

Date: 2004-08-27

Interviewee: Delijuan "Del" Calvin, JC Calvin, and Harold "Scotty" Scott

Interviewer: Jake

Location: \*

Collection: Stax Museum Oral Histories

Notes: Del on left, JC in center, Scotty on right

[0:00]

Interviewer: Alright, guys. Nice to see you, good to have you here.

D. Calvin: Glad to be here, [INAUDIBLE].

Interviewer: I had Scotty in on Wednesday and I said we need to get everybody together-

D. Calvin: Yeah, it's the perfect day, perfect weather.

Interviewer: Yeah, it's beautiful. Light's coming in, it looks nice.

Scott: It's good that we all get together. 'Cause some things that I may have forgotten, or see it one way-

Interviewer: I always say, you know, you get a bunch of guys who are in a band together talking, ain't no tellin'.

D. Calvin: You see things a little differently.

Scott: Everybody's got their own interpretation.

Interviewer: Well, I'd love to start with you, Del, because I got Scotty's story about how it started. Where did it start?

D. Calvin: It started in the junior high school. Our group has made a lot of transitions. In fact, we made a full circle because my father and older brother

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was in the group before it became professional singers. So, it was Larry Dodson, Jasper Philips, myself, and \*Glen\* Calvin.

Interviewer: Alright.

D. Calvin: Glen got drafted. Scotty came in the group, about 7<sup>th</sup> grade, 8<sup>th</sup> grade, something like that. 9<sup>th</sup>? 9<sup>th</sup> grade, something like that. At that point, that's when everything took off. I mean everything just changed and by the time we became professionals- I sent an album over to Vietnam and the DJ's over there were playing The Temprees 'Lovemen.' Over there in Vietnam. That was the point that the group made their mark, was when- well, Larry left the group. Left The Temprees, moved to Bar-Kays. Jabbo, Scotty and myself, we just looked at each other and said, "Time for us to do something." While we're doing the right thing, we just kind of did everybody's songs.

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Like Sly and the Family Stone, Gladys Knight, Temptations. Anybody you could name, The Intruders, anybody.

Interviewer: What were some of the first songs you guys sang together when you were really young?

D. Calvin: We sang songs by The Tymes. We would call up The Tymes. Sly and the Family Stone.

Scott: I remember singing a song walking down the street. We were singing "As We Stroll Along Together." Who was that by? [Singing] "As we stroll along together..."

D. Calvin: [Singing] Oooooooooo...

Scott: I remember that!

D. Calvin: The Tymes!

Scott: That was The Tymes? I remember that being one of the first songs.

Interviewer: JC, you were around.

Scott: He was a little boy!

D. Calvin: "How do you do this? How y'all do that?"

Scott: But, he wasn't that little.

D. Calvin: "How you get that high note?"

Scott: Wait, wait, wait. JC wasn't that small. "The baby, the baby"- he wasn't no baby.

JC Calvin: I'm gonna tell him your age if you keep on-

Scott: He wasn't that little.

[3:00]

[INAUDIBLE]

JC Calvin: I was, like, four years younger than them.

Scott: See? I was saying he wasn't that old.

JC Calvin: I wasn't. But yeah, but I'm like four years- that was a lot of years, 'cause those guys were running fast.

Scott: Ok, if you're the 9<sup>th</sup> grade- if we the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, that means he was in the what?

JC Calvin: What?

Scott: 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup>.

JC Calvin: Yeah.

Scott: Oh, he was little, wasn't he?

JC Calvin: I mean- well, what I remember is our house was the music house. So, you know, it was all around. Instead of me going outside and playing, after I heard them harmonize a few times, I'm like, "Hey, well this sounds pretty good. Maybe I could do this." And I started off, violin for them. They used to do, entertainment in the park, what was it? Showboat?

D. Calvin: Showboat on Channel 5.

JC Calvin: The Showboat. And then I got to- they would take me everywhere they go if they was in town. "'Come on, man get you in here! Let's go!'" So I would go.

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So I got experience through a lot of things, but I started from the bottom and then came up with them.

Scott: But he was in a group, too.

JC Calvin: Yeah, I had my own group.

Interviewer: What was your group?

JC Calvin: My group was called The Living Examples. Guy up here named Ronnie Mitchell and Elwood Covington. We had our group and we did all The Temprees' songs in high school. We played at The Rose, a local club here. We did all The Temprees' songs. When I came to the group it was like, I already know.

Scott: That made sense.

