

Must be over a year now that I first saw Anne play at Billy Block's Western Beat Roots Revival. She came on right after this other Australian act, an absolutely blazing guitarist named Geoff Achison. Most people would have been a little daunted at the prospect of hitting the stage of a packed jaded room after a smoldering and razor sharp Blues rock trio just blew the roof off the joint. But not Anne McCue, apparently. She's played in some pretty hot trios herself, after all. But we didn't know that, or anything else about her, aside from her also being Australian. But she was tall (actually, I *thought* she was, but she was wearing huge heels and her musical presence was looming in the stage lights) and kind of heavenly looking. Rarely would one see a solo acoustic act in this show, and Frank the soundman was not usually very kind to acoustic guitarists, in my opinion. Often they could simply not be heard.

But this evening a mighty sound was heard, and everybody looked, and everybody listened. Predictably, I ran her down later and introduced myself, and secured a CD for review. Not long after that, I heard she'd been back in town, and played the cool little room known as The Basement, and that Lucinda Williams had been in attendance. That's the thing about Nashville gigs—there are frequently none too many people in the audience (a lot of shows going on, and a rampant “seen it already” attitude is common), but one of the people there might well impact your life one way or the other. In this case, Lucinda asked Anne if she'd like to open some shows for her. I'd heard of people I knew opening one or even a handful of shows for Lucinda before, but in this case it turned out to be 23 shows. Which led to opening some shows for Richard Thompson. Well.

So, the woman's on a roll, for sure, and it will be interesting to see which way it rolls from here. She is a very charming person, actually diminutive and disarmingly cute. A refreshing combination of confident and self-effacing. She and L.A. manager Mike Gormley were in town recently, where Anne was headlining an Australian festival in Music City, of all things. I missed it, unfortunately—I had a Puremusic.com show that night. But we did have brunch at the fabulous Red Wagon on the East Side, and headed back to the Cat's Pajamas, a sweet B&B owned by ace songwriter Duane Jarvis and his wife Denise. Our conversation in the dining room follows. Be sure to check out clips of this incredibly talented musician and also visit her website, which is among the best artist sites we've seen. Oh, and her CD, *Amazing Ordinary Things*—buy it!

Puremusic: So, Anne, although our review some time back revealed us as Anne fans, the real reason we take the opportunity today to interview you is the interesting tale of the series of events that have taken place since you started playing in America. Where does that story begin?

AM: Well, it begins with—I was in a group, and we were signed to a label in New York. So he brought us out to California, and we recorded an album with David Kershenbaum, who did the Tracy Chapman albums.

PM: Sure.

AM: And it was a little overproduced for my liking. But that was okay. It got sold to Columbia. The album and our group got sold to Columbia Records in New York.

PM: And that group was called?

AM: Eden AKA. We played on the Lilith Fair, and that's where Columbia saw us play. So we were signed over to them. And then two years later, we were still waiting for the record to come out. And I was getting pretty frustrated, because I'm a songwriter, and I wasn't really contributing songs.

PM: Oh, you weren't allowed to contribute songs?

AM: Contractually, no.

PM: Contractually. Oh my lord.

AM: Contractually, I was allowed to contribute one song to the album.

PM: That's miserable.

AM: [laughs] Yeah. Well, I agreed to the terms. So after two years I felt, "Well, I gave this two years, and nothing's really happening." The record hadn't come out. Then I was offered a deal in Canada with a label called Relentless Records. So I finished my album—I'd already started it two years previously. We finished that album in L.A. It was released in Canada, but not in America. It was supposed to be released here. And that label has since folded. So I got the record back, and here I am. I'm just sort of playing gigs and selling it.

I came to Nashville to play here. And a mutual fan of mine and Lucinda Williams—well, he actually saw me by accident in L.A., and then he used to come to all my gigs—he gave her my CD. And he's been seeing Lucinda play for twenty years, like. As she says, "He used to come and see me play when no one else would."

