

A Conversation with Louise Taylor by Frank Goodman (Puremusic.com 4/03)

Some songwriters sit down to write today's version of what they do. Others apparently pick up their guitar and consider "Where do we go from here?"

Louise Taylor is not inclined to jump through anyone's hoops, and is not disposed to repeating herself. She is an unbridled creative spirit, with a soulful and transcendent voice, and a rare feel for the guitar. Her sensual rhythm on her earlier records and her fingerstyle approach on her later ones embody a real connection to her axe. I've known people with fantastic chops who still didn't seem inside their instrument. But Louise Taylor really owns that thing, she rides it like a horse, she's driving it. (And what amazing guitars she has! Louise is the de facto poster girl for the incredible Vermont outfit called Froggy Bottom Guitars.) And her voice, it's coming out of the person, the whole person, not just the throat or the lungs. You can hear all she's been and all she's seen.

Velvet Town is her fifth record, her fourth for the highly regarded Signature Sounds label. We covered her last release, *Written In Red*, in which she ingeniously wove her lyrical folk pop roots with strands of Celtic music and the Blues. (see our review)

In *Velvet Town*, the artist takes a bigger step yet. Her new batch of songs take on a much jazzier and World Music personality. Her drummer percussionist Dean Sharp was influential here, as Louise details in our conversation. Along with helping her to appreciate the scope of her own music through exposing her to new and far flung inspirations, Dean played brilliantly and preproduced the project, and mixed the tracks with Paul Antonell. Close friend and coproducer Annie Gallup was the third side of the triangle. She was the experienced and perfectionist confidante that Louise required to make the leap and land where she planned.

We think that *Velvet Town* is a great record, and an important one. I hope exposure to it incites programmers and DJ's to widen their playlists and acoustic artists to dig a little deeper for their music as well as their lyrics.

[Louise was at Annie Gallup's place in Michigan. Annie and I shot the breeze for a minute, she said that she and Louise were listening to Kelly Joe Phelps.]

Louise Taylor: Hello.

Puremusic: Hello, Louise.

LT: How are you doing?

PM: I'm fine. It's nice to speak with you. Sorry to interrupt your listening, there.

LT: No problem.

PM: So we'll just get right down to business.

LT: Okay.

PM: Although you and I are friendly, I don't really know much about your past. And so if you don't mind, I'd just like to spend a few minutes there. As far as I can tell, the gypsy fever had you kind of young.

LT: [laughs] Yeah, when I was like 12, I ran away for the first time. And I was just searching for something, I don't know what. When I was 15, I started hitchhiking around the country, and hitchhiked around for six years. I wound up in a lot of different places, mostly seeking out the sun and a free lifestyle.

PM: So do you mean when other people were going to school, you didn't do that, or you did get around to doing that?

LT: No, I really didn't do that. I did eventually go back and get my GED, in case I ever wanted to go to college, when I was like 26. But I really never learned very well from school. I was very energetic and wild, so I just took off.

PM: Wow. I sure love that. When you say you headed where the sun was shining, did you get south of the border?

LT: Not much south of the border. I didn't really dip into Mexico that much. I lived near the border, and the Gulf of Mexico, and down in Padre Island and Texas. I lived in Florida, the Keys, and an island actually past Key West called Christmas Tree Island.

PM: Yeah.

LT: And I played street music at Sunset Pier in Key West, as well as in various places around New England.

PM: So you were busking at a very early age.

LT: Very early. I knew like five songs that I wrote. [laughs]

PM: Wow. And would you play covers around them, or just play these five songs?

LT: Not much. I didn't really know too many songs. There were probably a few songs that I knew, but I'd just sort of repeat mine, and jammed with people. And I was also a dancer. I did a lot of street dancing for drummers down in the Keys.

PM: How would you describe your dancing?

LT: Lightly clad.

[laughter]

PM: Atta girl.

LT: Well, I didn't do bar dancing or anything like that.

PM: Not exotic, *exotique*.

LT: Yeah.

PM: Wow. Yeah, so my question about gypsy fever hitting you kind of young, I see now that it was a bit of an understatement.