JC Calvin: It was a big experience. It was Larry Dodson, Jasper Philips- Jabbo. It was just like I was their little brother. So if I was in town and they had a show, they would always recognize me, give me my props that I stand up there. They'd be like, "Who was that?" "Oh, that's my other little brother." So I was the little brother for a long time. But

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finally, as you know, signed for the big time and I'm here triffin', trippin', tryin' to keep this thing going.

Interviewer: What were some of the first songs you guys wrote together? When did you guys first start doing original material?

Scott: I was the first one to write a song.

D. Calvin: Yeah.

Scott: But both of them had come through to say, "Ah, we gonna write some songs." The thing that always happens with us- like the first album, *Dedicated to the One I Love*- bam, hit. My first song I wrote- bam, hit, *Love Maze*. Then the rest of them weren't always like that, but that one, it was really a hit. No matter who wrote it, everybody always contributed to it. You know, arranging it or- you come in with your melody and your words, ain't no telling what [INAUDIBLE] gonna look like.

Interviewer: Now you guys came up with your own harmony arrangements.

Scott: Oh, yeah. We always have done our own background.

Interviewer: What were the parts? Who sang what?

D. Calvin: We would switch around.

[6:00]

Interviewer: So you guys were able to sing a whole range of parts.

JC Calvin: We're still doing that today.

Scott: We have to.

JC Calvin: There's three of us so we switch up. I might sing first, Del might sing first.

Scott: But I always sing the bottom if I can.

JC Calvin: We make him go up sometimes. He can hold it for maybe seconds.

Scott: I have to sometimes. But it's so uncomfortable.

D. Calvin: He can hold it for fifteen seconds. But that's what makes us unique. We get together like this all the time. We ain't even have to rehearse. We're just like this. [rawr noises] Bite at each other, but we come out with a real good product.

Interviewer: A very smooth product, yeah.

Scott: When did you hear about The Temprees? I'm gonna interview you.

Interviewer: So when did you guys first start playing bigger shows? Was it before you went to Stax or was it when you got to Stax?

D. Calvin: Ooo, we played big shows-

Scott: -big shows

[7:00]

before.

D. Calvin: Yeah we played, we went to, we used the house for a lot of shows. One in particular. We played at Arkansas A&M, which later became Arkansas State over at Pine Bluff. We played our show with The Dells. And at that time it was myself, Larry, Scotty, and Jabbo and we used to wear these capes and we had devised a way of how we were gonna make these capes twirl and we got it right, you know, we wanted to show The Dells-

Scott: 'Cause we watched a Temptations show and The Temptations had some capes. So we got our own capes.

Interviewer: What kind of capes did you guys wear?

D. Calvin: They were red lining and black-

Scott: They had a black outside with black pants and a red shirt with ruffles on it and ruffles on the sleeves and the cape.

JC Calvin: You still wearin' that.

Scott: He lyin'. No, but on the serious side, we did- we were blessed, I'll say, enough to always be hired

[8:00]

to do shows and stuff even before we got a record out, because people thought we had a record out.

D. Calvin: Sure did.

Scott: We did all the big shows. We opened up for lots of people. Even before we got a song. And then we got a song and we did the Starlight Review or the \*Goodman Review\* or something we did.

D. Calvin: One of them.

Scott: 'Cause we did '(Follow Her) Rules and Regulations' at the Colosseum. We had them silver suits on. Vegas suits. Firemen's suits.

Interviewer: So the Starlight Review, or whichever review you're talking about, that was the first time you went out after you recorded-

Scott: Here in Memphis, on a big stage, in a big audience like that, yes.

Interviewer: And that was after you recorded with Stax.

Scott: Right.

Interviewer: And that was the first time you guys went out.

D. Calvin: Oh no.

Scott: Not the first time-

Interviewer: Well after you had a hit it was the first time you went out.

Scott: Right. After we cut a record.

D. Calvin: Well after we cut the record-

Scott: '(Follow Her) Rules and Regulations'

D. Calvin: Right, but what we did was that we had to travel all over the country with two songs

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in a car with us and our manager and our producer. We drove all over the country, you know, setting up sites-

Scott: But you mean when we first cut the record the first big thing we did here in town.

D. Calvin: Here in town, right, but recording and going to a big stage- we played Saginaw, Michigan, we played-

Scott: We played a lot of places after the record was cut-

D. Calvin: Right, that's what I'm saying-

Scott: But I think he was asking what's the first thing we did here.

Interviewer: Well no, but this is interesting because you guys are all from here, you're all from Memphis. This is the first time you have an opportunity to go all over the country, is that correct?

