

A Conversation with Laura Cantrell
by Frank Goodman (8/2005, Puremusic.com)

I am more accustomed to writing about Country singers or songwriters who have come from New York City to live in Nashville. Laura Cantrell is singular in many ways, but certainly in the respect that she was born in Nashville and is a great Country singer living for quite a few years in or around New York City.

For more than a decade she has piloted the popular radio show Radio Thrift Shop (on WFMU in Jersey City, 12-3 p.m. on Saturdays, 91.1 on your dial or RealAudio streaming at www.wfmu.org). Her superior abilities as a song finder are well demonstrated here, as they always are on her recordings. (On the new CD, Laura cut a vintage Lucinda Williams song called "Letters" that a friend had on a tape of from the 70s. On the downloads section of her site there's a smokin' version of it live from McCabe's in Santa Monica, with Jimmy Ryan on mandolin, Mark Spencer on guitar, and Jeremy Chatzky on bass.)

There is a double-edged quality to her singing style that has moved many others the way that it instantly affected me. It's been described as both passionate and businesslike, or vulnerable and determined, which is how it struck me. Alluring, and yet aloof. But she's turned on the tea baggers and the Yanks alike. The late BBC radio icon John Peel was a huge supporter of hers, and called her CD *Not the Tremblin' Kind* "My favourite record of the last ten years, and possibly my life..." His countryman Elvis Costello asked Laura personally to open 17 dates on his tour, and contributed a blockbuster quote of his own: "If Kitty Wells made *Rubber Soul*, it would sound like Laura Cantrell." And there you have it folks, as the artist is known to say at the end of her radio shows...

Laura Cantrell's partner in crime is her husband Jeremy Tepper, the founder of Diesel Only Records, her original label before she leapt to Matador on her new disc *Humming By The Flowered Vine*. Jeremy is himself a musician and a fine writer, having co-authored one of my favorite Jim Lauderdale tunes, "Diesel, Diesel, Diesel." His label specializes in truck driving songs of many varieties, but also includes recordings by the likes of Joe Flood, Amy Allison, Mojo Nixon, and tasty others.

With lawyers for parents, perhaps it's natural that this country siren went to Columbia and rose to corporate VP in a Wall Street investment firm, though it's a humorously enviable pedigree for a singer in this day and age. Consider how difficult it must be to walk away from that security, as Cantrell has with this latest record, and become a full time artist. With all she has accomplished as a part time artist, and with the AAA and college radio push by Matador Records, it will be very interesting to follow her trajectory.

We consider her a very important and influential Country artist, in the original and highest definition of the term. She's class, quality, and style.

Puremusic: So are you just finishing your radio show?

Laura Cantrell: I am cleaning up as we speak.

PM: Oh, really?

LC: Piling some records, and just getting everything straightened up here.

PM: How long is the show?

LC: It's actually three hours.

PM: Oh, wow. And how did today's show go?

LC: It went pretty well. Things were a little rough and rocky, because I haven't been here in a couple weeks, and there are always the radio reflexes that take a little while to remember.

PM: Yeah, right. A lot of dials and faders, and if you don't push the right one at the right time, bad things happen.

LC: Yeah, all those things.

PM: But that's a show you've been doing for many years, right?

LC: Twelve years.

PM: Twelve years. Oh, my. So before I get into the questions, I just want to say that I think *Humming by the Flowered Vine* is an amazing record.

LC: Well, thank you. I really appreciate that. We worked real hard on it, so it's nice to hear when people get it and appreciate it.

PM: Oh, yeah. You can hear the work. In the time since you walked away from the Wall Street corporate job and became not just a full-blown but a full-time artist, have you to some extent become a different person?

LC: Well, I definitely feel more aware—every day, really—of how much there is to music. I've been a fan and an enthusiast, and I've gone through many phases over the years. But to actually take the risk of putting myself out there as a musician full time was a big challenge for me. And it's definitely exciting when you feel like things are going well, just musically, setting aside how the external successes are defined. More like when you feel, oh, I played the song really well.

PM: Right.

LC: I'm enjoying being with my band. Those things, you start to realize they're not things that you can take for granted, and that you have to work hard to make those things work.

