

A Conversation with Sondre Lerche
by Frank Goodman (5/2008, Puremusic.com)

For an admitted vidiot, I'm not exactly a huge romantic comedy or, certainly, a chick flick guy. I'm not sure if it's considered a chick flick or not, but I was really surprised how much I liked the Steve Carell movie *Dan In Real Life*. Well, I mean, it stars Carell, but it's a Peter Hedges movie; he directed, and there our so-called story on Sondre Lerche begins. Because Hedges' vision of how he wanted not only the music, not only the songs, but the songwriter to fit into the cast and creation of this movie is truly without precedent of which we are aware.

Because he does a lovely job, we'll leave the telling of the tale to this young and gifted Norwegian from the town of Bergen, who now resides in NYC with his actress wife. For the movie score, several previously written songs of Sondre's were used, and a handful more written for the film, as well as some closely related and interdependent cue music that's equally catchy and memorable.

I can't recall ever seeing a movie where the music actually served to make it an even better movie. And the credit goes first to Hedges, because the vision begins and erupts there. After going through scores of artists, Lerche's music was what stuck, and Sondre stepped up to the plate remarkably, indelibly.

Although we hope you're not only moved to get the soundtrack and the many CDs of Sondre Lerche, you must (if you haven't already) rent or buy the DVD of *Dan In Real Life* and watch the Special Features CD where Sondre Lerche and director Hedges go deeply into how the music was conceived and executed for the film, and the amazing interplay between the composer and the actors, as well as the director. It was very exciting, and very inspiring.

For such a young artist, Lerche has already recorded albums of alternative pop, jazz ballads, and pop of a quirkier, jazzy nature, which is what we like the best. But you can sample them all on iTunes, and get the turn of the diamond that suits your current palate best. Our Listen page will all be clips from the movie soundtrack. Some of the big surprises for us lately: the movie, the soundtrack, and the songwriter turned composer, Sondre Lerche. (And what a nice cat, check him out.)

Puremusic: So where are you calling from today?

Sondre Lerche: I am in New York.

PM: Ah, yeah. I was just there and have to go right back, my father's brother passed away. You have a Joe's Pub gig coming up, right?

SL: I do have one on June 1st.

PM: Well, I'm gonna try and be in the city for that, 'cause I'd love to see you live. That's a solo gig, right?

SL: Yeah. It's a solo gig. I've been wanting to play at Joe's Pub for a long time. I went there a couple years ago, I think, to see Allen Touissant. I really love the room, so I've been trying to get a night there myself. I'm looking forward to it.

PM: It's a super room. I'm sure you'd get a wonderful crowd at Joe's pub. I'm sure New York must be going crazy for you right at the moment.

SL: [laughs] Well, we'll find out.

PM: Although one of our writers, Bill DeMain, reviewed *Duper Sessions* for us when it came out, and I think he interviewed you around then, too--probably for *Performing Songwriter*.

SL: I think I remember doing an interview with them, yeah.

PM: He's a very good songwriter and a writer for us. I really first turned onto you with the DVD of *Dan in Real Life*.

SL: Oh, cool.

PM: I really liked that movie, but I thought that your music made it a much better film experience.

SL: Oh, thank you.

PM: Music rarely does that.

SL: It's not often that you think anything about the music. Sometimes a film is impressing and emotional in its own sense, and you don't really notice the music, which is very often a good thing. The director [Peter Hedges] of *Dan in Real Life* wanted to make some room for the music and try to make it be a part of the story in a way.

PM: It was so much so. It was, to his credit--and yours, of course, but especially to his--a brilliant marriage of an actual movie and not just songs, but a songwriter. He carefully picked a guy with the right sensibility.

SL: Being a songwriter and a performing solo artist, what I started with, of course, was the songs. That's where I come from. But he wanted to blur the lines between what is a song that appears in a film and what is the actual score. I think we did something there that you don't see too often in films, where the songs are score and the score is songs. It sort of blurs the line between those two things.