PM: [laughs] And she did a very good Lucinda impression right there.

AM: [laughs] And so anyway, he gave her the CD. And she listened to it, and she liked it. So when I came to play in Nashville, she came and saw me play at the Basement here. And then she said, "Do you want to come and play, and open for me on the tour?"

PM: That had to knock you right on your keister, right?

AM: Yeah. [laughs] I used to play Lucinda's songs in Melbourne, Australia. Years ago, I was in a band called the Creatures From The Blues Lagoon. There were two female guitarists, and the other girl, Fiona Boise, would play Zydeco and a little more rootsy sort of blues. And I would play country blues, like Lucinda Williams. And then I'd do some Ray Charles, or my own blues songs. So there I was, years later, and here Lucinda is watching me play, and then I'm playing with her on a tour. So I'm pretty excited.

PM: And no less than twenty-three days, is what I've heard.

AM: Yeah.

PM: That's amazing. I mean, I know a couple of people that went out and opened a Lucinda show, a few shows. But twenty-three shows, that's a horse of a different color.

AM: Well, it's pretty great. And I was playing solo, so it was a little trepidatious, if that's a word, at the start.

PM: Well, I think it should be. I don't know that it is, but we're coining it.

AM: [laughs] But the audiences were so great, such great audiences, really. Her audience, they really know how to be an audience. So I felt very welcome, and it was fun, you know.

PM: And I would imagine that those are some pretty damn good venues.

AM: Beautiful theaters, like the Orpheum in Boston. The Paramount in Seattle. Mainly it was the west half of the U.S., but then we did Boston, Ohio, and Toronto.

PM: And did you get friendly with Lucinda at all? Was that possible? Sometimes the opener and the main act just don't have that much contact.

AM: Well, you know, [laughs] Lucinda really took me under her wing.

PM: She did?

AM: Yeah. I don't know, she's like a guardian angel or something, [laughs] to me.

PM: Wow. So you got on really good?

AM: Yeah, I would describe it like that. No one could have been nicer to me than Lucinda was, actually. She was just really good to me.

PM: Did you get to write a song together?

AM: No.

PM: Not yet.

AM: Neither of us really does a lot of co-writing. But obviously, it would be fun. But when you're on tour, you don't really get to sit down and play together, you know, because it's a bit of a crazy schedule.

PM: Was Lucinda doing a full band thing when you were opening for her? Did she have Bo Ramsey with her, for instance?

AM: Yeah. I went out in December, and she had Bo Ramsey and Doug Pettibone, Taras on the bass, and Don Heffington on the drums.

PM: Oh, I love Don Heffington.

AM: Yeah. And Phil Parlappiano on piano and keyboards. And then the year after, she changed over to Bernie Larson on guitar and Jimmy Christie on the drums.

PM: You know, just the way that you reel off the names of the players, it really distinguishes you to me as a real player, far from a front person or a singer/songwriter with a band.

AM: [laughs] They are all great musicians, too, obviously. Getting to see them play every night was really good for my head, my musical brain cells.

PM: Did you ever get to sing backup in her act or—

AM: No, no I didn't. [laughs] They all sing, Doug and Phil and—

PM: Oh, yeah.

AM: You know, they've got it all organized.

PM: But as amazing as it was to get asked—and it is amazing—on twenty-three shows of Lucinda's, then a Richard Thompson thing fell into line, too. How, where, when?

AM: Well, this was in January, and we played a couple of dates with him. I can't remember if it was two or three. And I'm not exactly sure how that came about. But I believe it was because I played with Lucinda. A few things have come from that. And yeah, I thought that was a really good double bill, actually.

PM: I can imagine.

AM: Because it was just him solo and me solo, first. And I don't know, there was something yin and yang about it that was really cool. I really enjoyed that. I'm not putting myself on the same level as Richard Thompson, but there's something similar about us in our performance style, or whatever. We both have a serious approach to guitar work, and I think we're both probably more songwriters than singers, as such. You know what I mean?