Scott: Oh, we went everywhere.

D. Calvin: It was the first time we had an audience all over the country.

Scott: We did the North Carolinas.

Interviewer: What was it like for a bunch of Memphis guys to go around to Saginaw, Michigan?

D. Calvin: It was different because, first of all, we didn't realize there were a lot of people of other races in Michigan. 'Cause we didn't know the history. So we got there and they were-

Scott: You mean the [INAUDIBLE] people of other races?

D. Calvin: Yeah, I mean

[10:00]

not just black and white, there were Mexicans, Latinos-

Scott: You mean coming to our shows?

D. Calvin: You know, different nationalities. So I was like, OK, I looked out in the crowd and this is a packed house full of people. So Scotty had a little thing, he wanted to do this special steps, so he did his special step one time and he fell off the stage.

Scott: Oh, I sure did.

D. Calvin: A whole group of people caught him-

Scott: That's why my back hurtin' today.

D. Calvin: -and he never touched the ground. And they brought him right back to the stage.

Scott: Oh, I was so scared for a minute.

D. Calvin: And there was nothing we could do, but those people caught him when he slipped off the stage and put him right back on there.

Scott: I hadn't slipped, they pulled me off-

D. Calvin: Yeah right.

Interviewer: It's a good thing you liked your record-

Scott: My eyes were like this big. 'Cause I saw myself being gripped when we did that. But no we were like really popular in the Carolinas and Florida-

D. Calvin: New York

Scott: -New York, we did the Midwest like Oklahoma and Kansas City, St. Louis, those places like that, we did all that.

[11:00]

The strangest thing for me- now, 'Explain it to Her Mama' was very big in Los Angeles when we did it-

Interviewer: Which one?

Scott: 'Explain it to Her Mama.' It was bigger than 'Dedicated' by Statistics, but now since we've migrated over to this time, the West Coast is in our favor a lot.

JC Calvin: Oh yeah.

Scott: That's why we still go there. We're going- in a couple of weeks we'll be there.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Scott: They love The Temprees' stuff out there.

Interviewer: What was the change in the feel in the shows for you guys from when you were playing big shows, opening for big acts, before you had the hit record? I'm sure you got a great response then, but how was the feeling different when 'Dedicated to the One I Love' came out and all of a sudden you had a national success?

D. Calvin: It was very flattering the way that the people responded and people who wanted to hire us. The response was more like, "Can you all"- Doug Cornelius even came to us and

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asked us, "Will you all play on Soul Train? How can I get in touch with your manager?" You know, it's like, OK, so our status was raised because we had a national hit.

Scott: And the other thing, too, was- this was Cornelius's concern- there's a great anticipation for that song. You can do stuff, it'd be nice, but they're waiting for that song.

Interviewer: You have to keep the right level of tension up with the crowd before you do it.

Scott: Right. It's different if you got a slew of hits, but when you first go out with your first hit, it's nice what you do, they like it alright, but they're waiting for that song.

Interviewer: And what happens after you play that song? Then they all leave?

Scott: Now you have to save that song for last.

JC Calvin: "'We leavin'!'"

Interviewer: Either that or you got to play it twice.

Scott: It's one of those things where you really can't go above, you can't rise above that. For us at that time, there was nothing greater than 'Dedicated', so

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that's what we'd do after 'Dedicated.' We'd say, "Bye, it's over!"

Interviewer: Now, when did you first hear 'Dedicated' on the radio?

JC Calvin: I heard 'Dedicated' before it came on the radio. We had a tape of it and I was like, "Man, this is totally different." That was his first lead. Jabbo was doing the leads. This was his first lead and I was like, "Now, that don't sound like Jabbo." He said, "Bruh, that's me, that's me!"

D. Calvin: Everybody thought it was Jabbo, but it was me.

Scott: There's probably people that still think it's Jabbo. I say, "That's legit. Jabbo's not singing this, no, that's Del."

JC Calvin: So it was really exciting. Then I had my little group. Since we're brothers, I mean, we sound alike and, honey, I would wear that song out. "You sure you ain't the one singing that

song?" "Nah, that was my brother!" We did a Temprees show everywhere we went and we did The Chitlin' Circuit. Arkansas, Mississippi, BMW's would come out, Al Green would come out and we'd come out the BMW the night before we'd go in there and

[14:00]

do our little thing. It was fun. We like to say the music kind of- was accepted even- 'cause what we were playing was basically like blues bars so when we played 'Dedicated' everybody was-

Scott: It was an across the board song.

