

**Oral History Interview of
Jesse Taylor**

**Interviewed by: Andy Wilkinson
January 21, 2006
Austin, Texas**

**Part of the:
*Crossroads of Music Archive***

© Southwest Collection/
Special Collections Library



TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY

**Southwest Collection/
Special Collections Library**

15th and Detroit | 806.742.3749 | <http://swco.ttu.edu>

Copyright and Usage Information:

An oral history release form was signed by Jesse Taylor on December 12, 2005. This transfers all rights of this interview to the Southwest Collection/Special Collections Library, Texas Tech University.

This oral history transcript is protected by U.S. copyright law. By viewing this document, the researcher agrees to abide by the fair use standards of U.S. Copyright Law (1976) and its amendments. This interview may be used for educational and other non-commercial purposes only. Any reproduction or transmission of this protected item beyond fair use requires the written and explicit permission of the Southwest Collection. Please contact Southwest Collection Reference staff for further information.

Preferred Citation for this Document:

Taylor, Jesse Oral History Interview, January 21, 2006. Interview by Andy Wilkinson, Online Transcription, Southwest Collection/Special Collections Library. URL of PDF, date accessed.

The Southwest Collection/Special Collections Library houses almost 6000 oral history interviews dating back to the late 1940s. The historians who conduct these interviews seek to uncover the personal narratives of individuals living on the South Plains and beyond. These interviews should be considered a primary source document that does not implicate the final verified narrative of any event. These are recollections dependent upon an individual's memory and experiences. The views expressed in these interviews are those only of the people speaking and do not reflect the views of the Southwest Collection or Texas Tech University.

Technical Processing Information:

The Audio/Visual Department of the Southwest Collection is the curator of this ever-growing oral history collection and is in the process of digitizing all interviews. While all of our interviews will have an abbreviated abstract available online, we are continually transcribing and adding information for each interview. Audio recordings of these interviews can be listened to in the Reading Room of the Southwest Collection. Please contact our Reference Staff for policies and procedures. Family members may request digitized copies directly from Reference Staff.

Consult the Southwest Collection website for more information.

<http://swco.ttu.edu/Reference/policies.php>

Recording Notes:

Original Format: Born Digital Audio

Digitization Details: originally recorded in DSS file format, converted to wav

Audio Metadata: 44.1k/16bit WAV file

Further Access Restrictions: N/A

Transcription Notes:

Interviewer: Andy Wilkinson

Audio Editor: Elissa Stroman

Transcription: Karina Rodriguez, Elissa Stroman

Editor(s): Leah Blackwell

Final Editor: Andy Wilkinson

Interview Series Background:

The Crossroads Artists Project encompasses interviews conducted by the Crossroads of Music Archive Staff members. They hope to document the creative process of artists and songwriters from all across the Southwestern United States.

Transcript Overview:

This is the second interview with Jesse Taylor, conducted by Andy Wilkinson. In this interview, Taylor discusses his time in the Joe Ely Band, touring with the Clash, and his artistic process later in life.

Length of Interview: 02:26:38

Subject	Transcript Page	Time Stamp
Road stories; playing with the Ely Band	5	0:00:00
Growing popularity of the band; playing at the Cotton Club	10	0:10:30
Fights at the Cotton Club; "banditos story"	11	0:16:00
Getting the first label contract with MCA	14	0:26:35
European tour with Merle Haggard	17	0:32:42
Memorable tours	19	0:39:00
Meeting The Clash; touring with them	21	0:43:50
Playing in Lubbock with The Clash	25	0:54:50
Worst gig ever; playing at the Hollywood Palladium	28	1:01:15
Cutting Solo Albums	31	1:14:00
<i>South Side Guitar</i> Album creation	39	1:37:45
Jesse Taylor Describes his Playing Style	41	1:43:57
Next Steps Artistically: Painting	44	1:58:00
Road Stories; Lloyd and Jesse on the New Jersey Turnpike	47	2:06:20
Unique influence of Lubbock artists	51	2:20:00

Keywords

Rock and roll music, guitar playing, Joe Ely Band, The Clash, Lubbock music

Andy Wilkinson (AW):

Let me just start out by saying this is, what is today the twenty-first, of January, I think, and we're here in Jesse Taylor's house, in Austin, so now we can decide where to start off.

