

**A Conversation with Chip Taylor & Carrie Rodriguez
by Frank Goodman (12/2003, Puremusic.com)**

Having veritably grown up in one, I have always been a lover of musical duos. Even great solos get boring, and three is already a band. But a duo is fortified on the one hand and vulnerable on the other, interesting and yet very human.

Guitar and mandolin was a popular duet setup, especially in the Brother duets of the 1930s. (The Delmore Brothers used a four string tenor guitar and a six string guitar, but the mando/guitar paradigm ruled for the Monroe, Bollicks, and Louvin Brothers. The Stanley Brothers used banjo and guitar.) It's hard to find a better duo anywhere these days than Gillian Welch and David Rawlings, and they play very different guitars, with definite rhythm and lead roles. Gillian's also become a very good clawhammer banjo picker. (More on them next issue.)

One of the things that makes Chip Taylor and Carrie Rodriguez such a compelling duo is that they employ the extremely musical and versatile guitar and fiddle combination. They're both fine singers, full of character and expression. Chip's a solid guitar player, nothin' fancy, and Carrie's a very accomplished instrumentalist. Chip Taylor is a songwriter of rare distinction, with legendary cuts alongside his name. Suffice it to say that the best known ones are "Wild Thing" and "Angel of the Morning." His songs, and their songs together on their first two records, are consistently top shelf material, and bear a strong signature.

Recently when we reviewed their second CD, *The Trouble With Humans*, we were so taken with their sound and vibe that we had to get a closer look, and after meeting them briefly at the Americana Conference, caught them in NYC for a phone interview. I found them both deep and fascinating, a study in high contrasts and close harmony. You've probably been hearing about them, so now hear their songs and their story in their own words. We think you'll fall for them and their soulful music, as we certainly have.

Chip Taylor: Hi, Frank. You've got us both on.

Puremusic: Oh, beautiful. Hi, Carrie.

Carrie Rodriguez: How're you doing?

PM: Good. So, yeah, I was saying to Chip, perhaps you remember our meeting at the Americana Conference where you guys had all those to-go cartons in front of you and graciously pushed them aside so that I could snap a few photos.

CR: [laughs]

PM: It's that guy calling you.

CT: Okay. What's the name of this—

PM: It's a webzine called Puremusic.com. Actually, *The Trouble with Humans* is reviewed in this current issue.

CT: Great.

CR: Yeah, I've seen that, Frank. It was a really nice review.

PM: Oh, thanks, yeah.

CR: Cool.

PM: It's just been running a few days, and it'll be up all month, but they're always available in the archives, so it will run forever. I really, really enjoyed the debut, *Let's Leave This Town*, but for me, *The Trouble with Humans* really operates at a higher level. And I guess that's understandable. You can really hear a duo that came together very powerfully.

CT: Well, thanks.

PM: I mean, how long had you guys been together when *Let's Leave This Town* went to tape?

CT: We met in 2001, at South By Southwest. So that's what month, Carrie?

CR: That's March. But I think we started touring in the fall, because that was—

CT: Yeah, we did a couple of shows in Texas, and then in October, just after 9/11, we were among the artists who decided to go to Europe anyway.

PM: Right.

CT: And I remember Carrie was very ill then, so I thought for sure she was going to back away, especially with all the talk about not flying. But she didn't, and I thought she was very brave to do that. And the audience really appreciated that, by the way. And so we started singing some of the songs—"Storybook Children" was about four shows into that tour. That was the first time she sang, about the middle of October, I'd say, the first time she sang in the act. Right, Carrie?

CR: Yeah, or November.

CT: And then we came back—when did we start making the album, was it...?

CR: We came back and started maybe getting ready for it in January.

CT: And we began recording, maybe in February, right?

CR: Yes.

PM: So it was only—

CR: Only a few months.

PM: So I'm sure you agree that, by the time the second album rolled around, I mean, you guys were—it's at such an unbelievable level as a duo at that point. You can hear how much hanging out those two people did together.

CT: Yeah. Well, these were very lived-in, these songs, whereas the first ones, we lived in a few of them. You know, we had three or four that we were performing by the end of the tour. But a lot of them came together when we got back. And so they weren't really played out as much as *The Trouble with Humans* was.