PM: I think that's absolutely so, because when you're writing for the movie--I definitely wanna talk about this as much as we can--using your songs for the movie was a brilliant stroke on its own. But whenever you're composing all the cue music, as they call it, for the other dramatic bits, it's very in line with the songs that are used in the movie. You can hear the continuity of the guitar and bass tones throughout, for instance.

SL: That was really important to Peter--to have the texture of each instrument, and have those instruments linked emotionally to some of the characters, to some of what is going on, so that when you hear a song, it echoes also later in the film when something happens or when there's something--it's fairly subtle, but for me it was creatively so exciting, 'cause it was also a nice way for me to approach scoring. I'd never done that before. I started off with the songs, and then slowly we turned also to some of the songs or parts of the songs--stuff like that. I would work on that to make it sort of become a score, also.

PM: I think that other people are gonna pick up on how well that was done, and we'll start to see a little bit more of that in the kind of films where it would be appropriate, in those situational kind of lighthearted comedy-type stuff where you could get away with that, and not only get away with it, but have it be incredibly appropriate.

What was your initial contact with Peter Hedges like? How did that happen?

SL: I would say a lucky break, in a way. Very early on in the stages of *Dan In Real Life*, his music supervisor provided him with music to see if he wanted to find an artist to work with. He was imagining that it would be cool to find a songwriter who sings and whose songs could accompany Dan on his venture in the story.

PM: I mean, who would even think of such a thing? That's amazing.

SL: Yeah, I know. And he had asked to be sent music. He says he was provided with hundreds and hundreds of records and artists, and one of those records was mine.

PM: What a drag. They give you hundreds of records. [laughs]

SL: Yeah. I was just lucky that a record that he heard was mine--the records that he liked best were mine--and that my music resonated with him personally, of course, but also with the story that he was in the early stages of developing at the time. It was just a great and lucky stroke for me.

PM: Right, and just meant to be, you know?

SL: Yeah.

PM: Since a lot of *Phantom Punch*, your most recent CD, hits a lot harder than the more acoustic stuff you've cut, one wonders what Hedges was listening to. I wonder if it was earlier material.

SL: Oh, yeah. At that time--he heard me early in 2006 when *Duper Sessions* was just coming out, and he had been sent *Faces Down* and *Two Way Monologue*.

PM: Right. Especially, it seems like to me, *Two Way Monologue* would really be the bridge to knowing that he'd found his man for the job.

SL: Yeah. There were a couple of songs on both those records that really resonated. Of course, we brought "Modern Nature" from *Faces Down* into the film as well. But he was drawn towards that, and then we met in New York. He came to my apartment. I was in the middle of releasing *The Duper Sessions* and going into the studio to record *Phantom Punch*. I was releasing one record and then recording an opposite record, in a way.

PM: Right, of course.

SL: I think he liked that, as well. I gave him access to everything I had of demos and records and the albums I had recorded, of course, and albums I was going to record--and also unreleased songs--everything.

PM: Wow.

SL: I think he got excited about that--that I sort of opened up, warts and all.

PM: [laughs] That's beautiful. When you see a guy--you're Peter Hedges and you're listening to *Duper Sessions* and you're kind of privy to the *Phantom Punch* sessions that may be underway in some fashion, you must think, "Okay, when we get in the studio and he's got to compose to cues or he's gotta improvise, he'll be able to because he's got this huge swing going on in his writing."

SL: I think it didn't hurt that I had an interest for different sounds and different energies. There are songs from *Duper Sessions* in the film. There are actually in the film two songs I used from *Phantom Punch*, 'cause they needed music, basically, that the teenage daughter was listening to. Peter insisted that she was a big fan of *Phantom Punch*. [laughs] So we have two of those songs in the film, and one that's on the soundtrack also.

PM: "Airport Taxi Reception" is on there from *Phantom Punch*, and what else got on there?

SL: There's a scene where they use the tape from *Phantom Punch* in a cafe scene. It's playing in the background.

