

**A Conversation with Tywana Jo Baskette  
by Frank Goodman (Puremusic 8/2003)**

I first met Tywana Jo Baskette (Ty to her friends) in the late 90s in Nashville. Striking and eccentric, that just happens to be one of my favorite combinations. She was also funny and creative, and had a bunch of songs. I wanted to investigate a little further, and I chummed her up some, we did a little hanging out and swapped some songs and stories in the weeks and months to come.

I'd never run into a songwriter like her. She had a little suitcase full of these one minute snapshots and vignettes about goat cheese and parakeets, lung cancer, a man that broke into her house while she was in the shower, very unusual material. She'd play me these little microcassettes that she'd send down to a producer named Clay Jones in Oxford, MS, and I think she even played some phone messages that went back and forth between them. All in all, I certainly felt like I was looking through a window into a world somewhat unfamiliar to me, even as the less than sheltered person that I am, let's say.

In terms of a biographical sketch, you could scarce do better than to quote a section from a bio by her longtime friend, video and film director Roger Pistole:

"Ty was adopted and raised by a Protestant minister and a Catholic nurse who, for a few years, lived in the country with some cows, a pet pig Pricilla (who was killed by her Dad while Ty was at school one fine day) and several other critters... This album reflects this past through the eyes of a child, brutally innocent yet wise and wary from her tenuous existence from the get-go—adoption, the death of both adoptive parents to lung cancer, the death of her childhood best friend, life without parole for two first cousins who killed Opry legend Stringbean Akeman and his wife Estelle, and eleven years of ballet abruptly ending with the death of her instructor."

So, you see that Ty comes by the distinction Southern Gothic honestly, innocently, almost inevitably. And you can see by her photos that she is a beautiful person, and expert in front of the camera. In fact when I was shooting some fruitless pictures (rookie syndrome) at her recent World Café taping, I was amazed to see how she behaved in front of the camera. It was as if somebody turned on the music, and she began to move seductively. I hope to try again before we go to print, at a rehearsal or at her digs, if she gets back from Oxford, MS, in time. See, she's already begun her second record, even before this one hits the street.

Her band is two fine players and the artist on very quiet vocals. Derek Greene plays tasty and commensurately quiet drums (a Papa John's pizza box with brushes at the World Café taping) and the superb John Jackson is on guitar, one of Music City's best.

Ty's a very complicated person, moody and brainy, she's interesting to be around. It certainly looks like she might make a run at some well-deserved attention on a scale far larger than her hometown. I hear Rolling Stone has been calling, for lyrics and other details.

The music of Tywana Jo Baskette is totally original, and really amazing. I'm not saying it's for everybody, but everybody oughta check it out, like you can do right now on the Listen page. We believe her name is about to spread far and wide, for very good reasons.

**Tywanna Jo Baskette:** Hello?

**Puremusic:** Hi, Ty. It's Frank.

**TJB:** Hey. What are you doing?

**PM:** So what I'm doing is, we're going to have our professional conversation.

**TJB:** Okay.

**PM:** Well, let's try, anyway. I just read a ton of your propaganda. And I know you've been having a time with interviews, too. So we'll just try to have a more normal conversation, if we can. Like we were saying the other day, it's different if you're playing a song and all of a sudden you look up and the red light's on, it's like, "Oh, shit. Now we're recording. Great." And you start to sweat and you're singing different and your lip is sticking to your teeth and everything. My brain does that. Hopefully where our interview will be different from the handful that you've done so far and the many that are to come is that you and I are already friends.

**TJB:** Yeah, that's true.

**PM:** So ours ought to have its own personality. When did you and I first run into each other, anyway?

**TJB:** With Molly [Felder, half of the hypertalented duo Swan Dive]. Maybe she was with Bill [DeMain, Swan Dive's other half]. It seems like we had sushi. At Shintomi. Is that right?

**PM:** It must have been. Yeah, Shintomi, late 90s, like when this stuff started happening, I think.

**TJB:** Yeah, it was around '99 or 2000. I'd have to look it up. I'm sure I wrote it down.

**PM:** I remember sitting in your wild little pad and listening to microcassettes of your songs, and cassettes, and even phone messages. So I think it was pretty early on. And I guess at that time you were sending them to Clay Jones and stuff. Is that right? That's my memory of it.