But I must say, it was Carrie's first time in the recording studio. And whether it was her

first time or her ninth time, I thought the stuff she did on *Let's Leave This Town*, even though it's maybe looser and we're slightly more vibing together on *The Trouble with Humans*, I still think it was like, you know, just lovely stuff that she did on that first album. Even though the performances might have been a little bit more innocent, to me, as a lover of duets, it's just wonderful to go back to that and listen to that, and how terrific she did for a girl who never sang, and who raised me to another level, you know?

PM: Yeah, that's scary, that it was your first time in the studio, Carrie. I'm also a lover of duos, and I think it's a really sacred form. In fact, I'm real familiar with the ins and outs of trying to maintain a duo emotionally. What are your methods for getting along in the good or the tense moments?

[laughter]

PM: Because they come up.

CT: Well, can I speak?

CR: Yeah.

CT: I think one of the things that's good about our partnership is we talk things out if we're having some problem, whatever it is. And I think that makes us stronger. A lot of people don't get to the bottom of their emotions that quickly. With Carrie it's not like putting up with each other. If we have a little problem, we just—whatever we have, we get out in the open. And I think we just come out—it's like the last song of the album, "We Come Up Shining." That's just exactly the way it is.

PM: Wow.

CT: So it's real. I'm way more powerful with her and with those kind of conversations than I would be without them. And I hope the same is true for you.

CR: Hold on one second. Hello?

PM: Oh, Carrie's got another call.

CT: She's got her breakfast on the way up.

CR: Sorry. This is a New York thing I'm doing here.

PM: Oh, it's a New York thing, yeah, right. Breakfast while you interview. So do you have anything to add to that, Carrie, about your secret methods of getting along in the good and tense moments?

CR: I think I feel the same as Chip does. If something's bothering us, we definitely don't keep it in. We just talk about it pretty immediately, so we're not carrying grudges. Because the road, it's hard enough as it is just with all the traveling and constantly having to do stuff. So we just get things out as we go, and it seems pretty easy.

CT: The truth is, Frank, that when you get to the bottom of some issues that you have with somebody you care a lot about, when you get to the bottom of it, the bond just gets stronger, and you just feel better about the day. It's almost like going to a psychiatrist or something.

PM: Yeah, be your own shrinks.

CT: You feel so much better. I can't ever remember us going through something where, when it was done, we didn't feel way better than we'd felt before. So it's a nice revolving door kind of thing.

PM: When I listen to "Memphis, Texas," when you guys hit that first chorus, I just lay my head down and cry sometimes. It's really pretty.

CR: Thanks.

PM: Is there a story to that song? Do you remember when you wrote that?

CT: Well, that's one of the first ones we wrote together. We wrote three songs together on the album. So Carrie, why don't you explain a little bit more about that process, what that thing was about?

CR: Well, I guess Chip just was really wanting me to bring something of my own to the record. And I was pretty intimidated by that because Chip's such a legendary songwriter—

PM: Indeed.

CR: —and what could I possibly bring? So he finally just suggested that I—he gave me a deadline.

PM: [laughs]

CR: He said, "Okay, by this day, I just want something." So I found some chords that I liked and a little hint of melody, and came in with that. And we just started playing it together and let it form its own thing between us. And then Chip, once the vibe of the song was there, Chip started putting out some words to catch the mood of it. It's kind of hard to explain—he's so organic in the way that he does lyrics, I don't even know how—

PM: That's an astonishing chorus, lyrically, I think.

CT: Yeah. Well, I like the setting, because it's almost like when I met Carrie for the first time, just the thing—how you would feel meeting somebody for the first time, and she being from down here and me being from New York. And I can explain things a lot better after the fact than I can before, because I really don't know why certain words come out of me, because I don't think about them.

But I had this feeling of this girl—of saying who she was through talking about where she was from. I just had the feeling of that, and the words sounded so pretty as they came out. Then Carrie and I adjusted them a little as we went along. But the flow thing just came from a real—my spirit, of who Carrie was and where she was from, and Memphis, Texas is the little town where Carrie's grandma was from. And we were trying to figure out how we would get that to all work together—we kind of forced that a little later from the fact, and liked the way that worked. But the chill thing we got from singing that thing together just is amazing.