PM: And it's nice to have time to write a song.

LC: Sure. I think I thought the missing ingredient over the years was only time. But I realized when I quit my job, it wasn't just time, but also focus, and how you approach things. All of those things became apparent when I left my job. So yeah, I've got a lot of new realizations of how hard the work is, and also how rewarding it can be.

PM: Yeah. Because when you are working a full-time gig you only have so much time, and you are extremely focused. And when suddenly you're a full-time musician, it's a whole different application to become, on a daily basis, very focused about your now completely musical work.

LC: I really don't regret having had to work full time while I was—it served a purpose for me, and I felt no shame in having to have a day job and all those things.

PM: Absolutely not.

LC: It's a good perspective to have. It really does make you relish the time when you turn around and have a little extra to go around.

PM: How scary is it just to walk away from the security and the steady paycheck?

LC: Yeah, that was hard. It took me a long time to do it, partly just because the reality of being in New York is that it's not a cheap place to be. That alone was an obstacle. But there were other things, too, other types of security besides financial. I had been at a place where I worked hard and had had some success in the corporate world. So walking away from that wasn't easy. It was hard work, but it was something that I didn't fret over, and I didn't ultimately doubt my abilities to do it. And there were times after I quit that I realized that I was a lot less secure as a musician than I had been as somebody in a job. To feel really comfortable owning that musician's role, I still work on that on a daily basis.

PM: Yeah, I can relate. Another big leap in that time frame, too, was the one from Diesel Only, your husband Jeremy Tepper's label, to Matador—

LC: Sure.

PM: —a prestigious house, to be sure. Can you walk us through how that transition came to pass?

LC: Definitely. Jeremy and I had put out *Not the Tremblin' Kind* and *When the Roses Bloom Again* and the EP last year, the *Hello Recordings*, on Diesel Only Records. The label was run primarily by my husband Jeremy, although I did a lot of the office work that Jer wasn't as focused on. And as we were looking at the prospect of making a third record, thinking about the work we'd done on our own, we had the feeling that, while I was totally prepared to pay for it myself and do what I had to do to get a record made, that it was going to be harder to get out there and do more than what we'd done for the previous two albums.

PM: Right.

LC: Considering the combination of good fortune that we'd had with those two records, and the favors we pulled and what-have-you, we were really feeling like we were going to hit some of our limitations in terms of being on a small label, and that we might start seeing some diminishing returns. And we were concerned that that might limit what I could do as a performer, and as somebody who wants to travel and play music. And so we were open to ideas, and to finding somebody else to shoulder some of the work.

Around this time, we heard from Matador, which was a big surprise for us, since Matador is known as an indie rock label. We've known those folks for years, being here in New York, [founders] Gerard Cosloy and Chris Lombardi, and known many of the artists who have been with the label, going back to when I was in college. One of their earliest releases was the group Superchunk. And I had gone to school with all of those folks.

So I had known them and seen from a bit of a distance what they did. And I was definitely a fan of the label, but never assumed that they would be interested in what I do.

PM: Yeah, it didn't seem that likely a place to land.

LC: No, it really didn't. What was interesting, though—we'd seen Gerard Cosloy at a few shows. He'd been living in England. And as my experience with gaining ground with an English audience grew, I think he saw what was going on there, with the press coverage and radio we'd received. He'd gone to London to open the Matador office there. And they had Belle & Sebastian and some other indie bands. [There's some very enlightening info on this great label in their FAQ here: www.matadorrecords.com/matadorinfo/faq.html]

PM: Oh, I didn't know they did Belle & Sebastian.

LC: Yeah. And so he was there working on Matador, but was also right there when my thing was starting to get noticed, and so I think he got the perspective of what was happening there. But if he'd been here in the States, I don't know if it would have necessarily come to his attention, or if it would have seemed cool to him in the way that it did over there—hearing John Peel playing some of the music, talking about it, and all the unlikely supporters that I got there, which certainly surprised me.

PM: And the level at which you got them. I mean, John Peel, jeez.