**TJB:** Yeah, it's probably so, around then.

**PM:** And now, just a few short years later, you're getting flown to New York City to talk with Interview Magazine, as like the new Southern Gothic sweetheart. How does that feel?

**TJB:** Good.

**PM:** Good, right.

[laughter]

**PM:** It's nice for a change to see somebody do something original.

**TJB:** Wait. Frank, are you taping now?

**PM:** Of course I'm taping.

**TJB:** [gasps] Okay. I have to concentrate.

**PM:** No, you don't. No, if you concentrate then we won't have our normal conversation.

**TJB:** Oh, I can't stand being tape recorded.

**PM:** Yeah?

**TJB:** Because I hate my voice. That's what it is. Then you can go back and listen to my stupid answers over and over.

**PM:** But the thing is that no one will hear your voice, which is nice. Yeah, because I hate the sound of my speaking voice on tape. And half the time when I'm on the phone with people, they say "Yes, ma'am."

**TJB:** Yes, ma'am?

**PM:** Yeah! And I have to say, "Hey, easy now. I'm not a ma'am."

[laughter]

**PM:** I must get excited and talk real high or something.

**TJB:** That's funny. Well at least they don't go, "Is your mom home?"

**PM:** [laughs] Do they do that to you?

**TJB:** All the time.

**PM:** [laughs]

**TJB:** Like telemarketers, "Can I speak with your mom, honey?" Well, I wish you could, sweetie.

**PM:** So many artists have difficulty with interviews for various reasons. How have you been finding this process yourself?

**TJB:** Well, I think it's hard to understand yourself. How can you know yourself when that's the journey through your entire life?

**PM:** Right.

**TJB:** Trying to figure it out. And I haven't figured it out, and so I don't know what to say, because I don't know really what I believe in yet or what I'm about. I'm still searching for the proverbial silver lining in the dark clouds. And I certainly haven't found it yet, so I don't know what to say. And doing interviews makes me just as sick as rehearsing and doing shows.

**PM:** That's still making you sick, huh?

**TJB:** Yeah. But that's getting old. I don't want to talk about that anymore.

**PM:** Many great artists do still get nervous before every show.

**TJB:** What can you do about it?

**PM:** I think you just kind of live with it and walk through it and just go do your show.

Let's see—I think we're smart to avoid some ticklish areas. We don't have to talk about your wild and wooly upbringing, because a lot of people are. But Roger, your dear and trusted friend, wrote such a good bio, capsulizing the key events in your life, that I think we'll just quote that in the setup, if that's okay with you.

**TJB:** Yeah, that's nice.

**PM:** So although you've been writing songs—or “pass-alongs” as you've called them for some time—I'm led to believe that you only started to record them in the late 90s when we first met. Is that really right?

**TJB:** Yeah, that's right. Because Roger started following me around. Well, he'd go, “I love that! Sing that again.” And I'd go, “I don't remember it. It's passed on through already,” or whatever.

**PM:** Yeah.

**TJB:** And then he'd get mad. And then he started following me around with a tape recorder. It was obnoxious.

**PM:** Truly, but—

**TJB:** Except that I wouldn't have a record if he hadn't. And so it's a big deal, I think.

**PM:** How do you say Roger's last name?

**TJB:** Like a gun. Pistole.

**PM:** So, yeah, God bless him, because, as you say, we wouldn't be having this particular recorded conversation without him pestering you and following you around with a tape recorder trying to get your pass-alongs in those early days.