PM: [laughs] Although I certainly like the voices of both people. But then, I don't usually like the leading actor. I usually like the character actors better in a movie, and you know...

AM: Hmm.

PM: You're more my kind of voices.

AM: Yeah.

PM: I don't know that there's anybody we find more fascinating than Richard Thompson. I think he is the very best solo guy out there on the planet at the moment. So we're keen to hear anything about him. Because we're fascinated with him from afar, what's he like up close? I've never met the man.

AM: Yeah, he's just an ordinary English bloke.

PM: [laughs]

AM: Quite charming, actually.

PM: Yeah?

AM: Yeah. And he looks really good in his beret and black suit that he wears, you know. There's something really cool about that.

PM: An impeccably spoken person.

AM: He's very sharp in his outlook. He's very perceptive. But he wears shorts and sneakers just like anyone else. A very casual sort of fellow.

PM: And he's not traveling on a bus, I shouldn't think—or is he?

AM: No, because it's just him and his—

PM: His soundman, with the Haliburton that's got the Sunrise preamp inside, the big transformer thing. Do you know what I mean?

AM: I didn't really see that. I don't know.

PM: The last time I saw him, he had this huge transformer looking tube preamp that Sunrise makes, the people who made his pickup. He had this big Norse looking dude who carried the transformer thing in a rock and roll briefcase, who mixed the sound. He blew everybody's sound away at the whole festival. Everybody sounded like folkies plugged into a direct box, and his sound was blowing down the trees on the grounds of this Jersey festival.

AM: He was a nice guy. He helped with my sound, actually.

PM: Really?

AM: Yeah, because you go into places, and you're at the mercy of the soundman. Actually, I've been very fortunate on these opening slots, I've run into some great people who were very helpful. Richard's man was one of them, I can't remember his name at the moment...

PM: So did you get to hang with Richard at all? I'm sorry to be gossipy, but when it comes to Richard Thompson, it's hard to glean any details from anywhere.

AM: He seems protective of his personal space. We had a brief chat, but it was quite a little stint.

PM: How many gigs did you do with him?

AM: I think it was two or three.

PM: Where?

AM: It was in California, Petaluma.

PM: Petaluma, that's where Mesa Boogie is. Where did you play?

AM: McNear's Mystic.

PM: I opened for Van Morrison there one time.

AM: Wow. That's cool.

PM: Yeah, sure. That's a nice room.

AM: Yeah, I really liked it. And the theater in Santa Cruz was really cool too.

PM: Santa Cruz... Ah, two really nice towns, Petaluma and Santa Cruz.

Let's see...one of your songs was used on *Dawson's Creek* a while ago. That was a cool break of a different kind. How did that happen? Do you know?

AM: I think that my manager really did some work, peddling, and he got that just by, you know, making phone calls.

PM: Through a music supervisor, a TV thing.

AM: Yeah. And I had a song on *UC: Undercover*. Jonathan Weiss was the music supervisor there. It was one of those real state-of-the-art, contemporary looking sort of shows, on NBC.

PM: Yeah. But those cuts, as cool as they are, do they lead to anything else? In your case, did they connect you to anybody or anything else?

AM: Well, I was a featured artist on the *Dawson's Creek* website. So I think a lot of people came to my website, and quite a few people bought the CD from it. And it's an international thing, too, so that's good.

PM: Right. So that was a good bump. You were the featured artist on the *Dawson's Creek* site. That had to generate quite a bit of hits and some sales in your direction. That's a good one.

AM: Yeah.

PM: You're an avid and more than able guitarist. And—no sexism intended—I've rarely seen a female using as big a pedal board as you do.

AM: Ah, yeah. [laughs]

PM: Let's talk about what you're using, pedal-wise.