PM: Oh, wow.

SL: It's just sort of a nod, in a way, to that record. But that was all Peter. He put that in.

PM: It's totally cool.

SL: I didn't have anything to do with either the tape or "Airport Taxi" being in the film.

PM: On top of all the great songs, I'm really into all the cue music. I like that, in its way, as much as the songs, even, and I'm a song man. Maybe you could get us into any scene at all where you were there with your guitar and Peter says, "Okay now, in this section we're gonna need something." What was some of that process like?

SL: I came up with this theme, it's sort of a Dan and Marie theme. I wanted it to be used very discreetly throughout the film and then burst out in the final scene, 'cause Peter had said he wanted the best for the scene where Dan goes after Marie. That, of course, is where it all happens. That's when he just releases and goes after her. This theme that I had played him, he really wanted that there, and it just seemed natural that that would be sort of the place where that chord structure, which I had used several times already in the film, but I'd used it with different melodies and different rhythms and tried to keep it really subtle--this would be the place where all of the different elements that are based around that chord structure come together. I also asked for Peter's permission to have some strings there. He wanted to keep everything very, very moderate and not use any orchestral elements. I wanted a small string section and a harp for that section, and he granted me that. I worked a lot on that. There's a voiceover there as well that I had to keep in mind, and it's a scene that they kept re-editing all the time, and it would be longer and shorter, and all of that really affected the final music.

PM: So the music had to keep changing with every edit, right?

SL: Yeah. He would change the film edit and he would shorten down the voiceover that he has there. Those things affect the music tremendously and I'd have to adjust to that, of course, 'cause the words are the most important. The music has to be powerful but not overpowering, and emotional but not pushing it too far.

PM: And it's still gotta follow the scene.

SL: That was to me the most exciting thing about scoring. A lot of the other score elements are very acoustic, so I would have a melody or a chord structure that I liked or that Peter and I had agreed to try. In my bedroom here in New York, I would record ten different versions. Different tempos, different ways of going in and out of the scene. I would show them all to Peter in the editing room, and we would try them all out, and I would make adjustments and come back. A lot of it was just guitars or guitar-driven. It was very easy for me to be flexible and to try out different things really fast and see if it worked.

PM: Wow, that's fascinating. That's exactly what I was after--that you'd be in your bedroom and say, "Here's six, ten different takes on this possibility. Let's pick one and I'll hone it up."

SL: Yeah. That's exactly what we did.

PM: Very interesting.

So there are a couple of covers that we'll go into, too, and all this great cue music. Were there three or four new songs written for the film?

SL: There are four original new songs that I wrote, yeah.

PM: Were they written at the time of the film, or specifically for the film?

SL: I had the great privilege of being involved in the film at a very early stage. When Peter was still re-writing the script, he had already hired me as the songwriter/composer or whatnot.

PM: Oh, that's great.

SL: We didn't know exactly what my part would turn out to be, but he wanted me to be involved, basically.

PM: It's an amazing blueprint.

SL: I had access to the film in ways that were really inspiring. He would invite me to some of the auditions for some of the actors, and I would go on the set and work a lot with the actors in preparing--both myself, but also preparing them for their characters. Peter really believes in using music in tune with the characters and the work that they do, so we had a great time on the set just playing songs and getting to know each other. That really helped me, 'cause I've never done this before. It was really inspiring to have a lot of time on my hands and to really let things sink in and to enjoy the experience. Through that, I came up with a lot of songs, and four of these songs ended up in the film, and they're the original songs.

PM: Wow. I think in particular "To Be Surprised" is a fantastic song.

SL: Thank you. That one I had been working on for a long time, and I'd been thinking that it could be a good one for the film, but I was in trouble with the lyrics. I couldn't finish the lyrics. I couldn't even come up with something that I didn't hate.

PM: [laughs]

SL: Once when I was on the set, I was helping out in the scene where Steve Carell and Dane Cook are performing "Let My Love Open the Door." Steve Carell doesn't really play guitar, so I sort of helped him out by playing off camera.