PM: Yeah, it's a really great. I guess, Carrie, when you talk about a hint of a melody that you brought in, it's the melody on top, and then you guys put the vocal on the bottom later? Is that what you mean?

CT: She would bring in the pattern of the chords and a little bit of a melody. And when

we'd get together and start playing it together, that would shift and change.

CR: It kind of evolved.

CT: Yeah. It kind of evolved differently. And then as the words would flow, the melody would change with the words. That's the way it usually happens. And so the melody was—the hint of everything came in with Carrie. And that's the nice thing about it, and that's why I wanted her do it on her own, bring something that she'd come up with, because what she would bring to the table would be different than what I would bring. Then it's not just another Chip Taylor song with another friend helping. She's a little bit more bluegrass oriented, so whatever she would play, whatever little chordal thing she might play on the fiddle, plucking it, or on the mandolin, would be different than something I would come up with.

And so the groove of all three songs was started by her. Then the melody would develop around that. Maybe she brought in a hint of it, but it would develop more when we were together. And usually it developed with words thrown in, because that's the way I write. I don't write from melody putting words to it.

PM: Right. What are the other two co-writes? Because my credits got away from me, they're at the webmaster's, where they're uploading clips.

CT: "All the Rain," and "Confessions," which was the first one we wrote together.

PM: All three great tunes. Carrie, where and how did you grow up? How big a group?

CR: I grew up in Austin. I was born in Houston, but we moved to Austin when I was a baby. My parents were divorced when I was a toddler, so I basically grew up with my mother, who ended up remarrying a wonderful man, so between the two of them and my—I would see my biological father, too. He's actually a musician, a songwriter. I guess that was probably pretty influential musically, for me, growing up.

PM: What does he play? Is he a guitar player and songwriter?

CR: Yeah. His name is David Rodriguez. He's a Texas songwriter. He moved to Holland about eight or nine years ago. He came up in Houston with Nanci Griffith and Eric Taylor and Townes, stuff like that.

PM: I see, yeah.

CT: So he was from that school of songwriting.

PM: How's it going for him in Holland?

CT: Well, he went over there like what we do on tour, back years ago, and just never left. He kind of fell in love with the lifestyle there. And he's got a girlfriend there and helps to raise her daughters. So he has a kind of quiet life over there.

PM: I see.

CR: But I mostly grew up with my mother, who's a big classical music fan, and I grew up playing classical violin. And I had a small, but very doting, loving family.

PM: Is your mom in Austin?

CR: She is.

PM: What's her name?

CR: Katy Nail. Nail like a hammer and a nail. [For those with a curiosity about family, there's a set of photos of Chip and Carrie by Bill Groll at AustinAmericana.com, and in the middle of that page there's a nice portrait of Carrie with her mother and grandmother.]

PM: Speaking of classical, I might have thought that a Berklee education would wreak havoc with somebody's fiddling, but it doesn't seem to have hurt yours any.

CR: Well, I actually went to a classical conservatory first, Oberlin. It's in Ohio.

PM: Oberlin, sure.

CR: That was pretty intense. It's a really great school, but you have to be so motivated. Your end goal has to be "I want to be in a symphony orchestra."

PM: Right.

CR: But I just didn't really have that goal. And I thought, "Well, I don't know if I can put in all these hours." People practiced eight hours a day there.

PM: No doubt.

CR: It was serious.

PM: So do you like to play classical or jazz or anything like that, besides what you're into at the moment?

CR: Lately I haven't, but I do. I love to listen to everything. I mean, my record collection is pretty random. [laughs] And I—it's tough to get back your classical chops once you've been playing fiddle music for a while.

PM: Yeah, you've got to really want them.

CR: It's kind of a different animal.

PM: Yeah.

CR: But a couple years ago, I did a classical recital just to see if I could do it. That was really fun. And every once in a while—my boyfriend is a jazz musician, so we might play some.

PM: Who's that?

CR: He plays tenor saxophone. His name is Javier Vercher.

PM: And where's he out of? Where does he play?