LT: Yeah. I used no money for a long time. I mean, very little money. I panhandled and lived on nothing for many, many, many years. And that was a whole way of life that had actually been taught to me by someone who really was a street person, who really knew how to get around without money, was very good at it.

PM: Who was that person?

LT: His name was Frank, actually.

[laughter]

PM: Oh, I see.

LT: And he was an interesting guy. He still lives in Vermont, near me. He was much older than me.

PM: Are you still friends?

LT: I see him every once in a while. He still looks the same. He was a street musician. He played sax and clarinet really well. He had been a Marine, and had sort of this wild life, manic depressive. And so he had a side that could go way too far, or he could just be fun and interesting. I kind of forget all about that whole part of my life. At this point especially, it seems so far gone for me and doesn't happen to play into who I am much, but I guess it's just there still.

PM: Oh, it's got to be. I mean, it certainly seems to have laid the foundation, for instance, for the freedom that you express as an artist in all your records, in a format that's, to my way of thinking, not particularly inventive. You know, the singer/songwriter domain and the radio formats that accompany it are not famous for pushing too hard on the envelope. So I think it shows up there in good measure and to great result. So your only self released CD was in '92, *Looking for Rivers*.

LT: Yeah, *Looking for Rivers* was the first. And it was actually recorded after work, at night—you know, driving to a studio about an hour and a half away, and gathering up \$75 or whatever I could come up with to sit down and play. And over the course of a year, I would get a take or two here and there that seemed good enough, and I would put them on a CD. A friend of

mine, Jack McKay, really believed in me and really thought I should make a record. So we just did it blindly.

PM: What a hard way to make a record, over that much time, and in those increments.

LT: Yeah. I think a lot of people do that with their first project, they sort of don't know what they're doing. But I had no money. I was a single parent, and I was working full time just to get by. So that was how I went about it—and thinking that no one would ever hear it, even. And it wound up getting reviews, and I started to get letters and emails from people around the world.

PM: And with that first release in '92, you were already, to some degree, on your way, is that not right?

LT: Well, it helped. At that point I wasn't even playing very much anywhere. I had been doing some local stuff, but I hadn't really been touring at all. And it was after I released that record that I started to tour, mostly New England, a little bit nationally. And I realized, "Oh, people are going to be listening to this. I have to pay attention to what I'm writing—"

[laughter]

LT: "—and think about what I'm going to say." So it all kind of came, for me, in a very unconscious way. I was always interested in many kinds of art, and not a very disciplined person, more sort of wild and scattered. And through the course of having some success with that first record, then I kind of reined it in and tried a little harder.

PM: And it was a full four years before your long-standing relationship with Signature Sounds began in '96 with *Ruby Shoes*?

LT: Correct.

PM: And *Ride*, the following year. Why was it so long between the first and second CD? What was happening in your life then?

LT: Mostly I was struggling as a single parent.

PM: What year was Morgan born?

LT: Morgan was born in '83. So I was just trying to get him through school, and work, and survive, in the country, in a small town where an uneducated woman couldn't really make much of a living. So that was a lot of what was going on. I was writing all the time. But I was looking for some type of record deal, or whatever. And actually, I recorded the record about a year earlier than when it came out.

PM: I see.

LT: I recorded it in '95, and I shopped it around for quite a while looking for a label. And Signature had always wanted to sign me. They wanted me as their first artist. But they were a brand new label. They were just starting, and I was not convinced that they would be successful.

PM: They wanted you as their first artist?

LT: Yeah.

PM: So whom did you know, and how? You knew Jim Olsen?

LT: I knew Jim Olsen from a radio station. He was the program director for WRSI. And the first thing I did for him, as a lot of local artists had done, were these Homegrown Holiday CDs to raise money for various good causes, like the Food Bank of Western MA. And he still puts those records out.

PM: And that's where WRSI was, Western Mass?