JC Calvin: -they was into that song. Everybody was into that song.

Interviewer: You think maybe Memphis and the area around Memphis, specifically- it's very open to the idea of different genres of music mixing together? 'Cause I find that in this city, you can go to see a blues band and they're going to play an R&B song, they're going to play a rock n roll song. I think that maybe there's less difference between the genres in music for people in Memphis than anywhere else.

Scott: Well, yeah, because me and you, we touched on that the other day. Nobody thinks that we're from Memphis, formerly. I mean our style, our songs. Nobody else here sings the sweet love thing, the Delfonic, Blue Magic type thing. We were the only group

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really here to do it. Now other groups here sang other folks songs who did that, but to come out of Memphis with that kind of singing, nobody did it. Our producer at this era Jimmy, said, "I thought y'all was from New Jersey. Anywhere but here with that type of singing. They don't want to think that we're from here.

Interviewer: Now for you guys, 'cause you guys did the singing, do you feel like there's a Memphis spin on that Philly soul sound on your records?

Scott: I do instrumentally.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Scott: Music wise. Not so much vocally. But I think instrumental wise and sound wise.

D. Calvin: I think the creativity, because the rhythm and blues music from this area is so, it's different. You might have a bass line that might be thumpin', you might have a strange little guitar

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“waw” streak or something like that and in our songs we had mostly music that did a lot of the things that we didn’t have to do. [Singing] We didn’t even have to sing it. All we had to do was sing, “Ooo baby.”

JC Calvin: Now my take on it when I was in New Jersey that was the style. Smokey Robinson I think he first came out with that falsetto style. Then Philly took over, Delfonics just took it to a whole other level. Then The Stylistics, then Temprees, then Blue Magic. And I think after that the rest of them were just trying to get to that level and they never reached that level.

Scott: Right.

JC Calvin: They just never did reach it

Scott: I agree with that, ‘cause-

JC Calvin: I think it was just going around. Everything goes in full circle.

D. Calvin: There’s a lot of uniqueness with all of those people you mentioned.

Scott: Our producer’s name was Tom Nixon and there’s one thing that Tom Nixon told us- and I will pat him on his back to this day

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for it- Tom Nixon said, “I’m not going to over-produce these records because when you all get on stage, you want to sound like your music.” One of the first things people say to us, “Y’all sound just like y’all’s record.” All the time. You know how now a lot of things are over-produced- well not necessarily over-produced, they sound like there’s a lot of reduction in it and then you get to the stage it doesn’t sound like that because you can’t have all that stuff playing? He took out certain things- like once people were in the studio and he was, like, remixin’ and ‘Love between a Boy and Girl’ was on so I was up there with him. So he hit a button and all the strings and oboes and stuff came on. I said, “That ain’t in the record!” He said, “I don’t want to put it in the record because when you all got on stage, it wasn’t gonna sound exactly like it sound.” And it came to pass. I think ‘Dedicated’ was the first really big produced song. The rest of the albums was basically a good rhythm section.

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Interviewer: Now, see I would say that’s a pretty Memphis-

D. Calvin: -based thing.

Scott: Ah, that’s when we have that quality.

Interviewer: Yeah. Because a lot of- of course, you know, those Delfonics records, they’re very beautiful, but they’re very bombastic in production-

Scott: Oh, yes.

I: And Memphis was always stripped down. It was only two or three horns, guitar, bass...

Scott: And I guess one of the unique things for us was to sing the way we sing without all that pretty stuff all on top of it. He basically used the voices to create the mood.

Interviewer: And I would say that's a very Memphis tradition. If you look at The Astors and The Mad Lads there's always this Memphis rhythm section, this raw soul with the smooth soul on top, which is an incredible combination. You guys were sort of the end of the peak in that trajectory.

Scott: And, Jake, one of the other things that happened- and this has been a blessing, too- Memphis had many groups. I mean,

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every corner you go on, there was a singing group.

D. Calvin: Right. Every club.

Scott: But we remained. And we're still out there. And for some reason after thirty-something years, we still are called upon, respected, and looked at to come and sing. There's something in the formula that makes it happen. I don't know what it'd be.

D. Calvin: I don't know what it is. It's just something special and people say that, you know, "Don't change your style," you know, but we have to change some because the rhythm, the music is making a circle. It's not all orchestrated now. It's more like that beat's got to be there to make everybody's head do this. We have to change a little bit, too, and we have. We have changed.