Jesse Taylor (JT):

Okay.

AW:

Well we left off, the other day, you had mentioned that a good topic would be road stories.

JT:

Right, uh-huh.

AW:

And I'll bet that's true.

JT:

Oh yeah there's so many of 'em, and you know what's funny, Andy, is if I'm out with some folks riding in a car somewhere, going somewhere, or doing something or drinking a few beers with somebody or something like that, well I am just full of road stories. But I noticed last night, I was sitting here trying to think of some of the good road stories, and I was just drawing a blank. I would think, gol' man, what's the deal? It's kind of funny I'll start getting a talking about them, but, let's see, did we ever talk about the early days at the Cotton Club?

AW:

No, well you talked a little bit about Tommy, but I think it would be good to talk about that, and I think some road stories about the early days of the Ely band, too, would be—

JT:

Yeah, sure, uh-huh.

AW:

Real interesting.

JT:

Yeah, I've got a few of those—

AW:

And if you want to tell anything incriminating we'll hide the tape, until the statute of limitations runs out. (laughter)

JT:

You know Billy Joe, my good buddy Billy Joe Shaver?

AW:

Yeah.

JT:

Billy Joe is such a great story teller in everything, and Billy Joe says, "Just tell it like it is. Tell it like it is," he said, "If it makes you look bad it won't matter, just tell it. People want to know the way it happened." He said, "They don't want somebody embellishing on the truth. They want to hear what really happened, and that's what grabs people." And Billy is just like that. He'll get up on a mic and start talking, and boy you'll be like, I can't believe he just said that. (AW laughs) Or I can't believe he'd tell that story to this huge crowd of people. But that's the way he is. But anyway I learned a lot from him about, well about everything in general really. (laughs) Because he's just so straightforward that I guarantee anything you hear coming out of Billy Joe's mouth is for real.

AW:

Yeah.

JT:

Because then later on I hear people tell the same story and everything, and they'll tell it word for word, just like Billy, just like it happened, you know. But I wanted to talk a little about the Cotton Club there because you know when we more or less last got started at Stubb's Bar-B-Q, well the first place, the first gig I ever played with Ely really, you know, a show type gig, was at that old bowling alley at, The Longhorn Bowling Alley, or no, no it was Longhorn Ballroom. It had been a bowling alley.

AW:

Yeah, where was it? Do you remember?

JT:

Yeah it was down there on, well what used to be called College Avenue, now it's University, down there by that old Clover Leaf [dairy].

AW:

Oh yeah.

JT:

By Mathews Junior High, west, on West College Avenue, or University Avenue, that place there, but we had just been basically kind of putting a band together with these guys, and just more or less playing for fun over there at Stubb's all the time. And by then it had turned from more than just what it got started as, was that those Sunday Jams that went on for a long time. Then Stubb's started putting music in there on Friday and Saturday too, and so that's really where we kind of honed the Ely band, got our chops together and everything, and then Ely got us, oh I know we had one gig up there opening at the Longhorn Ballroom opening for old Earl Scruggs. The Earl Scruggs Revue?

AW:

Yeah.

JT:

Then we had one opening for Rusty Weir, and that's when Rusty was really big. He had a Top 10 hit. Did you know Rusty had a top ten hit?

AW:

No, which was it?

JT:

(sings) "Don't it make you wanna dance."

AW:

Yeah, that was a Top 10?

JT:

Yeah, so Rusty was riding a wave there on that. And anyway, so then we actually got together and started rehearsing (both laugh) because before we was just showing up and playing. And we had a few songs down pretty good and all that, but then we got these—and those were big shows you know. So we'd played there, and that's when the band started getting tight, but then, I'm not really sure how it got started, but we started playing the Cotton Club. I've still got old posters that say, "Joe Ely Band at the Cotton Club, One dollar," one dollar cover charge! Boy, those were the good ole days.

AW:

Well who owned the Cotton Club then?

JT:

Tommy still owned it, but Ruth his mother, and Zack ran it. You remember them, Ruth and Zack?

AW:

I remember his mother.

JT:

You know she just died last year. Boy she lived a long time.

AW:

Yeah she was well in her nineties wasn't she?

JT:

Yeah. So the deal with that was we would—you rented it, the club.

AW:

So as the Joe Ely Band you had to rent the club?

JT:

Yeah we would rent the club, do all the advertising.