LC: Yeah, exactly. I mean, we were very thrilled, once I got over the shock of Peel playing my album and talking about it. We really, really appreciated that that was unique, and a great opportunity for me. And we certainly made friends with John over the years, and got to know him and his family. So I think that Matador had a perspective that some other labels here didn't have, because of their UK operation. And that's how I understood their initial interest.

PM: Wow. That's a very interesting and unpredictable set of events. That's really an interesting story. With Matador behind this record, do you plan a great deal more touring behind it than usual?

LC: Well, trying to do more concentrated touring, we've done more organized promotion around the release itself. I've just come back from three weeks, basically, of being out. I'm not quite sure what's happening with this Lucinda tour, but I have two weeks in the UK that were on the calendar anyway. And then we'll have more touring in the fall, both here and a little more in Europe. So yeah, we're definitely committed to getting it out there. And one ingredient that you really can't skip over when you're trying to build an audience is going and seeing people, and meeting the folks who have liked your music, even if there's only ten of them in the town you're in.

PM: You need all of them.

LC: Yeah, you need to really go and make that connection. It's hard to build up an audience without traveling. So that's what we're committing to doing.

PM: I mean, you've always gotten great reviews and great press, but now you're in Vanity Fair and Elle. Where else are you showing up, and isn't all that pretty exciting?

LC: That's all real exciting. We've been trying to get a little bit more on the radio. It's been great to watch Matador try to crack away at the college market and Triple A. And I just did a Weekend Edition piece for NPR that is going to run tomorrow.

PM: Yeah, I'll be listening for that.

LC: I'm starting to get opportunities that I didn't get on my last couple of records. And I'm very grateful to have somebody who's organized to just cover that stuff.

PM: Matador must have a strong college radio thing going on, right?

LC: Yeah, definitely.

PM: And isn't that pretty new action for you?

LC: It definitely is. I did college radio myself many years ago. But it's very gratifying when you go someplace and there are some young people who are into what you're doing, and play it on the radio. It's very cool.

PM: I think this new record is really a triumph, and the best of all your beautiful records. I thought the opener, Emily Spray's "14th Street," got a breathtaking treatment.

LC: Thank you.

PM: And I think it's maybe your best vocal sound on record. What do you think?

LC: Well, we worked hard on it, let me tell you. That song is not particularly easy to sing, actually.

PM: No, it's not. Yeah, that chorus, and there's some pretty good leaps and—

LC: Yeah, there are some high notes in there.

PM: Yeah.

LC: But I really love the song. I had heard Emily perform it, and it's on a compilation locally here for Two Boots, which is a restaurant here in town that—

PM: Where is Two Boots?

LC: Two Boots is down on the Lower East Side. It's a little pizza store, pizza counter. They also have—it's a cool local business, basically. [check out twoboost.com] And they had made a little homemade sampler CD that they sold at their shop. So I had heard her recording of the song, and I'd had it in the back of my mind as something we would try. We started playing it last summer, kind of as we were doing our summer gigs, going into the Newport Folk Festival, and some stuff we did in the UK. And it worked really well in front of a live audience, so I knew we would record it.

But J.D. Foster, who produced this album, really took me to task singing. I think a lot of singers are tempted these days by the kind of glossing that you can get with technology. Without even turning on the Autotune, you can use technology to fix things that bug you, or whatever. And J.D. was really very adamant with me that we get performances and not these little piecemeal assemblings of the best line.

PM: "Yeah, we'll comp you a vocal," right. [Comping is assembling different lines from different takes until the whole song sounds good.]

LC: No, he was all like, "No, you got to go in there and sing it again." I sang all these songs tons just to satisfy what he felt was the right emotional pitch for the vocals.

PM: What were the typical number of takes once you finally got the vocal J.D. was looking for? Was it in the thirties or the—

LC: Oh, no. It wasn't that much. But it was more like we'd sing a few takes one day, and I think we had a really good set. Then we'd come back the next day and we'd sing another song that we hadn't worked on yet. And then he'd say, "I just want to try '14th Street' again."

PM: [laughs]

LC: And so—

PM: "I thought we were done with that."