Interviewer: You know one thing that I think really strikes me about you guys and the music that you've made is that there's always been a lot of positivity in it because there's probably so much positivity between you guys, I think a lot of people who have been- ran the gamut and were really hot in the '60s or '70s, I think they might

[20:00]

have more bitterness than you guys do. And I think keeping that positivity probably keeps you younger out there-

Scott: Oh, but it does!

Interviewer: -keeps you warmer.

Scott: Believe, believe me. I know that's true, Jake, I know that's true. We talk to other people in groups and the things that they go through and even with Stax- being bitter with Stax- when they call us to do something, we'll be right there.

D. Calvin: Right. Right. Because we looked at our counterparts, our peers and we look at the way that they're living and we look at the way that we're living, it's like, "Ok, it's a big difference here." Our records are still played all over the country. All over the world. So, why is it like that? So, our thing is that, it is truly a blessing for us to be able to still hit those high notes at our age, at this late time in our lives, so it's truly a blessing. Even with Jabbo passing and JC taking his place- it's another blessing. We're still being called the same thing.

[21:00]

It's all good.

JC Calvin: Yeah, three years now and it's been a while.

D. Calvin: It's been a while.

Scott: But you know, one thing, Jake, that The Temprees need is a hit record. We need a new hit now record. It'll put you back. I watched, just yesterday, I was doing some paperwork and I was watching, I had tunes on the VCR. *The Fighting Temptations*, the movie *The Fighting Temptations*. The O'Jays's were in it. I just looked at them, I said, "That's another group that keep on keepin' on." They still right there. You don't have to necessarily always have a lot of gold records, long as you got something that's substantial enough to keep you working.

Interviewer: Certainly. Now, when you guys first went out on the road- let me say, the excitement of the first time you went on the road was there obviously.

Scott: Detroit.

[22:00]

Interviewer: Ok, let's have it.

D. Calvin: For me it wasn't because we had- since we started as teenagers and when we realized we had a talent and that we could hear all these different parts, it wasn't anything that was really unusual about being on stage when we're singing in front of five people or we were singing in front of five thousand.

Scott: We never had that problem.

D. Calvin: It's that we have a show to do, gonna do the show no matter what because this is what we're being paid for, it's what we wanna do, so let's go and have some fun. Get ready for the next show.

Scott: My personal excitement was, I'm a traveler, I like to go, I like to be out, I like to, you know. When I can get out of here and go somewhere, I'll be happy.

D. Calvin: Yeah I enjoy that, too.

Scott: Even to this day, I still get excited for that. I love to leave. I love to travel. It's a great learning experience. There's nothing like that.

D. Calvin: Every time we do travel, when we go out of town, we always meet somebody from Memphis and they come up and introduce themselves and, "I remember you all when you all

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played at our high school." "I remember you [INAUDIBLE]" and all these different things and like, ok, so these same people grew up from high school to the clubs and then, here they are right now.

Scott: But again that was another smart move we made.

D. Calvin: Yes it was.

Scott: The kids couldn't come to us, so we went to them.

JC Calvin: But Jake, I love the crowd. I love just being on- they have their own-

D. Calvin: Yes he does.

JC Calvin: I love the crowd. The crowd get hype, I mean it's a natural high that you just can't duplicate until you get back on the stage. I try to leave it all on the stage because I'm ready for that. I'm ready for it. They may be used to it, but to me that's a joy.

D. Calvin: It's still exciting, but I mean it's like- it's not a job, it's not a chore, but it's something that is natural when you do it.

JC Calvin: You love doing it.

Scott: It's something you want. It's something you like to do.

D. Calvin: Thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you.

Scott: The thing about it, and I'll speak for myself personally on this, if you know you got it together

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and you know you got something to offer and you know that it's going to be good, that's my joy. As we walk out on the stage and I know that our act is together, the band playing right, we looking good, we got great songs, a great production, a good show, I won't be worried about nothing else. There's nothing to worry about.

D. Calvin: Nothing. Smile and have fun and sing your song.

Scott: All you gotta do is do your thing. When it gets like that, you get to the high points, you know when your show gonna rise, you know when it's gonna mellow out, you know when it might go down a little bit because you know the parts, what's gonna happen where.

Interviewer: Now everyone says that in order to get to the place where you got it all together and you're looking good and you're sounding good, you know, when you're young you've got to go through some hurdles first. You've got to make a few mistakes. It's hard in the beginning. What was it like in the very beginning? Before you knew everything that you had to do to put it all together.