AM: Okay. Well, I've got an analog delay pedal. It's an old delay pedal. I think it's a Boss—or Roland. Should I look? I can tell you later. But it's red. And it's just an old—obviously it's analog, so it's got a warmer kind of sound to it. And it could be a 70s one, actually. I know they're worth quite a bit of money now, those. I picked it up for like \$40, but I think they're worth a couple of hundred dollars. And the same with my flanger. That's a pretty old flanger I've got.

PM: That had a good sound.

AM: Yeah. It's good on acoustic guitar. That's what I use it for. And my chorus pedal is pretty old, too, the Boss chorus.

PM: The old CE-2, the blue one.

AM: Yeah. And then I've got a Wah-Wah pedal. It's a Jimi Hendrix Wah. I'd be interested to play a different kind of one, actually. Maybe a Morley or a Vox, or whatever.

PM: Yeah. The Buddha is really nice too.

AM: Oh, yeah.

PM: I have one of those, yeah.

AM: And then Danelectro just gave me some pedals. I got a tremolo pedal. It's a really good pedal. A Danelectro tremolo.

PM: It's the best one.

AM: Yeah.

PM: I just bought one too. Yeah, Kenny Vaughan told me recently, he said, "Frank, for a tremolo pedal, the best one is the cheapest one, this Danelectro." He said, "And I have them all, including the Cesar Diaz \$250 Tremodillo."

AM: [laughs]

PM: He said, "And the \$50 one is the best." So if Kenny Vaughan says a pedal is good, I just buy it. He was a Lucinda guitar player for a long time.

AM: Yeah. I saw him. He's amazing. And I got a Leslie speaker pedal from Danelectro as well,

a Leslie pedal. I can't remember if it's called a Milkshake or—

PM: Yeah, they've got hilarious names for their pedals. Does that work worth a damn? Does it sound like a Leslie?

AM: Yeah. It's even got the noise.

PM: [laughs]

AM: [laughs] And I got a Tube Screamer distortion.

PM: Yeah. You're not afraid to use it, either. Last night when you played "Who Do You Love" and a couple other things, and you hit that pedal, I thought, "Well, she's no stranger to distortion."

AM: I'm happier when I use distortion, because that's where I started. I started in a thrash band. It ended up being heavy rock. But when we first started, I couldn't play that well, so it was thrash. But I got used to having a distortion sound, and I was scared to play clean for a long time. So once I put my distortion on, I'm really comfortable.

PM: [laughs] You're back to your thrash roots.

AM: [laughs] Yeah, because it hides stuff. You know, you put a pedal on like that, and you can almost play anything and it sounds like rock 'n' roll.

PM: That's true. So that's all your pedals, right?

AM: For the moment. I'm always looking for new stuff. I've got too many pedals to plug them all in at once. And it's kind of ridiculous, you know, so...

PM: You need one of those Pedal Power units that accepts eight of them.

AM: I need two of those.

PM: That's a lot of pedals, folks.

AM: But I'd like to get all those different ones, you know. There's so many great pedals. Richard Thompson had one pedal. [laughs]

PM: The Rotovibe.

AM: Yeah. He looked at my pedal board, and he goes, "Oh, you've got a lot of pedals."

PM: [laughs]

AM: But I just use them every now and then for textural differences, to make it more interesting to my ear. I think it's good, you know, especially if you're playing solo or three-piece. I think it's

good to have all different textures coming in.

PM: Did you happen to notice how much he was using his Rotovibe?

AM: I only noticed it once.

PM: Wow. What a rat.

AM: One song. Yeah.

PM: So we spoke a little bit about this at brunch. One thing that distinguishes you from all the other solo acts one can see out there—or most, I should say—is that your songs, at least the ones that I’ve heard you play, tend to be more firmly rooted in the pop domain, not so much folk or blues based stuff. Is that true of your show today?