PM: A guitar player could tell, sure.

SL: Yeah, exactly. I was helping out with that and just hanging around. Of course, on a film set, there's a lot of waiting, so I found myself just sitting with my guitar waiting for

cameras and everything to be ready. That night, in the house where they shot the film, I wrote the lyrics for "To Be Surprised." That really helped me identify the song even stronger with the film, with the characters and what we were doing. I feel that song couldn't come out of anything else.

PM: The more we talk about it, the more amazed I am, how early in the process Peter Hedges got you involved, and how unique the process was between the composer and the actors. I've never heard of anything like that in a film before.

SL: Everybody tells me, "If you're gonna do more film work in the future, don't get used to this thing, 'cause this is not how it's usually done."

PM: [laughs]

SL: For that, I really credit Peter Hedges. He wants things in a certain way to try to get the best out of everything, and I'm very thankful for that.

PM: I think I have to go back out and rent that DVD again, not just to see the movie again, but to see the bonus features again--to see you and Hedges talk about how the music was conceived, because it's really amazing.

SL: It was really a terrific process.

PM: Let's talk about the beautiful cover of the Pete Townsend song "Let My Love Open the Door." That's such a remarkable scene in the movie, of course, when they play that, but it's just a great cover to begin with. I never realized what a really good bridge that is-- "I have the only key to your heart"--and how it leads into the breakdown, especially in your version. But then, to me, what's really brilliant about your version in the movie is that string-intensive interpretation of the third verse-- "...when tragedy befalls you..."

SL: Yeah.

PM: How did that come together? Did you write that?

SL: I wanted to have that verse, 'cause I think in the film when Steve and Dane perform the song, that's where it gets really emotional, you know?

PM: Yeah.

SL: I was asked if I wanted to do a version myself of the song, so it could be represented on the soundtrack, since it's a significant part of the film. I also worked on the song with the actors in that scene, trying to structure the song and arrange the song so it would go from being sort of awkward and funny to awkward and really emotional.

PM: Right.

SL: I wanted to keep the acoustic vibe, to have it be based around just a guy playing guitar, like Steve and Dane in the song, but I wanted of course to elaborate on the song musically. It's a pretty simple song. It's sort of a three, four chord song, almost. But that verse--I wanted to take out a new sense of harmony in that particular verse to underline the lyrics, and also to make the song more exciting, 'cause by that time, it's been repeating a lot of the same chords and same parts. I thought it would be a strong statement to go into a completely different, harmonically-charged landscape, just for a couple of bars.

PM: Yeah.

SL: I worked with a terrific string arranger, Sonny Kompanek, and I gave him some records that I liked. A lot of Brazilian records. They always have the best string arrangements. For this song, I wanted an arrangement that never repeated itself, that always did new things, 'cause I think the song is strong enough to take that sort of activity. And then that part--I wanted to really change the chords and just explore, and make it really romantic and a bit heartbreaking, and then a big crescendo in the end.

PM: That was a super string chart he wrote there.

SL: Yeah. He did a terrific job. He also helped arrange some of the string parts in the score.

PM: Have you had occasion to run into Peter Townsend in the wake of the movie, or do you know if he got to hear your really great version or see the version in the film?

SL: I have no idea. Before we were shooting, we were talking about finding the right song. Peter Hedges had two songs that he wanted to try out, one of them being "Let My Love Open the Door." He was worried, 'cause he only had Pete Townsend's original version and that it was too upbeat. He wanted it to start upbeat and goofy, and then go very emotional and mellow. I said to Peter--this is something I truly believe--that any song can be almost anything. It depends on what you do with it, what kind of emotion you put into it, and also what you set out to do. A recorded song is just a version of a song. It's not the final version of that song. The song is alive in itself, and can do a lot of things. I sent him another version of "Let My Love Open the Door" that I heard by M. Ward, which was very different. Peter was shocked that this song could be two such different expressions.