D. Calvin: It was like this, I'm going to break it down to a very raw area, low area. The Lanskys, downtown,

[25:00]

they used to have a little place, a store on Beale in that- I think they used to kind of like give clothes away. So, some of those clothes, we used for the stage. See what I'm sayin'? We didn't have money to buy that, but if it was given to us, we did the little tweaks and all those things we needed to do to make it look like, "Hey, these guys dressin'- they starting their own style." That's one of the things that we were able to do as teenagers to look- just dress a little different. So then we pass the baton over to Scotty. Since he had the ability to, had the opportunity to have his own modeling agency or something like that. He was very good at putting together clothes.

Scott: Use stuff again and again.

D. Calvin: But anyways, that's when we was teenagers. Putting things together.

Scott: One of the challenges of it all was not having a lot of money.

D. Calvin: That's right.

Scott: And trying to come up with something that looked neat and nice

[26:00]

and together with a little different twist to it. 'Cause we were known for our clothes. We came out there with an army outfit, you know, JC was in the military, too. He said, "Why y'all gonna put some army- I don't want to be reminded of the military!" But it was the hottest uniform we got. It's the one when we put on, everybody go, "Goddamn."

D. Calvin: They just go [gasps]

Scott: But it's real military. No matter what anybody says or thinks or does, we have a manager who for their own benefits, which I understand, as well as ours began to give us money to do uniforms and different things and do stuff. We had to pay him back.

D. Calvin: Right, well we would had a creative peer or two like 19 years old-

Scott: Right

D. Calvin: The young guys.

Scott: Now remember in the '70s, couture-wise, clothes-wise, the world was going through change. Didn't nobody know what to really wear.

[27:00]

Going back to what you asked about- the hurdles. We've also talked about this. You know how you hear those horror stories about groups on the road and having a hard time and all of them getting arrested and all that kind of stuff-

D. Calvin: No, we learned early.

Scott: We didn't really have those difficulties.

D. Calvin: Do the show, go to the room, don't have those wild parties, and go home.

Scott: Me and Jabbo got into some trouble once-

D. Calvin: I was a good boy.

Scott: -but it was minor.

Interviewer: It was minor.

Scott: But I went back and got in trouble again the next night.

D. Calvin: But I always lock the door when he gets out of his cage. I always lock his door and then I take the key with me.

Scott: He was asking who the wild one was and I told him I wasn't.

D. Calvin: I always lock his door.

Scott: But we never stayed at raggedy hotels. We never were hungry out on the road.

[28:00]

We missed a lot of that. And we did some children's work as well. We were just lucky. You know, we were just lucky.

D. Calvin: Yeah. Very fortunate. And like we said before because the- when 'Dedicated' was released, everything just changed. Everything changed.

Interviewer: Now, the world was also changing at that point.

Scott: It was.

Interviewer: If you look at Memphis, Tennessee between 1962 and 1972, you know-

JC Calvin: The turmoil [INAUDIBLE]

Interviewer: Yeah, and the blood that was shed for that change.

Scott: All the assassinations came in between that time. Everybody.

Interviewer: That was when you guys were coming up. You guys were making black music in a time and a place where- that was starting to mean different things. People were starting to write political music. Now, you guys didn't have political hits, but that climate, that political climate, the racial climate

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in the years you guys were coming up, how did that effect the music you were making? How did that effect some of the performances, the dynamics in the group?

D. Calvin: Well, we did the political songs. We did 'Ball of Confusion,' [INAUDIBLE], 'Sock a Smile on Your Face' all those things that made people aware that there's a change going on here. You have to choose sides now where do you want to be? We sang those songs, but we didn't sing anything about, you know, 'Burn Baby Burn.' Nothing like that, but we did indicate that there was a change.

Interviewer: And you felt the change.

Scott: Oh yeah, we felt the change too because I think from the color structure I think things were opening up a little bit more and we were coming to a period where we're busting doors down so people could go in and do stuff. And I think we had another time coming. What you must remember, Lil' J, the type of songs we sang through all the 'Burn Baby Burn'

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all the fighting all day and carrying on and 'Ball of Confusion' and stuff we sang sweet love songs so by the time people got to us they were ready to chill and be happy.

Interviewer: Yeah, that was the positivity again.

D. Calvin: But, you know, in Memphis, Tennessee, the Shell. They used to have concerts at the Shell.

Interviewer: The Overton Park Shell

D. Calvin: Yeah, I mean all kinds of people were there dressed any kind of way. Came in, "Here's some good music," that's all they want to do.