AM: I think I’m heading back a bit to the blues roots, sort of being just in my own head. I saw Tony Joe White last year a couple of times at the Byron Bay Blues Festival in Australia. And I just realized that’s kind of what I like. I like a simple groove. I want to get back towards that a little more. Every now and then I’ll write a pop song. I don’t know where it comes from. I have written a lot of pop songs. But, you know, they’re not pop like currently popular music, but they’re—

PM: More like Adult Contemporary.

AM: Catchy three-minute songs. You can tell I heard the Beatles when I was a kid, sort of thing. [laughs]

PM: Right.

AM: But my new songs, like “Ballad of An Outlaw Woman” and stuff, are more bare, fundamental, almost blues type songs. I like telling stories like that. It’s a cowboy story—or a cowgirl story, sort of.

PM: You started the set with that one, yeah. I liked that. There’s not enough outlaw woman stories, that’s for sure. And by the way, that was a really good version, last night, of “Who Do You Love,” with Rick Plant and Bryan Owings, the rhythm section of Buddy and Julie Miller’s band. So yeah, you’re obviously no stranger to the blues or to guitar slinging.

AM: Well, in Melbourne I was in this band, and it was a heavy rock all-girl band. And we had a fair bit of alternative success. We had a good following. Afterward, it’s like when you’re in a relationship and it breaks up, you’re kind of lost for a while. So I started playing solo, which was really scary, you know, at first. And I didn’t know what I wanted to do musically.

I spent a couple of years searching around. And then I started going to blues jams. And I would go every weekend and spend all weekend at blues jams and drinking Guinness, and you know, just playing guitar. And I think that really gave me some direction for my playing. Because I think a great blues solo is just something to be reckoned with. You know what I mean? If you

can play a blues solo and make it interesting, then I think you're onto something—you're communicating something very fundamental and important. So I just got right into that scene. And then I went to Vietnam and played over there and played a lot. I played five nights a week over there.

PM: I've heard that a lot of blues players go there.

AM: Do you remember Geoff Achison? He played that night—

PM: Yeah sure. [see our review]

AM: He got me that gig in Vietnam. Geoff's been very instrumental in my story. He got me that gig, which really changed my life. It got me out of Melbourne. I started saying, "Oh, yeah, you've got to make things happen, you've got to get your own gigs," and stuff, because I didn't know anything. I was just in a band. I didn't know anything before that. And I didn't learn that much during that time, about the business or anything. And when I was in Vietnam, I started just being a little entrepreneurial and getting gigs all over town. And I would play blues one night, jazz one night, heavy rock one night, acoustic songwriter one night.

PM: As many musicians as I've known in my life, you're the only one I've ever met that went to play in Vietnam. [laughs]

AM: [laughs] I know.

PM: It's kind of outlandish!

AM: It was one of those things. I was literally starving. I was hungry. I hadn't eaten properly for days—three days, maybe. And I got a phone call from this Irish guy in Saigon saying, "Would you like to come to Vietnam and play? You'll get such and such American dollars a week and free accommodation." I said, "Um, okay." [laughs]

PM: [laughs]

AM: It was winter in Australia, and I'd been like, "God, what's going to happen to me?" And so I had nothing to lose, absolutely nothing to lose by going. I was supposed to only go for three months. I ended up staying almost a year. And I played a *lot*. And it was the first time I played rock for a couple of years, rock 'n' roll. We played Pearl Jam and Nirvana and stuff.

PM: [laughs]

AM: [laughs] And AC/DC, in a bar called Apocalypse Now.

PM: How bizarre...

AM: I know.

PM: Was that in Saigon?

AM: Yeah. Oh, it was a crazy, crazy time.

PM: And what was your social life like in Vietnam?

AM: Oh, I went out every night [laughs], yeah.

PM: And where would you hang? Were there ex-pats from everywhere?

AM: From all over the world, yeah. And there were lots of bars there.

PM: And was it mostly a rock 'n' roll scene?