LT: Yeah. WRSI was in Greenfield, and it's now moved to Northampton. But I don't believe he's the program director anymore. He just does a show once a week. And he took a long hiatus from that, actually, to just do the record company. But it was through doing that Homegrown Holiday CD—I believe, at least—it gave him and Mark Thayer, the co-owner of the label, who had the studio, Signature Sounds Studio, the idea to make records. They enjoyed it so much, and I think they saw the potential there, and they saw that there were a lot of unsigned artists in that area.

PM: Yeah, God knows, they've become one of the most important of the small labels, and one of the most tasteful.

LT: Yeah, they've done very well.

PM: Now I see my friend Amy Rigby is coming out on Signature Sounds.

LT: Is she? I don't know Amy.

PM: Oh, she's great. Her new record is coming out, and it's a real foray into pop music for them.

LT: Great.

PM: And I think as jazzy as *Velvet Town* is, there's also a lot of pop in *Velvet Town*.

LT: Yeah.

PM: And very sophisticated and refined pop, for a woman who calls herself uneducated.

LT: [laughs] Uneducated in the regular way, that's for sure.

PM: Yeah, right. So *Ride* was a fantastic record, as was its successor, *Written in Red*, which was the first one of yours we covered. I remember we thought you'd found the trap door between Celtic music and the blues. Tell us something about your trips to Ireland at that time, around *Written in Red*, where you went and how you felt influenced.

LT: Well, I went to Ireland, I guess it was the year before I wrote *Written in Red*. I went there for a few tours—three tours. And I became interested in Irish music—well, I was already. In *Ride* there are hints of that sort of Appalachian feel, or the Celtic feel, just beginning.

I got really interested in traditional songwriting, and how a traditional song works. How a story is put across, the way a story unfolds, and the sort of mystique about it. And the beauty of a traditional song, for me, has a lot to do with the fact that the song has been handed down from generation to generation, and has become honed over time, so the finite details become that much more powerful. And impossible as it is to write a traditional song—you can't—I wanted to write something that had that type of story line in it and power in it.

PM: Wow.

LT: After being in Ireland and listening more to traditional music, I was beginning to understand it better. I think when I first started hearing it, it all sounded the same to me. Then I began hearing the intricacies of the melody lines, and how stories are born and play out.

And then I tried my hand at writing a few songs that sort of combined that and the blues, because I really heard the link between them. Actually, when I was on tour over there—I toured with Chris Smither and also did a few shows there with Kelly Joe Phelps, and I really heard in their playing that the Celtic style was just a note or two away from being very bluesy sounding.

To me, the whole history of music and how it's gotten around the world is fascinating. And I see a lot of pockets of Irish music around the world.

PM: Oh, yeah. At times I've heard English or Irish music, and I've heard Indian music, and Persian music that, in a certain way, all sounds like it came from the same place.

LT: Yes. It really fascinates me. [laughs]

PM: As Coltrane said, "There are only twelve notes."

LT: And there's a few in between there. [laughs]

PM: Yeah, right, well, if you're playing Indian music, there's a couple in between.

LT: Yeah, yeah. And that's actually what I was going for on *Velvet Town*. I was trying to play some notes that were—starting hear some things that are a little out there, as far as not really on a typical scale, and trying to mess with tone.

PM: Ah. And I wonder if one of your incarnations to come has something more to do with microtonal music, with Indian styled music.

LT: [laughs]

PM: There was quite a leap between *Ride* and *Written in Red*, more bluesy and more Celtic at the same time. There's an even bigger leap between *Written in Red* and *Velvet Town*. How would you describe that leap?

LT: Well, the main difference was to thin back the lyrics a lot. I really wanted to strip back the lyrics and make the songs have more openness in them, have more space in them, and have more room for music to happen, not just lyrics. And in doing that, it gave me more time to sing the notes, and play with the depth of the note and the tone of the note, which also got me into messing around with pitch. And then also writing larger melodies, writing melodies that had more depth to them, I felt, than some of my storytelling songs.

PM: Right.

LT: So that's the biggest change, and that's what I was going for. I wanted something much more musical.

PM: And I think it's vastly more musical in every way. Greg Brown once said to me that he thought there was an overemphasis on words, and that people ought to be more interested in laying down a good groove.