**TJB:** It's true. “Jellyfish” is one that he captured. It would have gone—and I love that song.

**PM:** Yeah. “But you sting me,” yeah. Having grown up a Nashvillian, though, had you been around a lot of music and musicians all along in your life, or—

**TJB:** No, not really. I just stayed in my room and read books on my big stuffed turtle. [laughs]

**PM:** Wow.

**TJB:** My mom had to force me to go outside to play. And I'd try to sneak a book out then, too.

**PM:** What were you reading growing up, do you remember?

**TJB:** All the Nancy Drew books, all the Hardy Boys books.

**PM:** I liked those, too.

**TJB:** Then like lots of Gothic mysteries. I read a lot of those.

**PM:** I'm not sure I know what that means.

**TJB:** I read a lot of books by this writer Marilyn Ross. And they're like queer little romantic mysteries that you read when you're in fifth, sixth, seventh grade, I guess. I don't know how old. But I was reading them. I always wanted the new one. I don't know, I read all kinds of books when I was a kid. And books about birds. I love birds.

**PM:** About birds?

**TJB:** And dinosaurs. I don't know. A lot has happened in my life with animals, like anybody, I guess, that's had a life [laughs], because they're everywhere, the animals.

**PM:** But it's neat that you write so much about them, or they come up in the songs one way or the other. I like that.

**TJB:** Thank you.

**PM:** So when would you say, in your life, growing up in this town of writers and players, when did you start bumping into people who played music or wrote music that you might later find influence from? When did you start rubbing shoulders with those kinds of people?

**TJB:** People that I think influenced me?

**PM:** Or just people who were involved with music or the arts in any way. Because dancing was a part of your life from an early age, wasn't it?

**TJB:** That's true. Do you want me to talk about that?

**PM:** Yeah, let's talk about that.

**TJB:** Okay. I took ballet from the age of five to fifteen, which is eleven years. And then on NPR I said fifteen years, because I thought the age fifteen—

**PM:** Right.

**TJB:** So I said fifteen, so I lied on the radio.

**PM:** Oh, well.

**TJB:** But who cares, right?

**PM:** Yeah. And now we've corrected it in print.

**TJB:** Anyway, it's eleven. And anyway, then my teacher died. She committed suicide because her husband was cheating on her. And it killed me, you know, because it was such a big part of my life.

**PM:** And she was a really good friend, too?

**TJB:** Yes. She was a beautiful person.

**PM:** And so when she died, of course it was a crushing blow, but did you turn to something else to kind of fill that gap? Some other artistic pursuit or something?

**TJB:** I started writing a lot of poetry, I guess, about that time, lots and lots of poetry. And I'd win little women's club poetry contests when I was a kid.

**PM:** Would they have the contests in schools or outside of school?

**TJB:** They were usually by counties, like Davidson County Women's Club Poetry, or whatever.

**PM:** And would there be a cool prize?

**TJB:** Getting your name in the paper. It seemed like you get a ribbon or something. I don't remember. I'm sure I have it in my box downstairs that I've got taped up.

**PM:** So the ballet led to the untimely tragic death of your mentor, and then led to a writing period. When did other elements, say musical elements or other artistic elements, start to enter your sphere after that? Because you seem to have known or know a lot of musicians, and later got into the whole realm of modeling and film—or video. How did all that start to happen? Is that too big a question?

**TJB:** I don't know.

**PM:** Well, okay, you went from the ballet period to some writing, and at that point you're in your mid teens.

**TJB:** Oh, and I always listened to those Walt Disney Storybook Records. I loved those. When I was a kid I'd spend hours going over them. You know the sing-along storybooks?

**PM:** Wow. I don't think they were part of my childhood. Like what?

**TJB:** Like all of them. Like *Pinnocchio*, *Snow White*, and *Cinderella*. *Mary Poppins*.

**PM:** I grew up with so many brothers that that wasn't a thing in my house.

**TJB:** As you know, in my "Pinky" song, there's "Someday my prince will come."

**PM:** Yeah.

**TJB:** But I sing it differently. But that's from something. It's either *Cinderella* or *Snow White*. I'm not sure.

**PM:** Well, while we're mentioning "Pinky," that was one of the co-written songs on the record, written with Bobby Bare, Jr. Is that the single?

**TJB:** I don't really think they're going to do specific singles. They're probably going to like strongly suggest you play blah, blah. I'm not really sure they necessarily do singles on a small budget.

**PM:** Yeah. In the production value category, it seemed to get the single treatment, but maybe that's just what the song called for. It had a little bit different groove in it.