AM: Well, you know, Vietnam has been very protected. Especially since the war, the government has been very protective of their people, which I really admire. When you go up north, the people are very proud and nationalistic. In the south, obviously, they are always more sympathetic to the American culture. So it's less Vietnamese, I'd say, in Saigon. But even so, rock 'n' roll was just hitting Vietnam when I was there. [laughs]

PM: Really? They'd never heard it?

AM: They hadn't, not really. I mean, some people had, but not in general. It was more still this underground American thing leaking into the country. They had this competition for young Vietnamese musicians, and I swear, this guy got up with an acoustic guitar and an Elvis hairstyle, and the girls were screaming.

PM: [laughs] That's excellent.

AM: And it was beautiful. And the thing is, too, that the culture is like the 50s. It's like they're still into getting married really young. And they cruise around—not in cars, on their motorbikes. Every Sunday night, the kids, the teenagers, they cruise around in couples, the boy riding on the motorbike with the girl in the back. And they cruise around the town, and they call it the victory lap.

PM: Wow.

AM: And I'll tell you what, for a foreigner to get in there and ride around with them, they're all like, "Hi! Where you from?" And that's magical. That's just beautiful—

PM: Oh, my lord.

AM: But it really is 50s values, family, getting married, and all that sort of stuff. Yeah, it's really interesting.

PM: Now, what happened to the guys you were playing with in Vietnam? Did they stick around, or did they—

AM: Well, there were a few different ones. There was Auna and Tien, who were two Vietnamese guys I used to play with. And they are still working in Saigon, great musicians, a bass player and a violinist. And then there was this band called the Jazz Brothers, who were all Vietnamese as well. And they had a really beautiful sax player, especially the tenor saxophone player. Really, there was something so beautiful about him. He had a face that could have been an Indian, a Native American, Asian, one of those universal people. And when he played, it was so beautiful. And yeah, so I guess those guys are still playing.

And then there were these two Australian guys I met. I ran into them there. I met them there. The bass player now is in Barcelona, and the drummer is playing Melbourne again. We had the power rock trio, the one that did Pearl Jam. We'd do Al Green. [laughs] I mean, we'd just do anything we liked. So it was fun there, really fun.

PM: What an experience. So what's happening in your career now, and what's up just ahead, would you say?

AM: It's hard to predict the future. Christmas is coming, [laughs] I know that. Well, I just did some dates with Heart. You know that band Heart, obviously.

PM: Sure. The Wilson sisters.

AM: Yeah. They were amazing, really amazing.

PM: Nice people?

AM: Yeah, really nice people. When they play, they channel something, I think, something powerful. When Ann Wilson sings, it's amazing. It's like something extraterrestrial.

PM: She reminds me sometimes of the early Grace Slick period.

AM: Yeah, I see that. There's something special going on. I don't know how she does it, but yeah, she's amazing. And Nancy Wilson is such a great guitar player, just such a natural.

I'm just not exactly sure what's next. I'm going to record a new album.

PM: And you think this one is going to be more pared down?

AM: Yeah, I'd like it to be more pared down. We had a lot of layers on the first album. And I think it's really good, but it's more like a studio concept album or something.

PM: Yeah, it's a very pop produced record.

AM: And it doesn't really reflect—I mean, to recreate that in a live setting would be very expensive. [laughs] I'd need six guitar players. And I'm not really into that anymore. I really wanted to make that record like that. I wanted to make like a Beatles record, you know, like a real classic pop record. Now I'm more into doing a pared down theme. And my songs are much more, well, earthy, I guess.

PM: How do you see yourself? Do you see yourself as like a singer/songwriter person? I mean, all those terms are such bullshit in a way, but I mean, what's your vision of yourself at this point, musically?

AM: I struggle to categorize what I'm doing—one minute I'll write a waltz folk song, and the next minute it'll be a blues song, and then just a pop song. I find it really hard to describe what I'm doing, and to pinpoint where I'm coming from.