LT: Yeah. I think all the elements are important. And I've always approached each element separately. So I'll work on my voice for a while, and then I'll work on my guitar playing for a while, and then I'll work on songwriting. After my first record, I was really interested in lyrics, and getting better at writing better lyrics. I focused on that a lot, more than anything else, and kind of ignored my voice—not completely, but that became my main focus. Whereas when I was starting out, I was more interested in just singing. And I think I've come back around to the singing aspect, and sort of bringing all the elements to the fore. All the pieces are really important, and it's important to pay attention to each one. And I pick at it slowly.

PM: I think you really are singing your ass off on this last record.

LT: Thanks.

PM: Who are your recent influences in that vocal regard?

LT: I listened a lot to women from around the globe in the last couple years. I listened to an African jazz singer, Gloria Bosman. I was given a tape of hers by a woman who knew my music for many years. She worked with the International Institute for Learning that's in my town and she had been to Africa several times, and she said, "Oh, there's this woman who reminds me of you. You would love her." And she brought me a tape just before I went on tour. And I stuck it in, and I wanted to listen to that tape the whole time on tour. That's how I became familiar with

Gloria Bosman's work. I don't even have her CD jacket. I don't even know how to get her stuff. [laughs] That's my excuse for that.

PM: We should surely track her down and turn our readership on to her music. [check out Gloria Bosman at <http://www.sheer.co.za>]

LT: Yes. The record that I listened to was called *Tranquility*. And I loved it, it is just a beautiful record. Some of the rhythms that I picked up or got ideas for came from listening to that CD. Also different types of guitar playing that come out on *Velvet Town*, like on "Call My Name."

PM: Oh, yeah. Now, how was that beautiful African sound that you're making on "Call My Name" produced?

LT: That's a piece of paper. In the strings, woven between the strings.

PM: Ah, yes. And you're picking with picks or no picks?

LT: No picks. I dropped all picks for this record, too. That was the other thing that was really different from in the past. I've always played with at least a thumb pick or a flat pick. And I was trying to improve my guitar style. It was actually something Ray Bonneville suggested, that I try not using any picks.

PM: Oh, Ray uses no picks.

LT: No picks.

PM: Never did?

LT: I don't know if he ever did, but he sure hasn't in years. And now, in fact, he just uses two fingers.

PM: Yeah, he really gets around on two fingers.

LT: He sure does.

[laughter]

LT: A thumb and a finger. So, yeah, he suggested I work on that, and so I did. And I wrote a lot of these songs without picks. And I improved my guitar playing a lot, and really changed the way I approached the guitar, too.

PM: I've gotten into playing with no picks recently, and I really love it. And that's the way I used to play. But it's a problem if you play an awful lot, then you really wear your fingers out. I get blisters, and I get really sore.

LT: Yeah, you have to build up calluses.

PM: I do, but then they break and—

LT: Yeah. It's a problem. [laughs]

PM: Yeah, it's really a job liability.

Really crucial to this record are two relationships that have everything to do with *Velvet Town*, with your longtime percussionist, Dean Sharp, and with your soul sister, Annie Gallup.

LT: Right.

PM: So let's talk a little about each of them. Let's talk about Dean first, because I know he had everything to do with preproduction and bringing some things to your ears that made a difference, etc.

LT: That's right. He started feeding me music, actually, a couple years ago, just giving me compilation tapes of things to listen to, to give me ideas. He suggested that my music wasn't just folk, that other influences were present. And I also toured with him for those couple of years after recording *Written in Red*. He was always telling me I was more like Cassandra Wilson, and that I should just let myself do what I do, and explore those things.

He also is such a phenomenal player that I really wanted to keep him interested, and write music that he would be interested in playing. He also found players for me. He introduced me to Ken McGloin and Ira Coleman, who both play on the record. So we put together this band first. And although I wasn't able to afford to take them out very often, we did a few things together, and, they, in my mind, were my band [laughs] even though in reality I couldn't afford to have them with me all the time. So I did a lot of shows, though, with just Dean and I as a duo, which is a really effective show, I think.

PM: When you and Dean go out as a duo, what does he show up with?

LT: Well, a full but small set, more like a jazz kit.