**TJB:** Yeah. Plus I wanted it more rock 'n' roll. That's why I wanted to write it with Bobby. I started writing it, actually, at Sweet Tea, during the recording. And then I decided I wanted it to be more rock 'n' roll, and I couldn't come up with a melody that I liked. And Bobby had been wanting to co-write, so I called him. And it was a really fast thing.

**PM:** So that's got some really cool chords. Did he come up with some of those twists and turns, or did he take them all right from the melody?

**TJB:** He would play da, da da da, da da da, and I just started singing. Is that what you mean?

**PM:** Right. So, yeah, he probably just listened to your melody and said, "Oh, this is that weird chord right here." Because it's got some very unusual changes that really stand it out. It's cool as hell.

**TJB:** Well, probably Clay did that, then, maybe. I don't know. I don't know anything about music. I don't know. [laughs]

**PM:** For a person who doesn't know anything about music, it's a damn good record.

**TJB:** Thank you. You know what I mean. Like I can't read music, I can't play anything.

**PM:** Do you want to?

**TJB:** I wish I could play piano, but it's a dream. I like to bang around on the piano and mess around with it, and see what I can come up with. And sometimes it's really beautiful, and I have to go get my tape recorder. I have a Wurlitzer [a classic electric piano] but it won't turn on.

**PM:** You have a Wurlitzer? I really want to buy one. I was just going to say, "You need a Wurlitzer." But it's me that really needs one.

**TJB:** Yeah. When I broke up with Rusty years and years ago, I had a classical guitar that I couldn't figure out, so I gave him that, and he gave me this.

**PM:** That was a good swap.

**TJB:** Yeah. [laughs]

**PM:** But it doesn't work?

**TJB:** No, because it's set up to go through monitors or something. I don't have those.

**PM:** Oh, it's not one of those with the little speaker in it.

**TJB:** Yeah, it has that, but it was in a recording studio. Like it was used on Jimmy Buffet's "Margaritaville." All these big records, Dobie Gray.

**PM:** Wow.

**TJB:** I have this information written down somewhere. [laughs] It belonged to David Briggs [a Nashville studio legend], I think. It was at Quadrophonics.

**PM:** It belonged to David Briggs!?! [laughs]

**TJB:** Yeah. And then it was Rusty's. That's all I can remember. I don't know.

**PM:** Can I ask Rusty who?

**TJB:** Rusty Golden.

**PM:** Was he one of the Golden's? [a big country rock group]

**TJB:** Yeah. But this is not important, okay? It's a long time ago.

**PM:** Yeah.

**TJB:** And he'd always—like he'd be playing some gospel song on the piano. He's a really good piano player. And then I'd start singing along, and he'd say, "Will you shut up? You are ruining the song."

[laughter]

**TJB:** He couldn't stand my voice. And then I had him sign this thing. It's somewhere here—oh, I'll read it to you. "You have a really good and distinct vocal style. You have great pitch." Rusty, March 14th, 2001.

[laughter]

**TJB:** He wrote that because he listened to my song and he said that. And I said, "You have to write that in my book because you used to tell me to shut up when I was singing to your songs."

**PM:** Oh, that's funny.

**TJB:** I know.

**PM:** So you decided to write "Pinky" with Bobby Bare. And so you went over to his place or he came over to yours? I'm interested in so how did it go down kind of a thing.

**TJB:** He came over here and he brought his guitar. And he started playing da, da da da, da da...

[laughter]

**TJB:** And then I just started singing because I already had a lot of the lines, you know.

**PM:** Did he contribute some words too?

**TJB:** Yeah. I said, "So how can I say about how they were married, and then she died?" And he said, "They were married till he buried, married and buried Pinky." And I said, "Oh, yes."

[laughter]

**TJB:** That was a great contribution, because it's so simple and so right.



**PM:** He's a brainy guy, huh? Or maybe that's the wrong word. He's a talented guy.

**TJB:** Yeah. Let's talk about something different. [laughs]

**PM:** So how and when did Dennis Herring and Sweet Tea Recordings come into the mix?

**TJB:** Okay. I'd write the songs and I had a friend that was living in Oxford at the time. And he said, "These are so good! You should make a cassette and send it to Clay Jones. He'd get this. And I'm going to start playing it for Dennis." And I said, "Who?" So then I thought that sounded good because he told me some people he'd produced, and I liked some of those people, like Cracker and Sparklehorse and stuff. And so I was really amazed that he liked it, and Clay liked it a lot. Clay's musical sensibility is amazing. We have so much in common musically, so that was a good pairing.

