

Mick Hucknall remembers writing songs with Lamont Dozier, 1986



This is me with Lamont Dozier, one of the greatest legends in pop music. He wrote and produced [with Brian and Eddie Holland] some of the biggest hits of the Motown era in the 60s and way beyond. He worked with the Supremes, Marvin Gaye, the Four Tops and many others, and I've lost track of how many hits he's had [14 number ones in America alone]. I went to his home in Los Angeles in late 1986 for a songwriting session. I was 26 and Simply Red had recently really taken off. Our first album, *Picture Book*, was already a hit and *Holding Back The Years* had gone to number two in the UK and number one in the US a few months earlier. My life had changed dramatically, so it was an incredibly exciting time, but there was also a lot of pressure because the record company wanted a second album as fast as possible.

My manager thought it was a good idea for me to work with another songwriter to broaden my horizons, so I was put together with Lamont, who was a big hero of mine. I remember sitting at the piano in his house and having some of his hits flashing through my mind – *Baby Love*, *Stop! In the Name of Love*, *Going Back to My Roots* – and thinking, this guy wrote these!

We spent a whole morning just making a lot of noise and banging out tunes on the piano and recording it on a Walkman. There was no singing, or writing of lyrics, it was just us working out some melodies. Lamont is an ideas machine and works fast, like he's on a production line, and I remember having to

We spent a whole morning just making a lot of noise. It was a very convivial few hours. Lamont is such a warm, friendly guy and he was quite paternal towards me

respectfully keep reining him in. It was a very convivial few hours. Lamont is such a warm, friendly guy and he was quite paternal towards me.

After that session I went away with an ordinary audio cassette and worked out the songs on my own. I came up with *Infidelity* and *Suffer*, which both appeared on the *Men and Women* album the next year. Lamont was happy with them, although he thought the words to *Infidelity* were a bit risky.

We worked together again at his house a couple of years later and wrote two more songs – *You've Got It* and *Turn It Up* – for Simply Red's third album, *A New Flame*. We lost touch after that. He's 73 now and still going strong.

I laugh when I look at this picture because of my double-breasted suit. Simply Red had just done a deal to be kitted out by Paul Smith. It was the first time I'd ever had anything bespoke, so I was very proud of it. I still have that suit and I can still fit into it – just. **Interview by Rob McGibbon**
The new Simply Red album, Big Love, is out now and their UK tour begins on November 28; simplyred.com