CR: He's out of New York. And he actually played on a track on our first record. But he's on tour right now in Spain with a trio. He's just getting started. It's kind of his first big tour under his own name. But he intends to make a record when he comes back.

PM: Will it be standards or originals?

CR: It'll be tunes he wrote with maybe a couple of standards included. But the record won't come out until April or so.

PM: So I spent my first ten years in Yonkers. Chip, how long did you hang around?

CT: I was born and raised there, and lived there until I was 23 or 24, something like that. You know Yonkers?

PM: Yeah. My first ten years I lived there. I was born there.

CT: I was born and raised just off of Lockwood Avenue, which is a street that runs under the Sawmill River Parkway.

PM: Uh-huh.

CT: And we lived on the road right off of that, kind of a poor section of Yonkers. See, the upper parts were kind of nice once you got up a ways, once you got more towards Bronxville it got to be nicer. But we were down in there just above the carpet factory, whatever.

PM: Yeah, yeah. We didn't live in the nice section. I was down on Lawrence Street, across from the Six and a Half Club, where my folks used to hang out with Gene Krupa, because he went to school with them and—

CR: No way!

PM: He was the bad kid that the nuns would talk about.

CR: [laughs]

PM: “Don't end up like the Krupa kid.”

[laughter]

CR: Wow, that's great.

PM: In our review of *The Trouble with Humans*, I refer to the CBS Sunday Morning profile of you, Chip, that aired some time ago.

CT: Right.

PM: Which I thought was really, really good, and hilarious, and I never forgot it. I thought it was funnier than hell what your brother Jon said. Basically the interviewer was saying something like, “Well, isn't it a crying shame that a great songwriter like your brother threw away so much of his life gambling?” And after a dramatic pause, Jon said, “Well, I don't know if you've ever seen him gamble. He's really good.”

CR: [laughs]

PM: “Sometimes I think it's a shame all the years that he threw away on songwriting...”

CT: Yeah.

PM: Do you remember that?

CT: Yeah, I remember. That's just Jon having some fun. Actually, my brother Barry would be more likely to say that to him, because Jon is always trying to get me away from that.

PM: Are you guys tight, the brothers?

CT: Yes, very.

PM: It's nice to know that you guys have stayed tight well into the latter part of life.

CT: They've been wonderfully encouraging all the time, and are both big fans of the Chip and Carrie stuff.

PM: Barry is a scientist, right?

CT: Barry is a scientist. Yeah, he's the guy who invented the formula that predicts when volcanoes will erupt, back in the late 70s. He's the Senior Scientist at Montserrat. And they call him all over the place to decide when to evacuate people and stuff like that.

PM: I mean, that's kind of unbelievable, such a high-powered trio of brothers. How did that happen? What kind of a gene pool is that?

CR: [laughs]

CT: Well, you got me.

PM: Were the folks like some real brainiacs, or—

CT: Ah, they were a couple of real wonderful characters who always just encouraged us to be ourselves and to challenge ourselves to try new things, and never got mad when we stepped over the edge, and always kept a good sense of humor. Dad was a frustrated singer. He was a golf professional, but he would sing around the house. And he loved to be out front, and kind of mimic different people. And we used to go to the movies all the time when we were kids, just all the time. On Mondays it was Dad's day off, because he was a golf professional. And a golf professional back in those days was not like it is now. It was really just a servant's kind of job to the members. But at least it was a job, so Dad was able to get out of the poor community kind of thing, and finally make a few bucks, enough to support a family.

But Mondays were his days off, and he used to always like to take us to the movies on Mondays. We'd often go to see double features. And he would use some kind of ruse to get us out of school early. He'd tell them it was a Czechoslovakian holy day, I remember him telling them that.

PM: [laughs]

CT: So we would get out. If there was a particular movie he wanted us to see, we'd be out at 12 o'clock and go to three double features or something like that.

PM: Oh, my.

CT: So that stuff was always fun around the house. And Jon was wonderful with dialects. He was funny. He had a real comedic sense when he was a little kid, so he could make us laugh every night just by doing routines. And Barry was up in the woods in the afternoon looking at rocks, and I had my ear glued to the radio to see what sounds I could find.

PM: It's amazing how our childhoods are telling the tale to come.