LC: Yeah, or so I kept thinking. And every time we did it, it would get better. I would walk out of the studio elated, feeling like, "Wow, I didn't realize that I had that in me." And then we'd come back the next weekend, and he'd say, "Let's try that again." So it was very interesting to me.

PM: Oh, that's very educational for me.

LC: I really appreciate that he was able to do this, because as a singer, you do get emotional. You want to please people, and I had a couple moments where I felt like, "Am I doing this again because you're not pleased with it?" And he said, "No, you're doing it again because I know that you've got a better approach within you, we're just—we're finding that."

PM: Wow.

LC: It was really amazing to have somebody who was listening with a totally different set of kind of criteria for what they were wanting to hear—different than what I might have been thinking, which was more like, "Does it sound pretty?"

[laughter]

LC: Or "Is it in tune? Does it sound like I can sing good?" All those things. He'd say, "I don't care about any of that stuff." He was like, "I want to feel it." We worked a lot on that stuff.

PM: Oh, that's very interesting. A friend of mine is making a record with Dan Huff here in town at the moment. And she said, "Yeah, he likes me to sing it about thirty-seven times." And I said, "You got to be kidding me. Thirty-seven times, I'd want to kill him after thirty-seven times." But everybody has got their own m.o. That's a great story. J.D. Foster, jeez. I love that.

LC: Yeah.

PM: Because, I mean, the track that you ended up with on “14th Street” is obviously just amazing. And would you tell us something about the author, Emily Spray? Is she a friend of yours?

LC: Yes, she’s a friend. She’s actually from Portland, Oregon.

PM: Is she married to Matt Keating?

LC: Yes, she is.

PM: Because he’s a guy I met when I spent a recent summer in the city. He’s a very nice guy and a good songwriter, too.

LC: Oh, yeah. A very good songwriter. And Emily has been writing more, and I think because Matt is so active as a performer, he’s really encouraged Emily to continue performing and writing. They have a daughter. And often when Matt performs, I think Emily gets up and does some stuff, and they sometimes perform as a duo, or do shows together, which is cool. She hasn’t yet made a record on her own.

PM: Yeah, I couldn’t find one. So there isn’t one.

LC: I don’t believe so.

PM: Before we get off “14th Street”—how long did it take to mix that song?

LC: I think we spent probably a day on that.

PM: A day. One whole day, yeah.

LC: I think that they did some stuff—well, there’s a lot going on in that song.

PM: There’s a lot going on. That’s why I asked, yeah.

LC: So I think that the actual mix day was a day. But I also think that they previously had done some editing and done kind of getting in place all the parts, because there are a lot of keyboards on the record, particularly on that song. Rob Burger played on that. He’s a wonderful—

PM: Oh, jeez! [He’s one of the geniuses in the Tin Hat Trio. He’s pretty unbelievable.]

LC: —local keyboardist. And he’s playing B3 here and there. And he’s got another thing going on. So there was some kind of arrangement sussing before we actually went into the actual mix. And of course, all the background parts. Mary Lee Cortes—I think she probably has about four parts on there.

PM: And they're great.

LC: Yeah, she does a lovely job. And she really got into it. It's something that Mary Lee does so beautifully that I could never do. She'd come in and say, "Okay, now I'm going to put this on there." It was cool, because she basically arranged her own part, and made suggestions as she went along. We had sort of a basic harmony thing that we wanted to hear in certain places, and she had a lot of great ideas for how to make that cooler and poppier.

PM: She sure did. Boy, did they work.

LC: Yeah.

PM: A friend of mine, and one of our favorite artists, also has a song on your new record, Jenifer Jackson.

LC: Oh, yes.

PM: We're very big on her. Is she a buddy of yours?

LC: Oh, yes. In fact, we were on tour last year in Italy, and Jenifer was doing a whole tour of Italy while we were there. She happened to be playing when we were in Rome on the same night that we were. Our show was early, and hers was late, so we actually got to go and hang out and see her do her show to a room of Italian bohemians. [laughs]

PM: Oh, really?

LC: It was really cool to see her singing in Italian. It was really, really impressive.

PM: Wow. Did she do a bunch of her more Bossa-type stuff, too?