PM: But even though you're not terribly on the folky side, whatever the hell that means these days, in essence you are a singer/songwriter. Although you're a really good guitar player, you're a singer/songwriter.

AM: That's the thing, I'm definitely not just a songwriter, because I can't really get into that idea of trying to write a hit song. You know, I've tried to kind of co-write in that way with people who just—

PM: With people who do that?

AM: Yeah, people who write songs and have hits. But it's just not me. I can't write a song that I can't sing. I couldn't write a song that I wouldn't want to sing myself. Even though I've tried to, I can't.

PM: That's an important distinction, I think.

AM: I would love it if people sang my songs, you know.

PM: Has anybody covered any of your tunes yet?

AM: There's this group in Ireland called Shimoon, and they've recorded one of my songs. And it's coming out in March on RCA.

PM: And where are they from, Dublin or Galway?

AM: I think they're from Dublin, but it might even be Belfast. I'm not sure. They're these two girls with really sweet Irish soprano voices. And a guy called Paul Schwartz produced the album, and he's really a great producer. So that's the first. I've heard of other people who like to sing them live, but that's the first recording.

PM: That's a big deal.

AM: Yeah.

PM: So when the songs on *Amazing Ordinary Things* don't concern some aspect or a situation of love, they are, in one way or another, about spirituality.

AM: Uh-huh.

PM: Last night you referred to a ten-day meditation retreat you'd gone on. What are your inclinations or your aspirations in the spiritual realm?

AM: Well, the thing was that I wanted to change my life. I was kind of sick of drinking. And I used to smoke cigarettes. I got to a point where I got so bored with it all, and I wanted to change. And I went on this retreat. It was a Buddhist retreat. And I was able to just change my whole life.

PM: Whose retreat was it?

AM: Well, it's called Vipassana. What they teach you is the original teachings of Buddha, which had nothing to do with religion. Like he never spoke about God or religion.

PM: It's a mindfulness deal.

AM: Yeah. You spend three days concentrating on the breath coming in and out of the nostrils, [laughs] and for eleven hours a day. It's excruciating. But then you move on to Vipassana, which is concentrating on the sensations of the body from the head to the toes and back up. And you just go up and down all, all day. But the idea is that instead of paying attention to the mind which is constantly causing you anxiety and trouble, rambling on and on and on and distracting you from reality, you know, distracting you from now, instead you're concentrating just on the body, which is experiencing every moment. You know what I mean? So it relieves you from all of the troubles that are going on in your head all the time.

PM: And tries to break that connection between you and endless fascination with the avenue of the mind's bullshit.

AM: Yeah, which is always concerned with the past and the future, you know, two things you can't change. You can direct your future, but you're usually worrying about some things that never happen. So that's all it is. It's not about God or religion or anything, it's just a meditation technique.

PM: Right.

AM: And that's all they talk about. That's all they teach. And I think for anyone to do it once is just good, because it gives you—I've been much more focused on music. I'm just much more focused on the important things.

PM: Was that in California, or where did you do it?

AM: The first time, I did it in Sydney, in the Blue Mountains there. And I have done it in California, too. So you know, I don't kill ants or insects or anything. I eat fish, but I try not to eat it very much. I don't eat any other meat.

PM: No poultry.

AM: No, and no beef, just fish. So in that sense, I'm fairly Buddhist. I mean, if I was a vegetarian, that would be better, but I find that's a little bit drastic after being such a carnivorous—

PM: Food on the road is difficult enough.

AM: It's very difficult to find good food. But I try, in that sense, I have that philosophy, the Buddhist philosophy, without the religion, as such. You know what I mean?

PM: You're not a Tibetan or a Zen Buddhist, you're just practicing a meditation technique.

AM: Exactly.

PM: So what music is turning you on lately, and what might you be reading?

AM: Well, I read a lot. [laughs] I just read the David Geffen biography. Have you read that?