PM: A jazz kit, and also some hand drums?

LT: Lots of hand drums, yeah, a cajon. And it's changed over the years as the material has changed too.

PM: Djembe or bongos or—

LT: No. I think on the record he plays some of those things, but in concert he will keep it somewhat simpler than that. The cajon covers a lot of those bases. The cajon is expressive, it has a very big bass sound and also a very high bongo-y sound. And he plays a lot of the kit with his hands, and then he'll have a lot of percussion instruments and toys.

PM: He's an awfully musical musician. Is he a songwriter as well?

LT: He's done some songwriting, but I don't think that he has really explored it. I think he could be a really good songwriter. And he helped me out early on with some of the songs, like suggesting ways that they could be fleshed out a little better. He is extremely musical, and he plays very orchestrally. He's really behind me in a very interesting way. And he actually loves playing bass parts with bass drums.

PM: Yeah, he's a fantastic player. And he's what you'd have to call the preproducer of the record, is he not?

LT: He is, yeah. He really is. He did a lot. He found the players. He'd also worked in the studio that we wound up using in Rhinebeck, New York, and was really in love with the studio. So he really did a lot of the legwork in finding all the elements for the sessions.

PM: Because that was, in this album, very important.

LT: Yes, it was.

PM: But on the subject of co-production, I think that brings us to Annie Gallup's role on this record, which we need to understand.

LT: Annie Gallup has been a friend and supporter of my music and I of hers. And I've always really admired her dedication to the art of it. Her vision with art is so individual. And to me, she is just one of the best out there. She's such a talent, her own musicality, her own lyrical genius.

And I'm very comfortable with her. I really wanted to have a producer there, someone I could trust so that I could really be myself, and someone who I knew would stand up for the important issues in a record, which would be keeping it true to its vision. And she was all those things. As it was, I was already running these songs by her as I wrote them.

So Annie helped me with the initial editing of the songs, and then with all the other preproduction work, which had to do with determining who was going to play what instrument on what day in the studio and getting it all really organized, working on the arrangements, and honing the words, making sure all the lyrics were really there.

PM: She has a tireless attention to detail.

LT: Yes, she does. And that's what I was really looking for. And then when it came time to work in the studio, there was that comfort and freedom, so that the three days when we tracked—the initial three days that we did the major tracking for the record, went smoothly. By the way, we tracked live. I recorded guitar and vocals simultaneously.

PM: Oh, really?

LT: Yeah. I don't overdub vocals, I always just do it with the band.

PM: So how do you separate your guitar from your voice adequately? I like to track that way, too. How do you separate?

LT: Well, it's always a problem. You have to give up a little bit of vocal quality and guitar quality for that.

PM: You have to let it bleed.

LT: It does bleed, sure, because they're both in the same room. In this particular studio, he had a really good technique, and he used just one—I don't know what you call it, but where the microphone didn't have a big span around it.

PM: Yeah, a close pattern.

LT: A close pattern mic for the guitar towards the back of the guitar, and then I had my guitar amp in the closet. I have an acoustic guitar amp that's very good sounding.

PM: Oh, that's right, you're a Daedalus person. [great speaker cabinets from Upper NY state specially made by Lou Hinkley]

LT: Yes.

PM: And so what's your signal chain—let's see, it starts with a Froggy Bottom guitar.

LT: Right.

PM: And it's picked up how?

LT: It has a Fishman Matrix.

PM: And then the preamp is what?

LT: A Rane, and a Hafler power amp.

PM: So since your setup is miked in a closet, the bleed issue is with your acoustic guitar into your vocal mic, or was the acoustic miked as well?

LT: One small acoustic mic on this particular recording session. In the past, I've had a couple mics on the guitar, and a vocal mic, and then there's a lot more bleed. It's a lot harder to get a good vocal sound, because the vocals tend to bleed into the guitar mics, and it makes the vocals sound really honky. But in this particular case, we used a Neumann U47 for the vocal.

PM: You can't fault those.