LC: She did some of that stuff.

PM: Yeah.

LC: And she did some of her songs that just kill me, like "The Whole Wide World"—

PM: Oh, yeah.

LC: The one that's from her first record. But I had really always loved "What You Said." It was from her album *Birds* [see our review], and it had actually been made in Nashville, and it had a more country take on it, even on her record.

PM: Right. Although you country it up quite a bit more.

LC: Oh, we twanged it up even more. I wanted to have Kenny Kosek come and play fiddle on it, and I thought he did a lovely job.

PM: Terrific, yeah.

LC: And also Rob Burger plays accordion on that. So it comes off with this nice breezy feel, and I just thought it had a really sweet sound. Jennifer's way of writing is simple, but at the same time it's evocative and sweet without lots of words and tricky bits. She's not trying to out-clever everyone, but it's very effective, I think.

PM: Yeah. I thought you did a fantastic job on "What You Said," that's just a great song.

Let's talk a little more about J.D. Foster. What's the dynamic and the chemistry like there? What's his personality in the studio?

LC: Well, it was interesting. He's something that I really appreciate: he's an old-fashioned music person and producer, in that he believes in spending a lot of time in the studio. And technology is only there to make certain things easy, but he doesn't want that to substitute for real performances, real emotion and real musicality. He doesn't want to have to fix anything that's not worth being there in the first place. You know what I'm saying?

PM: Absolutely.

LC: So he wanted really high quality, and I really appreciated that. Again, as we mentioned about my own vocals, he really got me to up my own game quite a bit. And he's definitely somebody who has made very lush, beautiful sounding records for Richard Buckner, and I don't know if you're familiar with the Mark Ribot records that he produced.

PM: I am, yeah. I like Mark Ribot a lot.

LC: J.D. is working on the new album by Calexico, actually. He made a Dave Schramm record that I was very fond of. Dave is a local.

PM: I know. He's one of your guys. What was the Schramm record that Foster produced?

LC: It's called *100 Questions*.

PM: Okay.

LC: Dave had had very high praise for J. D.'s process in the studio, and said that he was very encouraging, and really just wasn't going to impose some kind of producer's trip on what the music should sound like.

PM: Right.

LC: And that sounded good to me.

[laughter]

LC: I also knew that before J.D. was a producer he'd spent time in Dwight Yoakam's band. He was the bass player on Dwight's first two albums. And so I knew that he could play country music and knew country music very well, and that we would find some common ground together in our love of old country music. So that was my hope as we were getting to know each other. And indeed, that was the case. We really sat around talking about Wynn Stewart, and playing Merle Haggard, and just having a good time.

PM: [laughs] Wow. That's a very kind of psychedelically swinging outro to "Old Downtown" at the end of the record. Who's playing the guitar there?

LC: That is actually Dave Schramm.

PM: It's very cool.

LC: And he's probably playing Ebow, as well. And then also Mark Spencer is on guitar. And some places I can't even tell who's actually playing which part, because there are a lot of other sounds. It's more soundscapery than it is about a guitar line. There's a lot of atmosphere on that part of the record. We felt it would be a good note to end on—sort of like if we'd started in this place people would have freaked out.

[laughter]

PM: Oh, yeah, absolutely. My advance copy had no player credits, as they tend not to, and I couldn't find it on the website.

LC: Oh, my.

PM: I hate to not know those things, so thanks for filling in the guitar players, at least on that cut. But who are some of the other core players? Who's on the bass?

LC: On that tune, particularly, it was Jeremy Chatzky, who's the main bass player that I've worked with for the last few years. The only tracks that don't have Jeremy on them, actually there's only one, and that would be when we did one song with Calexico, "And Still." That's Joey Burns and John Convertino of Calexico.

PM: Right.

LC: And Paul Niehaus along with Dave Schramm. And actually, John Graboff plays guitar and other instruments for a lot of this record as well. And he's played with me for a long time.

PM: Right. So I think there are four originals on this record. That's about your usual number, right?

LC: Yes.

PM: Is that because, well, that's just how prolific you are, or is that just the mix of originals to found songs you prefer, or?