AW:

Charge the dollar?

JT:

Yeah.

AW:

And hope to make it pay?

JT:

Yeah, and it would, boy I tell you, we started playing out there, and I don't know, did you ever make it to any of those shows out there?

AW:

No, because when you—what year was this when you were starting?

JT:

Oh I'm talking like '76.

AW:

Right, see I had just moved to Colorado when y'all were starting to play, and in fact I had lost touch with Joe, and I think I told you this this story. I was riding down the street in Colorado, and there was a record on the radio and it was Joe, and I said, Oh I went to school with Joe, of course we called him Joey.

JT:

Yeah Joey, of course.

AW:

And so I went back and checked it out and found out that's who it was. But no I was gone so I didn't get to see any of those.

JT:

Well I'll tell you what man, it started off kind of slow, but we always had a whole handful of friends there in Lubbock, I mean a whole circle of friends that were the older Lubbock beatniks and stuff that always supported that band, and were always, wherever we played were there, and all. But it started out kind of with that circle of people.

AW:

Who was in the band by the time you got to the Cotton Club?

JT:

That would be Gregg Wright on bass, Steve Keeton on drums, Lloyd Maines, myself, and Joe.

AW:

So Lloyd was playing with you all by then?

JT:

Pardon?

AW:

Lloyd was playing with you then?

JT:

Oh yeah Lloyd was there from the very first, yeah, and then later on, about a year later, Ponty Bone came in, got Ponty in there. So that was basically like the original recording. Now Rick Hewitt played for a little while. Do you remember him?

AW:

No I don't, what did he play?

JT:

Oh he was a guitar player, but he wasn't around very long at all, moved off to Corpus Christi I believe it was.

AW:

Yeah I don't think I ever met him.

JT:

But anyway, after we did that for a few months, then all of a sudden, man it started getting—we started drawing in crowds, and you know that was a good-sized place. I mean it'd hold five, six hundred people easy. Well six hundred would be pretty packed, but by the time we did it a few months we started packing that place, and then we started charging two dollars. (both laugh)

AW:

Well now, when you were doing the Cotton Club and those shows to open for Scruggs and Rusty Weir, were you doing original material by then or was it—?

JT:

Oh yeah, uh-huh, it was probably about half and half. Yeah, because we were still doing a lot of old standards, and believe it or not we were doing a lot of country stuff, but cool country stuff, old stuff like "Crazy Arms," and "Linda On My Mind" by—I'm drawing a blank—by Conway Twitty.

AW:

Yeah.

JT:

And some Willie Nelson, but then besides that we were doing several of Ely's songs, and a lot of Butch, some Jimmie [Dale] Gilmore songs—oh and some other stuff that Ely—Ely was real good also at digging back through old material, and just pulling out songs that hardly—that were old songs and everything, but hardly anybody had ever heard of them. Like for example one that comes to mind is that old Utah Phillips song "Rock, Salt, and Nails."

AW:

Yeah.

JT:

I thought we did one of the better versions of that song ever. But anyway it started getting packed, and that's when we started drawing attention to other people and stuff, but I had just wanted to talk a little bit about those Cotton Club days because they were wild, man. I mean, that was a BYOB place, and I mean, like I say, we rented the club, they brought their own booze—well those BYOB places can get a little out of control.

AW:

Yeah because if they brought it they can drink all they want.

JT:

Oh lord we had guys coming in there with dollies wheeling in entire kegs of beer (AW laughs) just for their private party they were having there.

AW:

How did you keep any kind of control over that? Did you have to hire—?

JT:

It was pretty much every man for himself. There was a couple of nights it got out of control. I'll tell you about one of them here in a minute. I remember we 'as in there one night and I don't want to really name names on this, but everybody would know who it is, but our illustrious, so-called manager at that time who had taken us up, he was an older guy that was going to manage us and all that, well he was an old gambler and wacky as can be, and we're up there having a great night on the stage and all, and all of a sudden I hear, "Ka-bam! Bam! Ka-bam!" And I looked down on the dance floor, and right in the front of the stage is this nut who pulled out a .38 and boy he was just blowing holes in the ceiling.

AW:

This is your manager?