And then Dennis asked me if I'd be the first one on his Sweet Tea label. And I had to go cry. We were at this meat 'n' three in Oxford called Ajax. And we were kind of sitting in the back and nobody was back there. And I said, "Just a minute." And I had to go cry in the bathroom.

**PM:** Wow.

**TJB:** And so I did that and came back and I said, "Yes, I would love to do that." So I did. And now I think I'm having my second record with him too, which is really great.

**PM:** And now you're packing up, right at the moment, to go down to Oxford, Mississippi, and record your second record before this one even hits the street.

**TJB:** I know. Crazy, huh? How exciting.

**PM:** I've never heard of such a thing. It's beautiful.

**TJB:** I'm so excited. I can't wait to record.

**PM:** So who prompted that scheduling, and what's the thinking there?

**TJB:** Maybe I prompted it, because I'd say, "When, when, when can I record?" So they're finishing up Modest Mouse right now, Dennis and Clay. And then—

**PM:** What is that, Modest Mouse?

**TJB:** It's a really great band with this guy named Isaac something.

**PM:** Let's spell his name right. Do we know how?

**TJB:** No. But you could find out information about Modest Mouse probably on the internet. They're a really good band.

**PM:** And are they an Oxford band, or a southern band?

**TJB:** No. I think they're from Seattle or somewhere in Washington, or Portland, something like that.

**PM:** Way out there. Well, and so you'll go in with Dennis and Clay again?

**TJB:** No, no. Clay is my producer. Dennis owns the label, Sweet Tea, and he owns the studio.

**PM:** Right. So I guess I just mean him figuratively. It's his record, but you'll go in with Clay, right?

**TJB:** Yeah. And Ted Gainey is the engineer, and he plays drums.

**PM:** And then will Clay play a bunch of things like he did on *Fancy Blue*?

**TJB:** Yeah, I'm sure. And then, the way we do it, we just do vocal tracks with guitar, and then I go home. And then he puts a bunch of stuff on it, and then I come back and do some more and listen to that stuff. Or maybe not, maybe he hasn't done anything else yet and then I come back and do more vocal tracks with guitar, and then I go back home, and then come back, and go back home, and come back and go back home.

**PM:** Right. I remember meeting Clay with you years ago, and what a nice person he was.

**TJB:** Yeah, he's great.

**PM:** Yeah. And a great player and producer. But also there's an unbelievable musician in your band now. What's Derek's last name, your drummer?

**TJB:** Greene, with an "e."

**PM:** Derek Greene with an "e" is really great. And John Jackson, the guitar player, truly is a remarkable musician, I would say.

**TJB:** Yeah.

**PM:** Aren't you tempted to use John Jackson and Derek Greene on the record as well, and is that possible, or is that just not in the scheme of things?

**TJB:** Oh, I'd love that. There's just no money, you know. So if they're willing to go down and play and hope to get paid someday, then I would love for them to do that.

**PM:** Oh, and so that's perhaps a standing offer?

**TJB:** Oh, sure. I would love for them to play on there. It's just the way the record is, there's no money, so no one has gotten paid for anything, ever. [laughs]

**PM:** Yeah. When I stopped by the other day to hear your sound check before your World Cafe taping at Emerald Studios, I was so impressed with the acoustic sound of the three of you. It was really super good.

**TJB:** It did sound good, didn't it. I was happy with it.

**PM:** Yeah, I was too. I love seeing the evolution of the girl Ty Baskette that I met just a handful of years ago and now she's getting flown to New York and talking to Interview Magazine.

**TJB:** You know, I can't believe it. And I loved Andy Warhol so much growing up, and Edie Sedgewick. I'd read everything I could find about them. And I forgot to tell that to the Interview Magazine people. And I guess it's okay, because I called him already three times. I shouldn't call

him again.