PM: [laughs]

SL: I said, well, that's the beauty of music. This is what I work with. This is why I have the best job in the world, and I feel very lucky. You can go in so many different directions. Then I started structuring and arranging "Let My Love Open the Door" for that scene, 'cause it needed to not be too long. There were a lot of considerations, but it was a lot of fun to be a part of that. I would like to think, of course, that Pete Townsend will appreciate it, but you never know.

PM: Oh, yeah. I'm sure if he hasn't seen it yet, that he will, and I'm sure he will dig it. I hope he hears the soundtrack version, too, so he gets to hear Sonny Kompanek's great contribution and where the song went on the soundtrack. And what you're saying about the malleability of a song is also well demonstrated on your take of Elvis Costello's "Human Hands."

SL: Oh, yeah. That song--one of my 200 favorite Costello songs. [laughs] I did it with my band for the *Duper Sessions* album, and Peter set his sights on it really early on. I think he wanted to try it out in a couple of scenes. He put that song in the football scene and it just worked. It's an honor for me to be represented with a song written by my favorite songwriter. Elvis told me that he liked my version on it. I was really relieved, 'cause I was really worried that he might think it was a terrible take on his song [laughs], but he was very generous.

PM: You guys did some touring together, did you not?

SL: Yeah. But that was actually before I did the cover.

PM: I see.

SL: But I did tour with him on two occasions: once in 2003, and then I did a month with him and the Imposters in 2005. Later that year, I recorded "Human Hands," also. But I met him briefly after a show, and he gave me his blessing after hearing the version.

PM: What kind of a guy is he? Is he a nice cat?

SL: He's a great guy. He's so generous and enthusiastic, and the aura of love for music that he just carries around him at all times is just incredible. He's really a force of nature, I'd say.

PM: Beautiful to hear that.

Since I bought the soundtrack on iTunes, I don't have the credits. Can you say something about where and how the soundtrack all got recorded? Was your band involved, or studio guys as well?

SL: I'll tell you, 'cause it's sort of a weird mixture of different studios. A lot of the acoustic score elements, those are mostly recorded in my bedroom in New York.

PM: Amazing.

SL: I would tweak them and work on them in this big studio that we had for finishing off the whole soundtrack. We had a studio called Avatar.

PM: Oh, Avatar. Right.

SL: Yeah, near Times Square, where we also recorded "Let My Love Open the Door." I did vocals and strings and basically just finishing, and also mixes with the great Laurens Manchester. He was a terrific guy to work with.

The basic tracks for the original songs are mostly recorded in Bergen, in my hometown in Norway, with my band, the Faces Down Quartet. They play on "To Be Surprised" and on "Hell No" and "I'll Be Okay." We did a session in January of 2007, I guess, when they'd just finished shooting them and were just starting to edit. I went there and did a week of just recording a bunch of stuff. Among that was these three songs. Also I did a solo recording of "My Hands Are Shaking," which was intended to just be a demo, but Peter liked it so much and it was perfect for the scene, so we just kept it that way.

PM: That's always cool when something that was just intended as a demo goes right onto the record, or in this case, right onto the soundtrack. [laughs]

SL: Exactly. You just have to stick with it.

PM: Yeah. Did any studio guys get used in some of the recording as well?

SL: Well, I had my first experience as a producer of another artist, 'cause I was asked by the film producers and the director if I wanted to sort of produce and oversee a recording of Peggy Lee's version of "Fever." Peter had used her original version in one of the scenes. It worked really well and the scene was sort of shot around that song for quite a while, so we wanted to try to find a contemporary artist who could do a version of the song, but it would have to match the scene in tempo and expression and just rhythmically. There's some comedy happening--there's a lot of dances that relate to drum rolls and stuff like that.

PM: Wild.