JT:

Yeah. (both laugh) He was having such a good time, he just got so excited he just decided to blow some holes in the ceiling. Boy you've never seen so many people hit the floor. He wasn't even aiming anywhere that he could hit anybody; he was shooting straight up, but I mean he emptied that gun in the ceiling and that floor was [full of] people laying down.

AW:

How many of you on the bandstand hit the floor? (laughs)

JT:

I don't know, but I think I ran and hid behind the amplifier. (both laugh) But, gol', man, I mean, fights right and left, and I don't know if you ever heard the famous Banditos story.

AW:

No I don't think so.

JT:

Did you ever hear that one?

AW:

No, no, but I know who the Banditos are...

JT:

Well it was New Year's Eve, and this one involves me, and you know I don't want to just tell stories about myself or whatever, but this is one of the better ones. We were up there playing, and it was New Year's Eve, and everybody had fireworks, and we had a whole crew of Banditos, you know the bikers' gang.

AW:

Right.

JT:

Hanging there, and these guys come in and they had their own corner over there where it was just them in their own private party going over there. Boy, they were all drunk as a hoot owl and they were throwing firecrackers and they started shooting bottle rockets.

AW:

In the building?

JT:

Yeah, and like across to the other side. You know the dance floor was right in the middle. Huge square dance floor with chairs and tables all around that, and they just started popping 'em off on the other side of the dance floor there, and it was dangerous, you know, really. And Ely kind of, you know, Ely don't want to upset anybody, or make them mad or anything, so Ely gets on the microphone, and he's like, "Hey guys, I think we kind of need to cool it with the fireworks, y'all." He'd say something like that, and then, "Bing! Bam! Boom! Crack! Pow!" all over the place, and then we play another song or something, and Ely would say, "Hey guys could we please, please let's go outside and shoot the fireworks. Somebody's going to get hurt in here." "Pow! Boom! Ching! Woo!" all over the building and everything, and we play another song, and

it keeps on and everything, and I just, I got pissed, and so I grab the microphone, and Ely's, and I don't want to repeat all the words I said, but I got on the microphone, and I said, "Alright you sorry SOB, blankety blankety blankety." I said, "The next one of you blankety blankety blanks shoots one of them fireworks off I'm going to personally get down off here and kick your blankety blank ass."

And so then we start playing another song, and this guy, you know they heard that and everything, and this guy walked up to the front of the stage and lit a firecracker and waited until the fuse burned down to about like right there where it pops and threw it right up in my face. Bam! And boy, I mean I just saw red, like a red cape in front of a bull. And that guy just turned around, "Ha ha ha," and goes off marching back down to his seat. Well by the time I could get the guitar set down on the stand and get off the stage and get through the crowd, I was following the guy with my eyes and everything, watching where he went. He went over and sat back down in his chair, and they're laughing about that, and I walked right over to where he was, and he was sitting down. I was standing up over him. I said, "Hey dude." I said, "Are you the blankety blank that just threw that firecracker in my face?" And at first he was surprised to see me standing there like, "Where'd he come from?" And he said, "Well yeah, yeah what are you going to—" And he gets about this far out of his chair, fixing to say, "What are you going to do about it?" And he gets about halfway up out of his chair, and I just, "Ka-bam!" man. I hit this guy as hard, or harder, than I ever hit anybody in my life. He did about three flips backwards over the back of his chair. (AW laughs)

And then about that time, these guys they're—the whole show has stopped, (laughter) and a bunch of these old cowboys had seen what was happening, and something like that was fixing to happen anyway, they was all ready for it to happen. And before them guys could actually murder me, which I think they would have done and everything, well this is, to me, the gist of the story—the cool part was that I looked around me, and there was about fifty cowboys standing right there with me, and every one of them had a broken—a whisky bottle or something, or a leg of a chair or something all standing right there, and I mean there was about maybe fifteen of them, and there were about fifty cowboys with whisky bottles and chair legs and everything just ready to go at it.

And these guys just, I mean they backed down. They got all their stuff, and left, took off. And I'll never forget, as they were going out—I got this one friend in Lubbock. He was a really tough guy, and I mean he was bad. Big old, mean tough guy and everything. They were saying, "That's the guy right there. That's the one," and I'd already knocked the guy koo-koo and they were going out the door and everything. My friend, Dave, they said, "That's him. That's the guy right there." Well Dave walked over to him just for good measure, and knocked him back down. (AW laughs) I mean knocked this guy flying. But it was wild, and there was always—if there weren't two or three good fist fights it was an off-night.