LC: I definitely wanted to have more of my own original numbers on this album. And it was frustrating to me, actually, that I found that despite having extra time, I didn't actually write any more quickly or finish things more consistently than when I was working full time.

PM: Interesting.

LC: I think that's still because I kind of quit and was on tour, and there was a long transition that I went through into feeling comfortable just knowing when to work and how to do it. But I definitely felt good about the ones that I finished and that ended up on the album. I thought they held up well against the other songs that I picked, and against my older songs.

PM: Absolutely.

LC: So I don't worry myself too much about the quantity of my own songs. That said, I do get asked every now and again, "Will you ever do an album of all of your own compositions?" And I might, if I get—

PM: "If I get twelve at a time, you'll be the first to hear them," yeah.

LC: I don't see much reason to wait around.

PM: No. Was that a clarinet solo on "Khaki and Corduroy"?

LC: Actually, that's a claviola. Have you ever seen one of those things?

PM: I can't really place the instrument in my mind, no.

LC: It's sort of like a melodica, only with a shape, a more round kind of horn. It's sort of shaped like an autoharp or something, but without strings. It's got a keyboard on one side, and you blow into it, and play it on the keyboard.

PM: Oh, I want one.

LC: It's a very cool instrument. It has a very clarinet kind of reedy sounding tone to it.

PM: Right, without that hokey sound, though.

LC: Yeah.

PM: It's got a more serious sound. Really beautiful. That was a pretty solo, too.

LC: Yes. That's Rob Burger again. He and Ted Reichman are players that J.D. knew, and I would have never known to ask them to come play. I was so glad to hook up with them through J. D.—he'd worked with both of them. Rob Burger also plays with a woman here, Mary Mulliken, who is a local singer/songwriter who does some kind of country-ish stuff. And he plays really beautiful things on her albums, too.

PM: What was Lucinda's reaction to your unearthing the old song "Letters" from her bare '70s days?

LC: Unfortunately I didn't get to talk to her in person about it. She was busy, and we had to go through her manager to get the stuff to her in order for her to approve it. But some friends of friends had been with her when she was listening to it, and they said she was very pleased and thought that it was a cool take on her song.

PM: Wow. Did she even remember the song?

LC: When she heard it, she definitely remembered it.

PM: Because that's a really good song. You've got dates coming up with her, right?

LC: We're so sad to find out that she has an ear infection and can't fly.

PM: Oh, too bad.

LC: She just played in New York, and she was not feeling well here. And I think she went to the doctor. We were all getting on a plane tomorrow.

PM: Oh, what a drag for you.

LC: Yeah, it's a drag. I we were so looking forward to it. It would have been a lot of fun.

PM: So what will you do? Go do the shows alone or get somebody else on the bill?

LC: I think that they will probably reschedule her shows. I don't know if I'll be available when her stuff is going to be rescheduled, because we have other things planned for the fall. But we have a couple of our own shows in the UK that I think we'll go over and do,

shows that were scheduled in and around her schedule. We'll probably go do those anyway.

PM: Right. Yeah, because that's a great place for you. You do very well there.

LC: We've had a great experience there.

PM: Being originally a Nashville girl, do you have a lot of friends down here in town?

LC: Oh, yeah, absolutely. Absolutely, I have. In fact, I just went on tour with Paul Burch.

PM: Oh, yeah, he's a casual friend of mine. We always go for brunch at the Red Wagon [a favorite cafe in Nashville, owned by Paul Burch and his wife Meg Guiffrida].

LC: I wish I could go there and have brunch right now, even though it's a little late. Paul just did about ten shows with us on the East Coast. And yeah, I'm friendly with a lot of the folks from Lamb Chop and, between Jeremy and myself, we've had a lot of friends in Nashville over the years. And it's great to go, because I have a big family as well. It's good to be able to go and sort of balance out the family part with escaping for a while and visit some friends also.

PM: Would you ever do a record down here? Are you going to do that sometime?

LC: Yeah, we thought about it for this album, actually, because there are tons of beautiful studios in Nashville, and lots of great professionals to record.