SL: I was asked to oversee this recording of the song, and they brought in A Fine Frenzy, a recording artist with Virgin Records. So I studied the Peggy Lee version, and I had to match--it goes up and down in tempo, and we had to really, really make sure that it was in synch. It was a really fun experience, 'cause I got to choose the musicians. I thought, well, this is my big chance, so I asked if I could have whoever currently plays drums with Steely Dan. [laughs]

PM: Wow.

SL: That was, of course, Keith Carlock. I got him in the studio to play drums on that song, and also some other great musicians on piano and bass--really, really top musicians. It was a joy to work with them.

PM: Were you looking at any video when you recorded that--if it fluctuates in tempo--because obviously the Peggy Lee version wasn't cut to a click track.

SL: No, absolutely not. Yeah, we had the scene in the studio, so I would need to keep track of that all the time and make sure that we didn't fall out of cue, and also that it had the same exact and ideally an even stronger effect thematically with the new version, and I think we did that.

PM: Wow. Even with so much that you've done at an early age in your own career--

SL: It was beyond what anyone could expect or imagine. It was really challenging and a lot of new things for me, but I'm very grateful to have a chance.

PM: It's amazing how much new experience that film brought you. It's really one of a kind.

SL: Yeah.

PM: I hope you'll indulge a question as a fellow member of the male species. What's Juliette Binoche like, both as a friend to hang out with and an artist to work with?

SL: Oh, she was terrific. Of course, meeting her and sitting down to work with her as a musician, I didn't exactly know what I was supposed to do, but Peter wanted me to sit down with all the actors and work on one song that he wanted them to sing. Then I sat down with Juliette Binoche. [laughs] It was completely absurd, but of course she was a joy to work with. She was so professional and so determined. Just watching her on the set, you can tell that she's one of the great female actresses in the world.

PM: Ever.

SL: She was very determined to get the song right. We were doing "Piece of My Heart" by Janis Joplin.

PM: [laughs] Oh my God!

SL: It's a challenging song, but she took it really seriously.

PM: This Peter Hedges is just an unbelievable dude.

SL: He is really quite something. I feel blessed to have met him. He's a terrific guy.

PM: So it was kind of a device--if he wanted everybody to sing a song, not only to bond you to them, but also to bring them out of their safety zone and to bring them out of their bag and say, "Okay, I know you're a great actress, but I need you to sing "Piece of My Heart" now."

SL: Exactly. He wanted all of them to perform their songs for each other in sort of helping them relate to each other as a family as well.

PM: What was Steve Carell's song?

SL: That was the thing--he was doing another film before this, so he was the only one who couldn't be on the set a week or two before they started filming. What Peter had them do was to have all the other actors do songs that, when Steve came on the set a day or two before shooting started, they would welcome him by having dinner and then having these performances of their songs, and they would all sing them.

PM: [laughs] It's totally incredible. What did Dane Cook learn to sing?

SL: We did "The Wind Beneath My Wings." [laughs]

PM: [laughs]

SL: He was a good singer. It was really funny.

PM: Oh, that's really funny. "The Wind Beneath My Wings." Oh, that's incredible. Speaking of cool women, I thought Regina Spektor's duet was really good, too, on "Hell No." What's she like?

SL: She was terrific also. I'd been trying to find out who I could get to sing on this song. I thought it was really, really important to get it right. There are a lot of talented singers out there, but I needed to get a singer who's sort of streetwise, you know?

PM: Right.

SL: Regina has that great sensibility where she can be both very romantic and sweet, and at the same time really rough around the edges and really sassy in a way. I thought it was so important that that element was brought out of the song, 'cause if not, it could be just sort of another pedestrian--it's a sweet song, but I didn't want it to just be a sweet song. When she agreed to do it, I was over the moon. I think she's one of the very, very best contemporary singer/songwriters in the world today. She's really an artist.

PM: Yeah, very special.

SL: She was so sweet about it. She really liked the song, and she was excited to be there. Peter came in the studio when we were doing the recording and he really lightened the mood as well. I think she had a good time. Everyone was just really proud that she wanted to do it.

