I have to write it down. I have to write it and it might not be a complete song verbatim like I'm writing it. I'll write a paragraph here, I'll put that away. I gotta think of a hook for it. So stuff just start coming together, and I'll just start writing it. Before I know it, there's a whole song right there. I wrote a song one night, my husband and I, he didn't have any money, and I wanted to do something so I was a little disappointed, yes I guess, I don't have the money so if I don't, I won't and I wrote a song about it.

[Laughter]

Clipper: That's how the song came about! So it's so weird. It's weird how it happens but sometimes those are the best ones. "Detroit Wake Up" came around through situations that I'm seeing in the city, situations I'm dealing with personally with my children, and just things that I don't like going on within our city. It's so much black on black crime, all this mess, drugs. It's too much, so I say, "Hey, you gotta get that stuff out sometimes." So I began writing. And when I came up with it, I told Chuck I say, "Hey, I have a song and I wanna do this song, I wanna do it kind of quick. I wanna just get it out there cause I'm getting all this stuff coming from every angle and if I don't get it out it may explode." So I need to get it out. So we set up at his house and had a rehearsal one night and we just start doing it. And it was amazing how well it turned out. And we performed it at the Raven twice, I think. That song, I wanna get it on a different level. I wanna go into the studio with it and not just, you know, I wanna put it out there. I want that to be one of my first cds. Cause I love this city so much. On a lot of levels, we just need to wake up. Now so many people are walking around with blinders on, don't you see this happening right in front of your face? Please wake up before it's too late. That's where that came from.

Harrison: I think you kind of answered it but I want to be sure. Do the lyrics come first, or does the music come first, or is it they come at the same time?

Clipper: The lyrics. The lyrics with me, the lyrics come first. After I write it down, then I try to figure out how I can sing it. How I can... The music is in my head, but seeing that I don't have the training of writing scores, I can't put it down so I'll sing it to them. This is what I'm hearing and that's how I elaborate what it is that I want. Tell them the notes, whatever, that I'm hearing. The beat [claps a beat], that's how I go about doing it.

Harrison: It's a good way, especially you know, you're creative with how you get your songs written.

Clipper: Mhmm.

Harrison: How did your music group, Jackie C. and the Detroit Rhythm, how did that begin?

Clipper: Well, after exploring myself as an up front vocalist for everybody else. I'm in different bands. I'm just going to different places but it's not my band. They can get another singer at any given time and when you get in those situations sometime, some people aren't even thoughtful enough to say, "Hey, I found somebody else." They just go on and, "Hey, oh I thought I told you, I thought you knew." So when you get done with dealing with people of that caliber, you think to yourself, "Hey, I've done these things for different people. It's time for me to do me. Get my own band, get my own name out there right now." And that's what I did. I started my band; called some friends. I knew a lot of musicians, so I said, "Hey, I'm starting a band. Who wants to ride with me?" [laughs] That's how we started. We rehearsed, that was that.

Harrison: Did you audition any of them? Or was it more like you were already aware of their musical [talent]?

Clipper: I was already aware of them. And the funny thing is I just say, "Hey, I want you to be my drummer." It's like, "Okay, can you my drummer?" "Hey I want you to play bass with me," you know... came riding along. So it was like that's how it started. Now, the initial people that I asked to do that, there's only one that's still around, that is still with me no matter what, and that's Chuck. He's the only one. Before he was doing his thing I could always call him and say, "I need a musician, I need a bass player." And if he saw I needed a keyboard player or a lead guitar player, he makes some calls and gets somebody in for me. He has always helped, always been there. And the more I learn different musicians, I get their numbers, they have my number, and that's how I started writing down everybody: having them in my phone, having them down on the list where if I need keyboards I have a list of them. If I need guitar players, I have a list of them, bass players lists, drummers lists, anything I need basically for a show. If one of my guys are not available and I need to find somebody else, I try, I can do that with the lists that I have. As long as they are all not busy [laughs]. If everybody's busy, there's a problem. I did a show with just me and the piano, which was cool. I didn't know how it was gonna work out at first, and I almost did a show with just me and the bass player [laughter]. And it wasn't as bad as I thought. When we rehearsed, it

actually sounded good. And I thought we were going to have go out like that but we didn't. So it worked out but it almost happened. Almost happened. It's stuff like that, you never know what's going to happen. You never know what's gonna happen, but you gotta be prepared to keep it going no matter what.