CT: Yeah, yeah. Well, we're fortunate we all ended up doing what we wanted, we all had that drive in us. A lot of times you can't do that. But if I hadn't been able to, I don't know what I would have done. I guess I would have been a golf professional. I turned golf professional for a little while.

PM: Right.

CT: And so I probably would have stayed with that, maybe, or—

PM: When you left that, wasn't there a wrist injury or something?

CT: Yeah. I hurt my wrist at one point when I was playing some tour things and also working with my dad. And I told my dad, I said, "This is my one shot to take a chance. I can't play in tournaments now. I don't really feel like just giving lessons." I said, "I'm going to really give it one major shot to go to the city and sell my songs." And then, within a few months, it worked, so...

PM: Speaking of that working out, how about [rap star] Shaggy cutting "Angel of the Morning"? What was your reaction to that all these years later?

CT: Well, first of all, it didn't sound a whole lot like "Angel of the Morning," and I was just pleased that the guy was so honest about where he got it from. Another guy could have just claimed it was his—and I might have had to sue or something like that.

PM: Right.

CT: But he was so honest about it. And I really loved it. I thought it was really very, very well done.

PM: It was a pretty cool cut.

CT: Yeah. And I liked him a lot. I went to meet him, brought him some champagne when it was heading to number one. And we had a wonderful afternoon together with all the guys involved in it, and the mother of his children, and his kids. I loved the day I spent with him.

PM: Wow. In general terms, how did that cut's earnings—or how will that cut's earnings—stand up to the original, or to something like "Wild Thing"?

CT: [sighs]

PM: In real general terms.

CT: Well, put it this way: Since I've been out of the gambling, I've had this record company in mind [Train Wreck Records], which all of a sudden we're very fortunate to have the Texas Music Group behind us and paying the bills for us, where I used to pay them all myself. But it's a lot to run a record company, and to do it when you're not really selling many records and to try to do it on a global basis. So I had a couple of things that

came nicely in the middle of everything and paid all the bills, and one was “Angel of the Morning.”

PM: Right.

CT: I had to borrow from my royalties to get the company going, and then borrow to make the recordings, and it was a constant borrowing thing. And then a couple of things came in the way of that and got me clean. “Angel” was one of them. So it was just a real wonderful thing. And now we have to get to the point where we can survive, and we just about are, to where we can kind of break even on the road, and maybe head the other direction to be financially not dependent on that kind of stuff. But it’s allowed to me to make the music I wanted to make these last few years, and to do this thing with Carrie, and to do it at a little different level, to hire some more musicians and stuff like that. So...

PM: It’s a Godsend.

CT: Yeah.

PM: And now is Train Wreck Records overseen or owned by or something by Texas Music Group?

CT: No. Train Wreck Records is my label for all of Europe. Train Wreck Records owns all of the product. And in the States, we lease the product to the Texas Music Group.

PM: I see.

CT: And depending on how well the record does, they have it for several years. And they’ve been just terrific with it.

PM: Now, who is the Texas Music Group?

CT: It started as Antone’s Music.

PM: Oh, okay.

CT: At the Antone’s Club and the blues stuff that they had out of that.

PM: Right.

CT: And they were recording these blues things, and then from there they started to develop new artists, and they set up the umbrella thing called The Texas Music Group, which is Antone’s Records and Lone Star Records. And I forget what the other one is—there are three labels.

PM: I’d like to know, please, what each of you may be reading, now or lately?

CR: I just bought a new book, but I haven’t opened it yet.

PM: Well, that counts.

CR: [laughs] The last book I read, this friend of ours in Canada, his name is Neal McGonigle, he was organizing our tour, and he gave me a novel called *Smilla’s Sense of Snow* [by Peter Hoeg]. It was very cool, a mysterious kind of fiction set in both Greenland and Denmark. And we’d just been traveling there, so it was real interesting to me. And now

I have this new book from Isabel Allende. It's called *Portrait in Sepia*. She wrote *Eva Luna*. And I've read her book *The House of Spirits*, I guess that's probably her best-known novel.

PM: Right.

CR: So I haven't started this one yet. I hope I like it.

PM: How about you, Chip, what do you read?