AW:

(laughs) Now somehow it's hard for me to imagine Lloyd in the middle of all this.

JT:

Oh I know. Lloyd, he's Mr. calm, cool, and collected. He just kind of sits there chewing his gum, taking it all in. He ain't about to get involved in punching nobody, but he'd just sit there watching it go on. But I tell you what, we used to, 'cause we rented the place and everything, it'd be so wacky, hectic at the end of the—we'd do it on a Friday and Saturday—at the end of Saturday night, by the time they could get everybody out of there, cleared out and everything, well we'd just shut it up, lock the door, and come back the next Sunday afternoon to get out gear and get the amplifiers and everything, and we learned real fast, the first thing to do as soon as we got in there is go start hitting the tables. And I mean we would come out of there with fifths of Jack Daniels that didn't even have the label cracked, ice coolers this big full of cases of iced down beer, drugs, pot, you know all kinds of stuff laying all over the floor, ladies' purses with money, IDs—we always gave that back. We kept all the booze though, (both laugh) but that got to be our routine. Go in there, and before anybody moved one single amplifier or anything we'd be out there scouring them tables. (laughter)

AW:

Well did you ever have opening acts or was it always just the Ely band or did you bring in other people from time to time?

JT:

It seems like, that we would once in a while have opening acts, but I think mostly it was always just us, but then again, after a while other people were playing there too; locals would rent it out. And then once in a while Stubb would bring in a really big name, like we played there with Muddy Waters.

AW:

Really?

JT:

Oh that was me and Ponty Bone, though. We put together a blues band: Ponty Bone-Jesse Taylor blues band, played with Muddy Waters. Billy Joe Shaver started coming a lot, and we'd do a double bill with Billy Joe. Jerry Jeff Walker started coming a lot. So, I don't know if you knew this or not, but Jerry Jeff and the Gonzo Band were very much responsible for the Ely band getting that very first major label record contract with MCA.

AW:

No I didn't know that.

JT:

Yeah, we'd been coming down to Austin by then, and of course Joe had known Jerry Jeff, and we all got to be good friends with them later. And we'd known Bob Livingston, of course, like I say, I'd known Bob Livingston since high school. That was the one year I went to high school by the way. (both laugh)

AW:

Well if you just went one year you can meet someone like Bob, that's a good year.

JT:

But, it was funny, but they kept telling—they were on MCA at that time, too. That's what reminded me of it, is when you started talking about that *Viva Terlingua*. I think they put that out during that period.

AW:

Yeah I think it was '73 that that record came out.

JT:

Okay, then that would have been a little before. And so finally we get a call from MCA. So they sent this guy, I believe his name was—well I can't really remember. I don't want to say a name that it wasn't. But anyway it was one of their A&R guys—Artists and Representative guys you know. They sent him to one of the shows in the Cotton Club, and by that time that was at a point when we had—every time we played, the Cotton Club was packed to the gills. It turned into the thing, which lasted for damn near a couple of years before we actually really hit the road and started touring a lot. But this guy—I remember me and Ely drove out there in that old red—I can't remember if it's a Ford or Chevy pickup, an old pickup Joe had, picked him up at the airport, took him out to the Cotton Club for the gig, and he stayed there and loved it, and the next thing I knew we were on MCA Records.

AW:

Where did you record the first MCA album? Did you do that in Nashville?

JT:

We recorded the first two in Murfreesboro, Tennessee right outside of Nashville, with a guy named Chip Young who was quite a well-known producer back then. I haven't heard much about him in a long time. I think he got pretty sick or something, but he put out some real good albums. He had a multi-multi-million dollar selling song that Billy Swan sang it, and Chip produced it and played lead guitar on it, and it's that "I Can Help."

AW:

Oh yeah that was a huge song.

JT:

Oh that thing sold.

AW:

Didn't Chip write that also?

JT:

[inaudible] He was partial—half writer, co-writer, and played—you know that little guitar part (sings guitar part)?

AW:

That was his? That's interesting, yeah.

JT:

That's my rendition of Chip playing guitar, y'all. (AW laughs) (sings guitar part) But anyway, and he had done a bunch of Delbert McClinton, and a bunch of Kris Kristofferson, and you know that kind of genre, which Ely and the Ely band kind of was part of that, you know. I mean it makes sense, the Delbert, Kristofferson crowd and all that. It's a little—not really country enough to be real country, but not really blues or rock enough to be blues or rock, but something.