[laughter]

**TJB:** It's like, "God, she's stalking me."

**PM:** And you guys had fun in New York, right?

**TJB:** Yeah, it was really great. It was just so fast. There was no time for shopping. I wanted to go to the \$10 shoe store where all the shoes are \$10. And I hear that you can find great stuff if you have a lot of time to look.

**PM:** Wow. What are your hopes for this record, for *Fancy Blue*?

**TJB:** I hope to get a washing machine, and I hope people like it.

**PM:** Yeah, a washing machine. And a dryer, too. I mean, it's no good without—well, I hate drying stuff on the line.

**TJB:** Yeah, I need a dryer, too. I've never had a washing machine or a dryer. It's got to be so much nicer. Central heat would be good, too.

**PM:** You don't have that?

**TJB:** No.

**PM:** How do you heat your place?

**TJB:** I have little space heaters everywhere. Oh, it's stupid and dangerous. And it uses more electricity, I think.

**PM:** And it's expensive.

**TJB:** Yeah, and expensive for lousy heat.

**PM:** I like your place, though, even though it's funky and in a kind of gamy part of town. It's nice, though.

**TJB:** Oh, thanks.

**PM:** If you make good dough on *Fancy Blue* will you move to a different place or stay in your digs? I guess it depends on how much, huh?

**TJB:** Yeah, because who wouldn't want to live in Spain or Bora Bora or something?

**PM:** Right, Italy, yeah.

**TJB:** I would love to see the world anyway.

**PM:** Have you done much traveling?

**TJB:** Not really.

**PM:** Been to Europe?

**TJB:** Once, actually.

**PM:** Who with?

**TJB:** Just a friend.

**PM:** Recent years or many years ago?

**TJB:** Many years ago.

**PM:** Traveling is important, I think, perhaps especially to artists.

**TJB:** Yeah, it gives you something. Like Venezuela, I would love to go back there, except I got so sick, so much that it was dangerous, and I lost all my—something—what is it called? I'm so distracted. Someone is banging on something outside. Electrolytes. It was bad. But Venezuela was beautiful, and there are monkeys and crazy birds everywhere.

**PM:** I think it's really dangerous right now.

**TJB:** Yeah, I think it is too, so politically bad.

**PM:** People are getting kidnapped, and like that.

So what do you think about this CD that you're about to embark on with Clay now? Will it be continuing down the same road as *Fancy Blue*, or are there changes afoot?

**TJB:** I hope so. I'd like to make every record the same. Like have every record have different genres on one record. I have no desire to go out and make a rock 'n' roll record or any certain genre, really, jazz or country. I kind of thought about maybe doing a country record, but then I thought it's more fun to put different styles together, because that's the way I write. I don't just sit down and write country songs, or sit down and write jazz songs or even those little 45 second songs. They're just all mixed up. And I think the record should be all mixed up too.

**PM:** Yeah. Is there stuff we call jazzy on *Fancy Blue*?

**TJB:** "Sunny Day."

**PM:** Yeah, "Sunny Day," right. How did that get jazzy?

**TJB:** It just came out that way.

**PM:** Yeah. Was the melody kind of jazzy and then Clay played it that way, or how?

**TJB:** I guess so. The melody is the way I wrote it, he doesn't change the melodies or anything. Then he plays it the way he plays it. Is that what you mean?

**PM:** Yeah. I guess he just heard it was a jazzy thing and then played it that way. Yeah, you really found the right guy for you down there.

**TJB:** Yeah, I think he really, really gets the music. Because it's so delicate, you have to think delicately, I think. Like "Parakeet," what is that? Is that jazzy?

**PM:** That's a good question. Yeah, I think that's got jazzy elements.

**TJB:** And then some of them are classical, like "Goat Cheese." [laughter] "I Love Goat Cheese" is a classical melody.

**PM:** And it's amazing. I like me some goat cheese, and I can't ever eat it without thinking of that song.

**TJB:** Thank you. I love goat cheese too. I could eat it every day.

**PM:** It's funny when you write something very specific how it can really become part of somebody's life. I mean, I can't have any goat cheese in an omelet or any brunch anywhere without thinking of Ty Baskette's song.