PM: For sure, there are so many good players who will keep it in whatever pocket you care to be in.

LC: Yeah, I know. I definitely want to come and record there at some point. For this particular project, when we were getting going, I had the basics of my band here, and we decided to kind of stay closer to home and just to get it going here. But as I said, we thought about it. Even midway through, we thought, well, maybe we should go do a session in Nashville, but didn't end up doing it. But it's definitely on the list of things we'd like to do.

PM: I was recording this morning with a co-writer best friend of mine who had very nice things to say about your husband. What's he up to these days?

LC: Jeremy actually is working for Sirius Satellite Radio in New York. He's the programmer for one of their—I call them channels, I think they call them streams of music. It's kind of alt-country related. It's called Outlaw Country. And it's a really cool channel that plays a lot of old music mixed in with a lot of new country stuff that's sort of influenced by Waylon and Willie and the like.

PM: Have you read anything lately that turned you on?

LC: Have I read anything? I've been on the road, so I've been doing some reading. I read a Richard Yates novel that was just heartbreaking.

PM: Wow, I haven't heard that name in the while. What title?

LC: It was the one called *Easter Sunday*. Someone I was being interviewed by in England mentioned Richard Yates to me, and I was like, "Oh, I'm not familiar with that name." And then I felt silly, because when I read the book, he turned out to be someone who had a lot of familiarity with New York. So I read that recently. And I read another book that's more of an entertaining read, one of those Jon Krakauer books, the Everest book, *Into Thin Air*. It's pretty devastating, also, in a different way.

PM: Right.

LC: Somebody also recently gave me—I don't know if you're familiar with John Wesley Harding?

PM: The singer/songwriter?

LC: Yes. He's also a writer. And he's written a novel under his real name, Wesley Stace.

PM: Really?

LC: Yeah. It's called *Misfortune*. I don't even know how to describe it. I've just started it. But it's fascinating to me when I find music people who are also really good writers in a literary sense.

PM: Yeah, prose writers. And it's rare, certainly, that a singer/songwriter turns out a novel and publishes.

LC: Yes. His book has actually gotten quite a big release. I think they're expecting good things from Wes, so it's very cool.

PM: Oh, good for him. I'm going to pick that up. In fact, we should we review it.

LC: You should.

PM: We like to review other things that musicians do sometimes, paintings or photographs, or Steve Earle's book of stories.

LC: Sure.

PM: But in this case, very impressive, indeed. If it's a fair enough question, how would you describe your own personality, what kind of a gal are you?

LC: That's a good question. [laughs] It's funny, because I'm sort of a softy, I'm kind of a big pushover.

[laughter]

LC: But also I think I'm somebody who works really hard when I get something that I want to do, whether it's my radio show or with music. I just try to kind of keep plugging along. I think I'm pretty persistent.

PM: In either religious or simply spiritual terms, do you lean one way or the other, or not at all?

LC: I have a belief of some kind, I'm not sure what. [laughs] But I've not been into any sort of organized religion. I don't often end up talking about it. It's awkward.

PM: [laughs] Well, that's charming in its own right, actually.

LC: I did have somebody one time ask me because they'd been listening to my radio show and I had played some gospel music and spiritual stuff. And so one of my listeners took me aside and said, "Are you born again?"

[laughter]

LC: And I was like, "Do you think that from my program?" And they said, "Well, we thought you could be." And I thought, "Well, that's interesting."

PM: Do born again people listen to gospel music very much? That wasn't my impression...

Well, one last question: are there things in life that you'd like to try that you've not yet attempted?

LC: Oh, sure. [laughs] All kinds of things. All kinds of things. From pretty obvious things, like—I've been doing community radio and I'd love to do more produced type of radio with a little bit more forethought put into it. I'd love to continue developing as a writer. One of the most gratifying parts of the whole artistic process is when you come up with something that you've written that you really feel good about.

PM: Right. That's the best.

LC: And so that's something that I'm chipping away at, and feel could definitely get better for me. I don't know, lots of things.

PM: Well, thank you so much for your time today.

LC: Oh, my pleasure. I really appreciate the space. We'll see you down the road.