LT: No. It was a beautiful mic. And I was isolated in a room. The drums we had set up in two different spaces, two different types of drum sets—one that was real bassy in a smaller room, which included the cajon, and was more the earthy set, and then the regular drum set in the big room. If it was an electric bass track, he was out with the drummer. The acoustic bassist, Ira Coleman, who's a really good jazz player, had his own little booth. So we could all see each other, but we were separated as individuals from one another.

PM: Sonically, yeah.

LT: Yeah.

PM: And this is at a facility called The Clubhouse up in Rhinebeck, New York.
[<http://www.clubhouseinc.com>]

LT: Yeah, an amazing studio. Paul Antonell had a studio of the same name in a different location, but he just built this new building, I guess about year or so ago, and it's beautiful.

PM: And it was an analog setup, right?

LT: We began with two-inch analog tape, and then dumped it into Protools. Then Ken McGloin overdubbed some electric and acoustic guitars.

PM: So why did it dump to Protools later? For editing and mixing reasons?

LT: Yeah. It makes that easier.

PM: Was there any cutting and pasting going on?

LT: No, not much. A little bit.

PM: So you're endorsing The Clubhouse, highly, I take it.

LT: Oh, yeah, very much so.

PM: I'm sure we'll be hearing more about Paul Antonell. A great bunch of players on this record—who is that pianist, Eugene Uman?

LT: He is a local person from my town, and he runs the Jazz Center there. I played with him on just a few occasions. After I came back from the initial tracking, I had recorded "Velvet Town" with my guitar. And I just didn't think that it really made the grade. So I went back, and I was going to record it with him on the piano and me on electric guitar. I got to the studio, and I had a guitar intonation problem. And we were there, and we had to record the song, so I just put the guitar down and sang as he played. And he did an amazing track.

PM: Absolutely monster. Yeah, that's one of my favorite cuts on the record. And it was nice to hear cellist Stephanie Winters from The Nudes appear powerfully on a few cuts. What's she up to lately?

LT: Well, she's doing a lot of work. She's working on a solo project of cello music, but not just straight cello. It's many layers of cello.

PM: Gideon Freudmann style?

LT: Yes. With remixes done by Dean Sharp.

PM: Oh, wow. That ought to be interesting.

LT: Yes. I've heard some of it and it's *very* interesting.

PM: I hope somebody sends us that record. I want to hear it. And a wonderful choice in Kristin DeWitt, the heavenliest of harmony singers.

LT: She blew our minds. [laughs]

PM: She has an uncanny blending ability. She can really match tones like few I've ever heard.

LT: Oh, it's unbelievable! She has a whole technique that I guess she learned from her choir director, dealing with vowel sounds, and she explained it to us briefly. But we flew her in from Texas, and we were sort of at our wit's end. Some of these notes are very—they're not true pitch, they're below pitch, and the sounds are very unusual, and I was really concerned we'd just get somebody in there who couldn't bend at all, or blend. But Annie thought of Kristin. We brought her in, and she sat down and she just sang the whole song through, and she would nail the phrasing completely. I mean, she had a tape to practice with beforehand, but it was just unbelievable. I couldn't do my own phrasing like she does. [laughs].

PM: Yeah.

LT: And then we'd just pick and choose the parts we wanted to keep, arrangement-wise. But she would just sing the whole song through, and do it in one take.

PM: So, just a taste about all the guitars you may have used on this record.

LT: I personally used mostly my number one Froggy, who's called Betty.

PM: Is that a big body Froggy?

LT: Yes, she's a big girl. And I guess it's like a J-200, sort of that size. But the body is thinner, so it's not as boomy a sound. But it's the main guitar I travel with. I've had that since 1991, and it's a really amazing guitar.

PM: Oh, yeah, then, I know Betty. I've seen you play her around the campfire at Kerrville.

LT: And then I played just an electric that I picked up, that's nothing special, but—

PM: Has a good sound, though. What is it?

LT: Yeah, I like it. It's an Epiphone, with a humbucking pickup. I actually just got the guitar about a month or two before I recorded, because I really knew I wanted to have electric on it, and I didn't have a lot of time. I was on tour, so I just went out in one day tried about four guitars, and said, "Okay, I'll take this one," and brought it home, and learned what I could on it as quickly as possible. And I wound up playing slide on the record on that.