**TJB:** I have a new song, "I Love Clean Sheets."

**PM:** Ahh. Is it going to be on this next record?

**TJB:** I don't think so, but I like it. I don't know.

**PM:** I remember you put me in a song one time.

**TJB:** Oh, yeah. It's called "M as in Frank, F as in Mary."

**PM:** [laughs] Thanks for doing that.

**TJB:** Yeah, I'd like to record that, too. There's just so many, and the list is already really long. I don't know what we'll end up recording.

**PM:** So when you go down to Mississippi tomorrow, how many pass-alongs do you have in your pocket right at the moment?

**TJB:** To take down there?

**PM:** Yeah.

**TJB:** A hundred or more. I'm not sure.

**PM:** Are you still writing all the time?

**TJB:** I guess so. You know how you write, like sometimes you won't write at all for a month or two, and you think, "It's over, I'll never write another song." And then the next day you write four songs in a day.

**PM:** Right. Well, *you* can.

**TJB:** That's the way I write, anyway.

**PM:** Another whole aspect of the things you've done, one that we haven't touched upon—one of many—is you've done a lot of videos, both as an actor and as a makeup person. How did that start? And tell us something about that world, and that part of your career.

**TJB:** What do you want me to tell?

**PM:** Well, how did it start, your involvement in any—

**TJB:** Oh, like being a model?

**PM:** Yeah.

**TJB:** Well, I entered the county fair. And they said, "You should get an agent." And I said, "Okay."

**PM:** How old were you?

**TJB:** When I entered the fair, though, isn't when I got the agent. It was a few years later, maybe when I was 22. When I entered the fair I was like 18. And I didn't win, I got runner-up.

**PM:** So you entered the beauty contest—no, what did they call it?

**TJB:** The Fairest of the Fair.

**PM:** The Fairest of the Fair, right. You were 18, and you got runner-up.

**TJB:** But I hate that stuff. I don't want to promote that stuff.

**PM:** Well, of course, but it's just, hey, your story.

**TJB:** Yeah.

**PM:** So it's interesting, because you're interesting.

**TJB:** And then I guess that's when I started thinking I could probably model, because people started telling me that around then.

**PM:** Right. And you went in your early twenties and got yourself an agent.

**TJB:** Yeah. And then I just started doing a lot of music videos, mostly. And then usually if it was L.A. or New York directors, I'd pretty much always get the job. And if it was a Nashville director, I'd hardly ever get the job.

[laughter]

**TJB:** It was so weird.

**PM:** That's funny.

**TJB:** It was like that a lot.

**PM:** So what was the first video you were ever in?

**TJB:** Maybe it was this guy named Stevens, a comedian. Ray Stevens, is that right?

**PM:** Ray Stevens.

**TJB:** Ray Stevens, a comedian. It was called "Mississippi Squirrel Revival," which is kind of weird, because I'm recording in Mississippi.

**PM:** Right.

**TJB:** But I was like the scarlet woman, the woman in red that shouldn't be in the church.

[laughter]

**PM:** Right. And what other early videos can you recall, first breaks in that domain?

**TJB:** Steve Winwood, Alan Jackson.

**PM:** Which song of Steve's?

**TJB:** There's two videos. One is called "I Will Be There," I think. [singing] "I will be there when you call..." Do you know that song?

**PM:** Um, I think so.

**TJB:** I'm trying to find the video. I have them here somewhere.

**PM:** And then Alan Jackson, that's a big break—well, a big video, I mean.

**TJB:** Yeah. And then there's this guy Jeff Preiss, I've done a couple of things with him. He actually shot the Chet Baker documentary, *Let's Get Lost*. That was done with Bruce Weber.

**PM:** Wow. I've never seen that. Is that great?

**TJB:** Yeah, it's really great. I was happy to work with him a couple of times.

**PM:** I saw a Thelonius Monk documentary last night, *Straight, No Chaser*. That was amazing. I've never heard of that Chet Baker one, *Let's Get Lost*. I'll have to check that out.