Harrison: I think you said this towards the beginning: how did you become a part of Detroit's local music scene? Now you have so many connections with different musicians.

Clipper: Working with everybody. Then it would be bands that would call me, "Hey, are you available for such and such," that's working with different bands. I would go right on out there and do my little job, get my little pay, and go on home. You know I wasn't exclusive to them. I have people that to this day will call, "Hey I got a private gig, can you help me out? 'Lah dee dah dee dah,'" and I'll be there. I don't have a problem doing that. They don't have anything with Jackie C. and the Detroit Rhythm, but they know they can always call on me if I could call on you like that, then we got a really good, you know, if I need you, all you have to do is call me. If you need me, call me. As long as it's like that, that's how you get intertwined and working so much with so many different people. The Raven helped me out hugely. The Raven lounge is a wonderful, wonderful gemstone in our city. It helped me tremendously because I finally had somewhere to call my own spot that I'm gonna be there no matter what because they helped me in the beginning. When I was first trying to find a spot to play with my band, they allowed me to come in and play with my band and I packed the joint. I had people everywhere. Musicians, vocalists, I mean, we had such a great night that night. I can't recall another night in that place like that night was. Ever since then, I've been there. Every first Friday of the month, I'm there. But I wanna keep myself where I can always go home. But I can always go out to anywhere else, I'm not restricted to home. It doesn't matter if the pay is better or worse, I'll always go back to them; it's loyalty. And I think that's important. That's just how I am. I don't know if that answered your question cause I went all over everywhere.

Harrison: Oh no, that's okay! That was actually my next question, to ask you about the Raven.

[Laughter]

Clipper: Okay.

Harrison: But do you remember when that happened, that first night?

Clipper: Ooh, it had to be about...I wanna say about...seven or eight years ago, somewhere up in there.

Harrison: So like, 2009/2010?

Clipper: About seven years. So about 2010 or 2011. Hmm...that's a good question because I never even marked it, never have. I just...

Harrison: You just knew that from that point on, it really changed the game for you, in terms of venues.

Clipper: Being recognized as Jackie C. There was no Detroit Rhythm initially. It was Jackie C. and her band [laughs]

was Jackie C. and her band [laughs].

Harrison: That's fair.

[Laughter]

Clipper: So I had to give them a name. So that's how that came about. First it was Jackie C. and they were playing behind me, the band. After a few times, I was like, we gotta get a name [laughs]. I gotta give them a name. So I named them the Detroit Rhythm, and I was like, "I like that."

[0:27:16.1]

Harrison: How did you get that? I mean the "Rhythm" part of the name?

Clipper: Because that's what they are, they're the rhythm to my vocals. That's how I see it. They're my rhythm: the lead guitar and the drums. I figured all I needed was a rhythm section. You got your drums, you got your lead, you got your own bass, and that's it. That's all I needed. I kind of got to the point now where yeah you need a little bit more than that, but that's ok too. I still will do a three piece with no problems. As long as the three-piece musicians are excellent at what they're doing, I have no problems, none. Singing all night, we can do a whole show, no problem. I don't want music to cover me up. I want to sing with the music, I want to blend with the music. Sometimes bands play really, really loud, and you have to project-

Harrison: Scream?

Clipper: Pretty much. And I try and get to the point where I can do this and let them know, "you're too loud, come down. I'm not gonna scream because it's bad for you, it's really bad." You can't beat out an orchestra, singing. You can't beat out a rock band, you can't beat out a rhythm band. You have to let them realize, "look I'm not being heard." So it's important to get an understanding with your band, your people, so I can be heard. That's important, but I always feel it so much when I'm out there and half the time I don't even care that they're too loud. I be on my own little thing, I don't know what to call it?

Harrison: Your happy place.

Clipper: My happy place [laughter]; that's my happy place. I am really happy when I'm out there. I guess that's what you can call it.