Interviewer: That's where all the country blues festivals were.

D. Calvin: They didn't care about who was next to you. "Hey, man, how you doin'?" It didn't matter.

Interviewer: And that was the special thing about Memphis, is that there were these places like Stax, like the band Shell. Now, of course, one of the most important things that happened in rock and roll was the fact that there were white and black musicians playing together at the Overton Park band Shell, at the Blues Festival, and at Stax Records.

Scott: Right, right. Because it didn't happen. It didn't happen. I mean those things everywhere else just didn't happen.

Interviewer: Yeah. And it was an inherent statement, it was a political statement at that time even without the lyrics

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for you guys to be making the music you were making with the people you were making it with in this town.

Scott: It just wasn't a big deal to see Isaac or Al or anybody 'cause you saw them all the time. You were all around each other.

D. Calvin: And we had a goal also.

Scott: Yeah, everybody had a goal. I think some of our stuff happened then faster than we thought, but when the Stax transition came about in the end of the financial thing happened and Stax, you know, we really went through a transition, 'cause we were in the middle of stuff, didn't know which way to go. When we were picked up immediately- CBS picked us up- and put out- they tried to take us into the disco thing. It wasn't working. People formed us, made us into love, but we didn't.

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We always just want a rockin' number, you know? But the disk jockey said [vocal noise] on the other side. Every time we tried to do that.

Interviewer: So there's always an up tempo A Side and a slow tempo B side and the B side always got more popular than the A side.

Scott: That's the way it was.

D. Calvin: Always.

Scott: The only song that was up tempo that kind of made it was 'Explain it to Her Mama.'

D. Calvin: Yeah.

Scott: The rest of our songs that were up tempo, they just weren't that happy with them.

D. Calvin: They do remember the very first one was '(Follow Her) Rules and Regulations.' People start [INAUDIBLE].

Scott: Musicians remember that song.

D. Calvin: People fast remember that song.

Scott: Really? '(Follow Her) Rules and Regulations'?

JC Calvin: That was the first Temprees song, I think-

Scott: That was our first release.

JC Calvin: -that was released here in Memphis.

Scott: '(Follow Her) Rules and Regulations.' Ooo Jabbo hated that song.

Interviewer: Why'd he hate that song?

D. Calvin: It was so high.

Scott: It was high.

[Singing]

Scott: I mean, it started out high

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and then went higher. So, you know, it was hell for him. And I guess, I just hated to sing it too. But it was boring, for me the background was boring. But it got us started. And kids love it. Younger people love it.

D. Calvin: It was a good song.

Interviewer: What was your favorite song to sing together and what was your favorite song then and what is your favorite song to sing now?

Scott: Out of our songs?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Scott: I like 'I'm for You, You for Me.'

D. Calvin: I like 'Love Maze.' I mean, though I'd say 'Dedicated,' I like 'Love Maze.'

JC Calvin: And 'Love Between a Boy & Girl' is my favorite song.

Scott: So we all got a different song we like.

Interviewer: And what about now? What is the song you feel like you sing the best together now?

Scott: Oh, I'm gonna tell you what we sound good on, but we haven't sung it on stage yet. Alicia Keys. What's the name of that song?

JC Calvin: 'If I Ain't Got You.'

Scott: 'If I Ain't Got You.' These boys together sound good on that song I'm telling you. I can't wait for us to sing it somewhere 'cause it's gonna turn it out.

Interviewer: Can we hear a little of it now?

[34:00]

D. Calvin: Yeah, just I was sick yesterday so...

Interviewer: Alright we don't have to...

Scott: [INAUDIBLE]

D. Calvin: Alright. So how does it go?

[Singing]

D. Calvin: What is the words to this song?

[Singing]

[35:00]

D. Calvin: See what I'm saying?

Scott: But when we sing it right, it sounds real good.

D. Calvin: For where it is, though.

Scott: But that's the song I think we sound good on. We're also doing out of the rim for us- We're doing Outkast- I forgot the name of it.

Interviewer: Which one?

JC Calvin: [Sings] I like the way you move.

Interviewer: So you're sort of taking the old school more doo-wop, more '70s soul sound and bringing it to a modern context.

Scott: That's basically what it is.

Interviewer: And you said you've got a younger audience now than you expected to.

D. Calvin: We're appealing to them.

Interviewer: Yeah, that's great.

Scott: But you know what's strange, sometimes you can be in Memphis and someone says, "Oh The Temprees! You were The Temprees!" and then you go somewhere else they'll say, "Who are The Temprees?"