**TJB:** "I Will Be There," I found that one, but I can't find the other one. Anyway, it was two videos at one time, like one after the other, and both directors hired me.

**PM:** Was that Nashville or New York?

**TJB:** They were L.A. directors but it was shot here.

**PM:** So you've been in a surprising number of videos, right? What's that number?

**TJB:** I think it's 53.

**PM:** Holy geez.

**TJB:** But there used to be so many of them shot here. I could have worked every single week.

**PM:** And is it well paid work? Is it decent pay? What's the deal with that?

**TJB:** Sometimes it is. I guess it depends on the budget.

**PM:** But it's a one-time fee, right? There are no residuals?

**TJB:** Yeah. The only thing I ever got residuals on was *America's Most Wanted*.

**PM:** Wow. What did you do for them?

**TJB:** I played the drug addict girlfriend of the drug dealer.

**PM:** Nice.

**TJB:** Yeah, strung out on heroin.

**PM:** You're skinny enough for the part—I should say thin. Skinny is not a nice word. You're thin.

**TJB:** Thanks.

**PM:** Yeah. Didn't you say the other day that something you were in—you started off a video in the clothes dryer? Did I hear that right?

**TJB:** Oh, yeah, Delbert McClinton. And now me and Delbert McClinton have the same publicist. How weird is that? [laughs] How weird is it that I even *have* a publicist, right, Frank?

**PM:** Oh, I think you're going to get famous.

**TJB:** That's a scary thing. I really just want to have a washing machine—

**PM:** Which is an interesting segue.

**TJB:** —like just normal comfortable things.

**PM:** It's an interesting segue from starting a video in the dryer to saying that all you really want is a washing machine.

**TJB:** Oh, that's true. It's funny.

**PM:** So that Delbert video where you—oh, it was “Come Together” by the Beatles, right?

**TJB:** Uh-huh. That was directed by Michael McNamara.



**PM:** Do you have any clips of these videos you're in? I'd like to see them sometime.

**TJB:** Sure. I have a lot of them. I have a reel of my favorite ones, and then I have a whole bunch of the other ones on separate tapes.

**PM:** Have you done acting, like film or stage yet?

**TJB:** Yeah. I hate stage, though.

**PM:** Why?

**TJB:** Actually, performing live in front of an audience as a singer songwriter person is very similar to acting a part on stage, because it's all immediate, and there it is. That's why I prefer acting in front of a camera. It's completely different.

**PM:** When I was attempting to take some pictures of you the other day, it amazed me how you behaved in front of the camera. It was beautiful to see you just kind of unwind and pose. Because that's something I could never do. I'm very comfortable with performing music, but when somebody puts a camera in my face I go into abject fear.

**TJB:** I've always been comfortable with a camera. It's just performing live or doing live theater, uhh, I can't do that.

**PM:** You opened up just like a flower the way you struck some poses for me that kind of—I don't know, took me by surprise—

**TJB:** Oh, really?

**PM:** And wonderment. I thought, wow, look at her, how beautiful she just got for the camera there. That's really amazing.

**TJB:** Did you think they were nice?

**PM:** I thought they were beautiful.

**TJB:** I can't wait to see. I noticed you took one of Derek's set list. That was a good idea.

**PM:** Ah, yeah. [Acutally, because I'm no photographer, they didn't turn out worth beans, all dark and blurry.]

Well, call me when you get back from Oxford, and let me know when you're in. I think the CD is going to at least begin to make you famous, or make you famous, one or the other. And I think you deserve all the good stuff that comes from it.

**TJB:** Thanks, Frank. That would be amazing.

**PM:** And fond regards to Clay Jones, and tell him I want to talk with him.

**TJB:** Do you have his number?

**PM:** No. I'm looking for a pencil right now... Okay. Well, I've really enjoyed hanging out with you lately and being friends again, and talking with you today. And I wish you really good things for *Fancy Blue*.

**TJB:** Thanks, Frank. I hope you got something usable today. I just ramble and give dumb answers.

**PM:** No, no. You're fascinating and don't know.

**TJB:** [laughing] Okay, if you say so.