Harrison: First and foremost, congratulations on winning the Blues Artist of the Year award at the Detroit Black Music Awards!

Clipper: Thank you!

Harrison: I didn't know we even had a Detroit Black Music Awards.

Clipper: Yes, and it's been going on for I think she said, I wanna say she said 2007, but I'm not absolutely sure about that. So don't write that down [laughs], because I'm not sure. I was lucky enough to get involved with some people and I was introduced to Bert's down there on Russell. When I stepped foot in that place, all musicians from all walks of life go up there; be it jazz, be it R&B, be it funk, be it everybody, blues, they had all kinds of bands up in there too. Some people know me a lot of people know me from my blues. But like I was telling you, I don't

me, a lot of people know me from my blues. But, like I was telling you, I don't want to be put into a box. I have to make sure that everybody know, I don't just do blues, because people are quick to put you in a box, and say "oh that's a blues singer, that's a this singer." I don't want to be known that way. I just want to be known as a singer of everything [laughter] of all genres. But when I walked up in there, yeah. That's where I met Mystique Love. She used to do things in Vegas, and she sang with Kid Rock as one of his background singers. She's been all over the world doing that. When she came back home, I had no idea that I've lived blocks away from her growing up and didn't know. We never knew each other when I was growing up, but she knew my sister. My sister would go to her house with her sister. It's such a small world, you never know. So when we met years later, I was like "Oh I grew up around there" and she was like "What?" Franklin Wright settlement was my hangout. I grew up in the back of it. She said, "I grew up in front of it." So literally blocks away from each other and not even knowing that there was this star over there on the corner. Never knew. At that time that's when I was just getting into singing, and just learning those stuff. I didn't know anything about her. So maybe if I had met her when I was younger, things would have went a different way too. I would have been exposed to different things a lot earlier. I don't know. I just... Modern dance was my other love. I used to love it. Back in the day, I did a little bit of everything. You name it, I did it. Basketball, pool, that's my other passion, billiards, I love it.

Harrison: I haven't done that in a while.

Clipper: I shoot on a league. Two nights a week, Saturday and Monday, that's where you'll find me, different bars shooting pool. And a lot of the bars that I affiliate with, in pool some of them I've sang at their establishments, that's cool. A lot of them I haven't.

Harrison: It's kind of like at times the best of both worlds.

Clipper: That's the best of both worlds sometime.

Harrison: What did that, winning that award, along with your previous nominations; how did that make you feel to be so recognized by Detroit?

Clipper: Validation. I really do have something to offer. People do really appreciate what I do. And I guess that validity is what I had been looking for because I never went for any kind of contest and stuff like that. I didn't sing like that, I just wanted to sing. So I have my own karaoke company [laughs]. I still have the equipment. I just don't do that anymore. I had my own karaoke company that I actually printed out all my books. I bought all of my music, every thing hand-picked. I didn't go and get this huge selection from anywhere. All of my stuff was hand picked. And I used to go around the city... I wasn't doing the band stuff so much then. Once I got into the band I let that go. It's a learning process, I guess.

Harrison: Music is a never-ending learning process.

Clipper: Right, I mean, you're always learning things. On the karaoke stage, I was a really really good hostess because people get up there and they don't know how, I would help them along with it [laughter]. It's like I knew everything, all of the music and the catalogs. I knew everything. If I didn't know it specifically, I knew of it. Everything, oh my gosh. But I had some of the greatest singers that would

come to the shows sometimes, and I didn't know who they were. I never knew. One young man that used to come to my shows, his name was Damon Trice. Right now, he sings with Mark Scott from The Miracles, he's a Miracle. A young lady, Lacey I think her name was, she used to come. I didn't know she was an original Vandella at one time. I was like, "are you kidding?" People just out to have a good time and you don't know who they are. Just enjoying themselves. That was the first beginning of me growing. When I said I was going to have a karaoke company and I just did it. And I just started working. I was working every day, and then on the weekends I was doing that. Or a different weeknight, I would do that and get up and go to work, like it was nothing, back in those days [laughs]. It can't happen now. I couldn't do it. I couldn't have done it now. But I'm glad I did it then. I met a lot of people, a lot of good people. That's how I met a lot of musicians too, during karaoke. I met a lot of people: "Hey I play the piano", "oh, I play the horns" and I was like, "oh okay". We take each other's information down, and if you need a vocalist, call me. That's how I would do it. I didn't have cards; I just put it in my phone. Take my number. Call me.