AW:

Right, and what today we'd call Americana.

JT:

Yeah, exactly.

AW:

But did you start touring right away with the first album?

JT:

Oh yeah, pretty much. The very first tour was with Merle Haggard.

AW:

That's pretty good.

JT:

Yeah, in England. We went to England and, let's see, Sweden, Holland, we did Rotterdam, Amsterdam, and I believe it was Belgium—three countries involved there besides England. But we did lots of dates in England with Merle and them guys, and that was real cool. See they were on MCA, too.

AW:

Yeah. What was it like touring with Merle?

JT:

Oh it was fun. At first we were all kind of scared of him, (Andy laughs) and I was because I had long hair and a beard, and this was right about the time he'd come out with "Okie From Muskogee" or (sings) "You're walking on the fightin' side of me," and oh God those guys, they're going to want to get in a fight with me.

AW:

So I take it that they didn't.

JT:

No, they were the nicest people in the world—funny, funny, funny guys, drinking all day long. I've never seen anything like it. They would get up in the morning and start hitting it, and boy I mean by show time—we traveled over there on a tour bus, all around England, and Ireland—we played Ireland, too. But boy they would get polluted, man, and it'd be show time, and I mean they'd be all messed up. Their hair would be sticking up all over the place and everything, and then right before show time they'd comb their hair, get back there behind the curtain, and the curtain would rise, as it was rising, "Ladies and gentlemen Merle Haggard and The Strangers," and boy they'd kick into something, and I mean just perfect.

AW:

Really?

JT:

Total perfection, note for note, never missed a note, perfectly on key, perfectly on time, it always astounded me.

AW:

Yeah, how did they do it?

JT:

I don't know.

AW:

I sure can't do that, my goodness.

JT:

I guess the years of experience.

AW:

(laughter) At drinking or playing?

JT:

Yeah, but that was a fun tour.

AW:

Was it difficult being a brand new act that people may not have known? Was it tough being the opener for someone who was so well known as Merle?

JT:

Yeah, sort of in a way, but I don't remember anything real negative about it, or happening, like I don't remember ever getting booed or anything. Well for one thing the English are such polite people, 'til The Clash came along. (both laugh) But in a way I think they were all there to see Merle.

AW:

I was just wondering about trying to get a reaction from the crowd if they're there to see Merle, how that must have been a little tougher, especially [since] you were used to being at the Cotton Club where everybody was there to see you, and now they're there to see Merle.

JT:

Yeah, out of control loud people. I don't really remember anything bad, but it was I think, yeah, a little difficult to get them to come around, but for one thing, I think once we started playing and played two or three songs, then—the English people have a real fine ear for good music -- and I think after we played two or three songs they'd say, Hey these guys can play. They can play good. So you know, they'd give us a good listen—besides that we probably weren't on more than thirty to forty minutes.

AW:

Who did you get to tour with next? Was there another—did you continue to tour with other MCA acts that were [inaudible]

JT:

No, not necessarily MCA acts. Then after we put out the second or third album, and the Ely band itself started changing in ways of—we started dropping a lot of the classic country stuff and replacing it with more Ely stuff and more Butch stuff and all that, only the band also started rocking out harder, too. It started turning from a semi-country band into more of a rock band kind of deal because we were still playing some sort of country, but we were pushing it. We were playing hard, hard and fast and loud. (laughter)

AW:

And was it something the audiences were ready for?

JT:

Well, yeah for one thing after about that third album, well we had developed a national following, somewhat—we weren't big stars or anything like that, but had enough people that knew who we were that there would actually be people there to see us. But we did some great, great tours. I remember one, this was really a cool tour, it was a Lubbock tour. It was—get this line-up, man—it was the Joe Ely Band, The Crickets with Sonny Curtis, and Waylon Jennings.

AW:

Wow.

JT:

I know. What a tour.

AW:

Yeah, and about what year was that?

JT:

Probably '78, something like that.

AW:

That must have been really fun. Where did you tour? Was it the United States?