[36:00]

Interviewer: But that's the beauty of the local culture. 'Cause even when you guys came out it was getting to be much more of a national business, but even when you guys came out, one thing was a hit here, one thing was a hit here and you guys were big in Philly, maybe you weren't as big in Florida. But that's a wonderful thing because every city's going to have its own sound and its own flavor and we don't have that as much now. You get the same hits on the radio everywhere. There's not local program radio.

Scott: You know it's like rotation to them.

D. Calvin: Play this all day.

Scott: Just go [hiss].

Interviewer: And it's funny because everybody who I've talked to who was involved in Stax and everybody in Memphis who I've done these interviews with they all say the same thing. They can't stand what's going on with radio, they can't stand these big national program directors and in a town like this where the musical history's so rich, you'd think there'd be more than one or two stations capitalizing on that.

Scott: I'm with you on that, Jake. You tell it. If I were able I would love to start a station that didn't play nothing but new releases. Give

[37:00]

everybody a chance. You didn't have to already have sold 500,000 copies for them to play this record.

D. Calvin: Just to test it.

Scott: Now you've got to have already sold a million damn records going out in the distribution probably.

Interviewer: And especially in a city like this that was famous for giving people opportunity who wouldn't have always had it, you know? And that the Stax business model was that you had a 45 record, it didn't cost anything to make it, you recorded it one day and the next day they'd put it out in the record shop and they played it for people. They'd say, "How's this?" "Well that's alright," and they'd play this one and say, "Oh this one's good keep doing records like this," and that's how they figured out how to make records, you know? How are we supposed to figure out how to make records when everybody's always worried about five million people buying them?

Scott: There are situations, and you know, there has to be a hundred thousand copies sold before the [INAUDIBLE] man even look at your record. 'Cause all this week I was doing something for our big brother Willie B., and so I been on the phone talking to a lot of people and making a lot of contacts

[38:00]

that I had and some new ones I received. They were telling me stuff like, "Well, you oughta get the record out. After the first 200,000 are sold, then I'll put you in our rotation." Wait, I got to sell them for 100 first. So it's hard man. It is not going to be an easy task and I see that right now.

Interviewer: No, certainly not.

Scott: What might help us during this is a lot of people that I've talked to this week didn't know we were still together. Didn't know we were still living, thought we were a lot older. That's what people sometimes say to us now, "Y'all ain't the real Temprees. Y'all aren't old enough."

D. Calvin: Yeah that's what they say. "Y'all aren't old enough to be The Temprees."

Scott: But then we started out young.

D. Calvin: You know, "You went to school in Memphis? You were here?" Some people don't.

Interviewer: But it's great to see you guys are still going strong and you're still out playing and getting along and raising hell.

D. Calvin: It's all about enjoying life. If you don't enjoy

[39:00]

life, what is life?

Scott: We experienced a lot of things like JC said in the last three years doing different things. We sung our first gospel songs, sang in church, we'd never done that before. We did a lot of stuff. We did the National Anthem at the NASCAR race thing.

D. Calvin: Racetrack.

Scott: That came out real good. One person wore red, one wore white, one wore royal blue. We did some of the things to make you stand out. Then Deanie calls us to do things for Stax. But you haven't interviewed the Mad Lads yet...

Interviewer: What's that?

Scott: You haven't interviewed The Mad Lads yet have you?

Interviewer: No I have not.

Scott: Who have you interviewed? The Astors-

Interviewer: The Astors, you guys, we had Skip Pitts in yesterday. Who else has come in? Mable John, of course, when she was here we interviewed her. She interviewed Mavis Staples when she sang with the kids at The Orpheum. We try to get a lot of different people-

Scott: The Bar-Kays?

Interviewer: -[INAUDIBLE] Memphis records.

[39:00]

I called James Alexander and Larry Dodson, but we haven't gotten in touch with them yet. I'd love to talk to both of them.

Scott: You sure can- you can get them really easily if I get them right here [points to cell phone].

Interviewer: Next time I come back to Memphis I'll call you up and see if we can get them.

Scott: Okay.

Interviewer: I've called the Hodges brothers and those people-

Scott: Teenie?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Scott: You have the right numbers?

Interviewer: Yeah, but Teenie's sick, you know, Teenie's not doing so well. So I don't think he's got the energy right now.

Scott: Yeah I saw him downtown and he was looking real strange.

Interviewer: Yeah, he's got to take oxygen a lot of the time.

[End]