PM: No, is that good?

AM: Really good, really interesting, yeah, and really honest. I tend to read a lot of biographies. I read Marianne Faithful's autobiography. That's really good. And I read the Harry Potter books.

PM: [laughs]

AM: [laughs] They were great. And yeah, stuff like that. I read a lot. I'm sort of addicted to reading, actually. My eyes get really tired.

And music-wise, I like Tex Perkins' album, *Dark Horses*, and Lucinda's last album, *Essence*. And what else have I been listening to? Mike Stinson.

PM: Who's he?

AM: He's this musician songwriter in L.A., and he's just made this country album, this classic country album. He's a drummer. He plays a lot with Randy Weeks and Jerry Wages in L.A. But he's an amazing songwriter as well. A great drummer, one of the few feel drummers. But his songs are classic country songs.

PM: What label is that, do you know? I'll have to get that.

AM: I think it's his own. I can't remember, but I'll tell you after the interview.

PM: Okay. Because we'd like to cover him if you like him. That's how we find artists sometimes, from other artists.

AM: Yeah. There's this other guy, Jim Bianca, who just put out an album of his own, which is really good. There's a lot of good stuff happening in L.A. at the moment. East Mountain South

are on Dreamworks, and they're recording soon. Alexi Murdock—there's this kind of new scene going on there. It's gentle acoustic, quiet...

PM: I've heard that there's a kind of a—what are they calling it? The “canyon sound” or something.

AM: Yeah, yeah.

PM: I heard it was kind of a nuvo-Eagles thing coming up. Is that accurate?

AM: I wouldn't call them that, but I'd put them in the earlier Joni Mitchell sort of scene.

PM: Well, maybe you can help me root some of that out, because if it's a new softer movement afoot, we'd like to get up with it.

AM: Yeah, okay. There's some very good stuff going on, really great songs. I'm putting together a compilation of songs by songwriters in L.A., the criteria is just that it has to be a really good song. And there's twelve really good songs. We're putting it together, we're forming an alliance, kind of a song alliance.

PM: Well, when that compilation is done, yeah, we've got to have it, because then we'll send everybody to all those people's websites, and get a little activity going on.

AM: Yeah.

PM: Last question: Tell us anything, something big or small, that you hope to get done in life?

AM: In life?

PM: Big or small.

AM: I've got a few things. [laughs] I'm writing a novel. But I've been talking about that since I was eight, since I read my first novel, I said, “I want to write one of those.” But actually I've made a bit of headway with this. I really hope to get it done. It's a matter of finding the time to sit down and do that. I'm also trying to make a movie. I've filmed a lot of the shows and stuff with Lucinda on the tour. My shows were filmed, and I'm going to make that into a DVD.

PM: You filmed yourself, or you filmed her, or both?

AM: No, I didn't film her, that would be more formal. Whereas with myself, obviously, it was easier just to have someone film it, or whatever. So we filmed that, and we're going to make that into a DVD. You know, just real low, low tech.

PM: Good for you.

AM: Low fidelity production.

PM: Good going.

AM: I love documentaries. I love D.A. Pennebaker, who made *Don't Look Back*, you know, and things like that. And so we're doing that.

And what else? I don't know. I've just got a lot of things I want to do. I studied film production and film studies when I was at college, so I'd like to make movies. But it's just a matter of finding the time, really, to get the projects going. You just have to keep working at it. And I want to make a new album, obviously.

PM: And that's going to be pretty soon, we hope.

AM: I think I'll record in the next few months, maybe have it finished by the end of January, or something like that.

PM: Well, you know, in a profession where it takes, really, a lot of drive, and in a lot of cases a lot of self-obsession to get where one is going—

AM: Yeah.

PM: —it's refreshing to find someone as sweet and as nice as you are to have a conversation like this with. Thank you for your time.

AM: Oh, thank you for talking to me.

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