PM: Wow. Since your well-deserved success with *Dan in Real Life*, I know you've been spotlit in gigs at Sundance, and Tribeca [Film Festival] is still coming up, right?

SL: Yeah.

PM: How was Sundance? Was that a gas? What kind of a gig is that like, when your material is being listened to more specifically by a different community?

SL: I was wondering about that, but it was a lot of fun, actually. It was fun to be there. You feel sort of out of place, 'cause it's not really my scene, but when I'm on stage I have a good time, usually. People seem to enjoy it. I think it's good, also, to give people a break from watching films and talking film, and to have somewhere where they can go and just hear some songs and hear a show.

PM: When you went to Sundance, how long a set were you given to play? What'd you do?

SL: I did like 40, 45 minutes, I think.

PM: Solo?

SL: Yeah.

PM: Oh, cool. Did you meet a lot of cool people there? That must have been a good time.

SL: Yeah. You meet a lot of weird and cool people, and then all of a sudden, you bump into Jody Foster.

PM: Wow.

SL: Which was funny. She was gorgeous, but of course I didn't know what to say to her, so we didn't speak.

PM: Right. [laughs]

SL: Things like that make you feel sort of out of place--but in a fun way, of course.

PM: Wow.

That was a very cool video on youtube.com for the song "Phantom Punch." Would you say something about the director of that?

SL: Yeah. It was a young director. We had a competition, basically, in Norway. We announced a competition on the radio, asking aspiring directors to send their ideas to us, and the winner of the competition would get to direct the video for "Phantom Punch." This guy was really great. He was 21 years old--had a really cool idea that we did in just a day in Oslo. Yeah, the video became really cool, I think.

PM: Maybe if you don't mind, you'd tell us a little bit about your wife [Mona Fastvold Lerche]. Are you guys living in Norway these days, or in New York?

SL: We live in New York. She's an actress. She's been going to school here. We've been more or less based in New York for the last two years, I guess. I travel a lot, of course, so I go to Norway a lot of the time, but we like it here a lot.

PM: I've been staying up in Union Square when I go up there. My brother's got digs up there. What part of town are you guys in?

SL: We're not far from there. We're in the West Village.

PM: That's great. I love that. There's so many cool people living in that section of town.

SL: Oh, yeah.

PM: We recently interviewed another fine Norwegian songwriter, Hanne Hukkelberg. Are you friends with her?

SL: Actually, I have met her once or twice, I believe. I don't know her. I do know her manager quite well, though, and I've heard that she's been doing really well in America-- or all over the world, but especially in America.

PM: Yeah, she's making some inroads now.

SL: Yeah. Her stuff seems really, really cool.

PM: She's an interesting artist.

So would you call yourself a spiritual person in any way?

SL: Well, potentially.

PM: [laughs] That's very interesting that you say it like that.

SL: Well, yeah. I feel really young still, so I probably have a lot to learn about spirituality.

PM: That's very interesting. I always ask that question because artists' reaction to the question is singularly interesting. No one ever answered it like you.

Does your busy schedule leave much time for reading, and if it does, are you inclined to do that in English or in your native tongue?

SL: I do read mostly in English, I find. I wish I read more books, but I find that I like to read the occasional music magazines, and my guilty pleasure is *Entertainment Weekly*--

PM: [laughs]

SL: --which I subscribe to. But besides that, I find myself reading music bios. I was just reading this book about Peggy Lee, because I became a fan of her music after listening so much to "Fever" when I was producing that song. My wife got me this book about Peggy Lee's life. She was really quite something.

PM: "Fever" is an amazing song, isn't it? It's amazing how hip and how timelessly hip that song still is.

SL: Yeah, it's very true. It's still so cutting-edge when you hear it today.

PM: Absolutely. It's almost spooky in that way.

SL: Yeah.

PM: Well, it's very kind of you to give us this much of your time, Sondre. Thanks for talking with us. We're really, really big fans of your music now, and we look forward to seeing where your tunes are gonna end up next.

SL: Thank you so much. Thanks for supporting my music.