PM: Yeah, that was something.

[laughter]

LT: Yeah.

PM: And rockin' right out on it.

LT: [laughs] That was one of the scariest songs we did on the record.

PM: "Firebox Coal Train."

LT: Yeah, because it was the end of the session, and it was late at night and I was tired. And I was like, "Oh, jeez, I don't know if I have the strength." I played it through once and it was kind of horrible. Then we just did a second take, and that was it. And that's what you hear, just Dean and me rockin' away.

PM: There's a challenge here, to folk radio and the Americana radio stations that have given you good play. This record is obviously a more jazzy departure, even a more world music jazzy departure. Now, I would say that jazzy music that comes from a folk oriented place—call it folk-jazz if you want to—is its own thing, and it should get played on folk and Triple-A radio. Don't you agree?

LT: Well, that's the problem I have with any kind of boundaries, I just don't like boundaries of any sort. I think good music is good music, and it should be played. And I'm hoping that this music comes across as good music, and so I would like it to be played on all kinds of stations. But if it doesn't find its way into the folk world, then maybe it will enter some jazz program. I tried not to think too much about where it would get played. I did get worried afterwards, after I made it, like, "Wow, maybe it won't get played." But I think those people who have supported my music all along have always heard this jazzy side of me trying to get out.

PM: Yeah. I mean, it's always been present to some degree or another. And I mean, when is something too jazzy, anyway? A minor ninth chord, a chromatic melody, a flat five? I mean, where do you draw the line?

LT: Yeah. I just have to play things that are interesting to me, that keep me going. If you're not getting the financial reward from music, you have to at least be getting an artistic reward, I think. And for me to keep doing this, what I've been doing for so long, and struggling with, I have to be interested. I don't want to be out there just playing what I think people will play on the radio. And that never works anyway.

PM: Yeah.

LT: So I did realize that this would be challenging, and it may wind up being played more in Europe than here in the States, because I think they are more open minded in Europe. [But in fact it's already getting good play in the States at this writing.]

PM: Oh, I think they are too. And I think that segues into my next point. I think it says a lot about how cool Signature Sounds is, that they go a little outside the box with you on *Velvet Town*. That's an artist oriented label.

LT: It is. I think I initially handed them twenty-two songs, something like that. And they were more interested in the folkier material, which is understandable. But when I went to them and said, "These are the songs I want to do," they supported my choices. And that's very unusual, I think. I think they were concerned about marketing the record, but they were willing to go with me on it.

PM: So if you believe, and I see the wisdom there, that it may also find favor abroad, does Signature have the wherewithal to facilitate that, or will you look for a foreign label?

LT: I'm going to look for a few foreign labels to license it to. Hopefully, I'll find that.

PM: And your contract allows you to do that?

LT: It does, yeah. I was originally just doing this as their record, and as the record went over budget and I put money into it, we restructured it into a licensing deal.

PM: Good for you.

LT: And they can distribute it in some of the countries where I've done well already, which are Denmark and Holland, for instance. And I believe they have distribution in Italy. I just have to decide whether I'm going to let them distribute it there, or whether I'm going to try to find a label there. Probably they'll distribute it there.

PM: There should be a consultant, somebody who can help you field those questions. I can't put my finger on them, but I'm going to try and help you look.

Let's see, do we have any more questions? Oh yeah—I know you to be an avid reader. Whatcha reading lately?

LT: A few things, as usual. Two on the historical side, *American Colonies* by Alan Taylor (no relation) and *Eye of the Storm*, from the Civil War journals of Pvt. Robert Sneden. Some fiction, too: *Carter Beats the Devil* by Glen David Gold.

PM: Interesting traveling companions. You know, that person you were describing at the top of our conversation, who was hitchhiking around for six years, and even dancing on the street with drummers, I mean, I still hear that person in your records.

[laughter]

LT: Well, she's still there. [laughs]

PM: And I believe the records are better for it. I think you're a really important artist, and it was great to talk to you today.

LT: Thanks, Frank, my pleasure.