[0:37:52.4]

Clipper: Now I ain't got cards or anything...[laughs] Matter of fact...[at this point the narrator is looking in her purse for cards]...cards for the Raven here, and one of my, that's not mine. Mine is small, the ones that I do for my personal thing and then I have my business cards that I started having done [continues searching through purse and shows narrator some of their cards]...

Harrison: Nice! I was going to say, I need to get in the habit of doing that.

Clipper: "Detroit Wake Up!" I plan on that being my first cd. I plan on that being my first cd with most original music on it. I don't know if I want to do all or some, but I've already gotten six songs that could be original music going on there. And I could put a couple of you know songs that I just cover on there also. I think it would be a great cd.

Harrison: It sounds like it would be good to me [laughs]! Bringing our discussion even more into the present, what does music and Detroit music mean for you now? After all of these experiences you've had, how has it shaped?

Clipper: What Detroit music means to me now is...I don't know if this will make any sense to you or not, but it's almost a power of having something that can actually change somebody else's day. Somebody could come to my show, and, "oh my god I love your voice and I needed to hear that." You never know how, matter of fact me and Kim (Schroeder) were just talking about this. You never know the power you have to actually make somebody's day better. Just by singing a song, or affecting someone. I've had people cry. I've had all kind of stuff and I can't explain it, I don't know how. I didn't realize that I was doing it but that's how they were being affected. And that's amazing that you can touch somebody, that's what it is. It's just touching somebody's heart with what you do, and that's amazing to me. I love that. That's what makes me want to do it. Just knowing that you can't get them all, but somebody is being affected.

Harrison: What does it mean the success you have specifically in your hometown of Detroit, how does that now make you...?

Clipper: It's love, what's from the heart reaches the heart. I've always thought that. So when I go out on that stage, I'm not trying to do anything. I just do what comes natural. I just do me. And doing me, there's no pretense, I'm just doing me. And I have a good time with it. I figure if I'm having fun, you're gonna have fun. If I'm feeling it, you're gonna feel it. I've always felt that. That's how I take it. But it's amazing when you sit back and think about it like, "Dog, I was the vessel that made that person feel this way or that way or, you know, calm them down from that or whatever cause you never know. It's amazing.

Harrison: Tell me, and if you have or have not, about traveling outside of Detroit. Have you performed...?

Clipper: I have. As a matter of fact last summer, we went to Canada, over in Canada...I'm trying to think of the name of the place...it escapes me right now, but I've been in Canada. I've been... When I was younger, this was in church, I was with the group, Gary Nolan and the Angels for Christ. We used to record, excuse me, we would record and then travel in the south, in different places in the south. And these were places like, there's no road, there's mud, and we out there in churches; mosquitos this big and flies. That was my first time actually touring. I have not toured outside of the city since then. I guess I was 19 when that happened. Stuff just starts happening in my life and I run with it for a couple of years. Like Gary, we ran together for a couple of years. I enjoyed that; that was part of my church experience, finding Gary Nolan and the Angels for Christ. He passed. The recordings we did they've got to still be out there somewhere. I would really love to hear some of them. I had one tape, I think it broke or something; something happened. We used to do it, had a good time with them.

Harrison: Would you consider it now? And maybe not necessarily like a long tour.