CT: The last thing I read was *Seabiscuit* [by Laura Hillenbrand].

PM: Right. Was that good?

CT: It was wonderful. I thought the movie was wonderful as well. It was one of those movies that I thought even though it didn't follow the book exactly, it followed the passion very, very well.

PM: Yeah, that's rare.

CT: But I thought the same of *All the Pretty Horses*. I thought that was one of the most underrated movies I've ever seen, because almost everything that I visualized in the book, you know, the different characters, what they would look like and sound like and be like, was pretty much the way it was in the movie. So I know it wasn't a very commercial movie and it didn't do any business at all, but—

PM: Really?

CT: Yeah, it was total flop. Nobody wanted to see it.

PM: Because I loved it as a book. I listened to it on tape going across the country.

CR: Cool.

PM: And it was unbelievable.

CT: Yeah. I read it and then listened on tape as well. It was just great.

PM: Are either of you guys what you'd call spiritual or religious folks?

CT: Why don't you go, Carrie?

CR: I think I'm spiritual in terms of believing in higher powers and things in the universe that we can't explain with our little brains. But I'm not affiliated with any kind of organized religion.

PM: Right.

CR: I didn't really grow up that way. My family—I guess you could call some of them Methodists or agnostics. But my mother is very spiritual and she really believes in lots of strange cosmic things. [laughs]

PM: Really? Is she a bit of a New Ager, even, or...?

CR: Well, she's an artist. She's a painter.

PM: She's a painter. Well, there—

CR: Everyone in my family is pretty creative, and, I don't know. I'm probably not as out there as my mom.

[laughter]

CR: She's wonderful. But yeah, it's probably something also that I—there'll come a time when I'll want to explore it more. Right now things are just going so fast I don't always take the time to sit down and try to find out more about that kind of stuff.

PM: How about you, Chip, do you have a spiritual background, or—

CT: Well, I was raised Catholic.

PM: Did you go to Catholic school in Yonkers?

CT: White Plains, Archbishop Stepinac. I love a lot of the things of the Catholic Church. I don't like so much the way it was taught or the way it was preached, but I love a lot of the content, just for being good to each other and caring and loving your brother and all those things, which most all religions kind of teach. There are a lot of wonderful things in the Catholic Church. But I can't say that I practice now, I don't. But I have a strong feeling of conscience that kind of criticizes me most every day.

[laughter]

CT: It says, "You're not doing enough. You're not living up to what you should be."

PM: So your CD is top ten on the Americana chart now, right?

CT: Yes.

PM: I guess the bookings are getting better and—

CT: Yeah, it actually seems like all over the world the record is selling better than anything that I've had since my return to music, and it's still just really in the middle of the run of it. And people seem to love the shows. You know, the reaction after the shows—we sell a ton of records after the shows.

PM: I'm not surprised.

CT: It's a very strong reaction. Yeah, things seem to be heading in a really good direction.

PM: And I've been talking to Mark Pucci, your publicist, so I know that there's unbelievable press about to break, including mentions in *Elle* and *Vogue*, and a possible *New York Times* piece.

CR: We did find ourselves in *Vogue* this month—by accident.

PM: Oh, really?

CR: Yeah. That wasn't done by anyone from our camp. It was just there.

PM: Oh, because it was like an Austin piece or something.

CR: Yeah. I just bought the *Vogue* magazine because I thought Uma Thurman looked beautiful on the cover. [laughs]

PM: No kidding.

CR: And I was sitting in my hotel room flipping through the pages and found our names in there.

PM: That must have blown you away.

CR: Yeah, and I just freaked out.

PM: [laughs]

CR: I called Chip and said, “Chip! We’re in *Vogue*! We’re in *Vogue*!”

PM: [laughs] That’s beautiful. Where would you guys like to play that you’ve not yet been together?

CT: I’d like to play the Grand Ol’ Opry.

CR: Yeah, ditto.

CT: It’s something I’ve been wanting to do for years. I always was a country person at heart. I had a country band in high school. So “Wild Thing” and “Angel of the Morning” came into it after my direction as a country writer was set. I’m not like the New York boy who’s trying to fit into country, I just was country to start with. So I’d like to be accepted there.

PM: Wow.

CR: We’ve been so many places, I hardly even think about...

CT: Yeah.

CR: Traveling all over Europe and visiting Scandinavian countries, places I never thought I would go.

PM: So it’s more than the UK, you guys have been all over the continent and everything.

CR: Yeah. We’ve been to Holland and Belgium and then Norway, Sweden, Denmark.

PM: Oh, not Germany yet?

CR: We did do one show in Germany a year or so ago, and they’ve been talking about getting us over there, because I think there’s pretty big country music—

PM: Yeah. They’re going to love you there.

CT: I’ve played one or two shows in Germany before, and I started touring with Carrie just on the fringes of Holland. But we were supposed to do an extensive tour this time, then it

didn't work out.

PM: Oh, yeah, that's going to open up. So I know you've got shows coming up with Maura O'Connell and with Rodney Crowell.

CT: I guess we're going to do some more with Rodney, but we don't know what that's about yet. We just finished three—Columbus, Cleveland, and Ann Arbor.

PM: I love Will Kimbrough on guitar.

CR: Oh, he's wonderful.

PM: If you could open for anybody, who would top that list?

CT: Well, I have several times opened for John Prine. And Carrie and I have done it a couple of times. I love being with John, and he's an old friend. And I just think if I—he's like my favorite guy to listen to. I mean, listening to him is kind of like—we talked about the spiritual thing—to me that's kind of like going to church. I love hanging with him.

PM: If and when you have some time, what do you guys like to do in your spare time that may not be musical?

CR: [laughs] Chip?

CT: Oh, I don't know.

[laughter]

CT: I don't have much spare time.

CR: I like to play around with my mandolin. [laughs] But that's not very unmusical. Let's see...

CT: Well, once a year I take a trip with my ex-wife and kids. We go to Vegas and visit my gambling partner and I gamble like hell with him for two weeks. And that's always fun.

PM: Oh, really?

CT: Yeah, yeah. I can't wait—but I love it when it's over and I can just go back to totally music. But that's a fun thing for me to do. I always look forward to it, because the kids—our family and his family—get along wonderfully, and we just have a good time for a couple weeks.

PM: And when you gamble like hell, is it about cards or horses or—

CT: It's horses. He saves a bunch of records for me. And I always save stuff too, just for that period of time. But now it's so distant from me, like I don't—there was a time when I was leaving the television on while the races were on while I was doing my music work. But in the last bunch of time I haven't even been doing that, so it's just far away from me.

PM: So one more question: Musically or otherwise, is there something that comes to mind that you'd still like to do that you haven't tried yet?

CT: I'm not sure, but I'm sure it's waiting around the bend someplace.

PM: [laughs] You, Carrie?

CR: Yeah, I don't know. Musically?

PM: You're a youngster. There are a lot of things you probably want to do.

CR: Yeah, I mean, I just—I'm always wanting to just get better at anything I'm doing. I always want to be a better fiddle player, and I never want to stop learning with that. And every night I play with Chip, I'm learning. And now it goes to the singing thing, too, I'll always want to be getting better. But that's why it's so great to be out doing it every night.

CT: Yeah, I mean, for me, Frank, I was away from learning a lot about things for many years, because being a gambler—a professional gambler, at least for me, the way it was—it was all-consuming. So even though I spent time with my kids and coached the baseball teams and whatever, the basketball stuff, and loved being around my kids, it was my kids and very little else but gambling. So stretching out now and traveling around and looking at the scenery, there are so many things that I'm learning. As to what I would want to do down the line, I don't know. I feel like I'm going to school again, and that's a real interesting part of this whole thing, is to learn, to learn stuff—and thank God, because I'm really dumb about so many things.

PM: [laughs]

CT: I mean, I learn a lot from Carrie and whoever else we're traveling with, just different ideas, different things about art, and just about life.

PM: Well, as a real lover of duos, it's amazing to me what an interesting dynamic you guys have, and what a lovely pair of people you are. I really am grateful for your time today.

CR: Well, thanks Frank. It's nice talking with you.

PM: Thanks. And I hope to see you in town or somewhere soon down the line, and we'll have a drink.

CT: Okay, Frank. Thanks a lot.

CR: Bye.

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