Clipper: Now that my kids are grown, have lives of their own, I have...my husband is allowing me to try and fulfill my dream. So right now I'm not working, he's the breadwinner. He's the one that's working out there, making sure the bills are paid and everything because in the city, you're not going to get the pay that you want, generally. If the pay isn't good, so if you're doing it for the pay, you're in it for the wrong reason. It's not that great, but it's just the love of doing it, the love of music, the love of connecting with other individuals. It gives you all the reward and when people love what you do, they'll call you. You never know who is in your audience. Like Kim (Schroeder) was in the audience. You never know who is in your audience. You don't know who you may meet. I may meet somebody in the audience, "Hey! I got a club in Alabama and I want you and your band down there twice a year (you know what I'm saying?), and we'll pay you this amount of money." Now if I can get there, okay that's great. I had the pleasure of being on Thornetta Davis's cd. I'm one of her sister-girls, indeed. That's one of my big...I love her. She's a wonderful, wonderful entertainer, great woman, her and her husband are great people, and for her to call me and ask me, "Hey, I want you to come down here to the studio with me. And I wanted to be like 30-40 of us, all women, and you all will be my 'sister-girls.'" That was a wonderful experience. Absolutely wonderful. Singing on Fox 2 News was a wonderful experience. I did "God Bless the Child" on there in 2015, right before the awards show was coming up. I've had some great things happen to me just doing what I love. I appreciate it.

[0:4:49.5]

Harrison: It sounds like too Detroit has been so kind to you, in terms of what it has to offer and the experiences you've been able to have. Just like you said, you never know who's in the audience.

Clipper: Exactly.

Harrison: And how it can really change your life. Prior to this interview, had you ever considered documenting your life's story or music legacy in any way?

Clipper: No, I hadn't, I never have. I've never thought about it. I never thought anything about it.

Harrison: We'll have to change that.

Clipper: Okay!

[Laughter]

Harrison: I think we've talked a little bit about this too, but why music? Why do you perform?

Clipper: I love it. I just love it. There's nothing like it. Some people say it's a high, I don't know what it is. I know I love it. And if I didn't have music in my life, I'd be playing pool, that's another passion. I'd be doing something else but would I be fulfilled by it? I think music fulfills me. Being able to do it fulfills me. I love it.

Harrison: So if you weren't a musician, and you did mention billiards, what other career path would have taken?

Clipper: Well, that's interesting because there's something else I never went to school for, but it always happens to me. I don't care where I am, people come up to me and start talking. They have problems... So I guess I probably would have been some kind of a counselor or something. I really do because I listen and then I don't give my opinion unless they ask for it. And if I give you my opinion, I let it go there. It's up to you whether you want to do it or not. But I have a girlfriend. She would call me every time they were having issues; other than that she would not call me. We're girlfriends but if they weren't having issues, I wouldn't get a call. Every time I'd wind up telling this girl the same thing. "Look, you're running up to me, you're telling me this that and the other and I tell you what to do every time and you don't do it." I told her, I say, "so stop calling me. The only time you call me is when you're having an issue anyway, so if that's the only kind of friends that we are, that's a good friend for you, but it's not so much for me. So I don't need it" [laughs].

Harrison: Very one-sided.

Clipper: One-sided friendship. She thought about that thing and she changed after that. So that was good.

[0:51:20.7 phone rings]

Clipper: That's probably my husband. Excuse me.

[Brief pause 0:51:28.3]

Harrison: What is it about Detroit that has allowed so many phenomenal musicians to develop here, someone like you?

Clipper: Motown!

Harrison: There it is!

Clipper: Motown. I mean that's what the city is basically generated on. Motown and cars, automobiles, okay? But most of the guys who worked in factories was trying to be singers at Motown, so it's like, Motown. That's where you're from. It's in your blood. I was born and raised here.

Harrison: Okay. What would you want to say to future creators of Detroit music? Do you have any advice or thoughts you would like to give on it?

Clipper: Love what you do. And give it all you've got. What's from the heart, reaches the heart. That's all I can say.

Harrison: And that's important! Is there anything more that you would like to say before we bring the interview to a close? Any closing ideas?

Clipper: The only thing I'd like to say is thank you so much for being so gracious. I appreciate that and I appreciate you just wanting to interview me. That was really cool, so thank you.

Harrison: Thank you as well for meeting with me today, especially since I hope you didn't feel rushed in any way. But thank you so much for sharing your story. I think it's such an important one to tell. And for years to come, when people are trying to learn about Detroit, its music history, its legacy. This will be a bright spot. I'm so excited, so thank you!

Clipper: You're welcome.

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