JT:

The United States yeah—Midwest, up through the Midwest. I remember we wound up in Duluth, Minnesota, which must, I swear to God—it must be the coldest place I've ever been in my life. Man alive. First time I've ever seen where people plug their car batteries into an electrical socket at night.

AW:

Yeah to keep 'em warm?

JT:

Yeah.

AW:

Yeah, so I guess in '78 or so then Waylon probably would have been the headliner because he was really big.

JT:

Oh, of course.

AW:

Yeah, at that time.

JT:

Yeah. Yeah, Waylon was, at that point, a superstar. And of course The Crickets were stars in their own right simply because of who they were.

AW:

Yeah, and all the stuff they had done in the Buddy Holly years.

JT:

And then comes some guys called The Ely Band that managed to weasel their way onto the show. (laughter). It was a great show. I thought that was a killer package, too.

AW:

Oh I'd love to have seen that group, especially—[inaudible, speaking at the same time]

JT:

And everybody had so much fun on that tour, all the bands. The camaraderie of being up in somewhere like Duluth, Minnesota, and all of us being from Lubbock, I mean, at one point, they all for the most part I think lived in Nashville and stuff, or elsewhere by then. And then one big change is we signed with the William Morris Agency.

AW:

Oh for management and representation?

JT:

Yeah, uh-huh. Booking agents, management, and all that. And things changed a lot then too because they got us into the mainstream rock stuff, you know. And then, let's see, we did two tours with Linda Ronstadt, two tours with Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers, toured with that English band The Kinks, remember them?

AW:

Oh yeah.

JT:

Opened for the Rolling Stones. I got to meet all the Stones, you know, hang out with them.

AW:

Now, so when you were opening, especially with someone as big as The Stones, did you get to spend much time with people like that, or did they keep themselves kind of separate?

JT:

Oh no, not with them. Gosh. But with the others, like Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers, them guys are such nice guys, they would just desert their—we'd be playing these big arenas, huge halls—and they'd just kind of desert their dressing room and all come invade ours.

AW:

Really?

JT:

They were bored back there in their dressing rooms; they'd come hang out with us. And you know, we'd go after gig, late night hotel room parties, stuff like that. Another thing that really changed and shaped our direction around that time, after we'd already done all these other people, was meeting The Clash.

AW:

Yeah, now how did that come about? Had they been in the audience when you were opening for Merle in England?

JT:

No. They had somehow or another picked up on The Ely Band albums. And just like—I remember talking to a guy that owned a big record store out in California, they were over here playing California—well touring the United States. And this guy, I guess we later on did a showcase there at their record store, and this guy was telling us, Yeah we had The Clash in here. And we were playing The Clash music while they were in here signing albums -- I don't even

know if there were CDs back then. Joe Strummer, he came up to us and said, "Take that crap off."

AW:

(laughs) Talking about his own music?

JT:

Yeah, "You gotta get rid of that crap off there." And everything. And they said, Oh okay Mr. Strummer. What would you like us to play? And Strummer [says], "Well you got any Joe Ely?" (laughs) That's the first—and later on I found out that Joe Strummer and Mick Jones—the other main Clash guy, you know the guitar player—

AW:

Now isn't that Mick Jones that once played with the Stones?

JT:

That what?

AW:

That used to play with the Stones for a short while?

JT:

No.

AW:

Different Mick Jones.

JT:

You might be thinking of Mick Taylor.

AW:

I think I asked you this last time. That's right. I get that confused. Brian Jones.

JT:

Yeah, Brian Jones played with him. And then a guy named Mick Taylor later.

AW:

Yeah, Mick Taylor was there for a short while.

JT:

Yeah, but no. They're younger, a lot younger than that.

AW:

So how did it come about—because as much harder it is—the band was getting with the music, that was still a long way from what The Clash was doing, right?

JT:

Oh yeah. Yeah.

AW:

So how did that marriage come about, and how did it work when you toured?

JT:

Well, I don't know really. (laughter) I'm still trying to figure that one out. But somehow or another, when they were over here and everything, well they got word to us to give them a call one time or something. And then I guess it was a few months later, we were playing in London, England at a place called The Venue. A real famous old joint in London. Big hall, you know. Rock hall and everything. And we're back there, backstage and all, and I heard—they were like super, super, they were like The Beatles in England. They weren't that well known in the United States, although they did get really big over here and all. But the whole backstage was abuzz, the hanger-on-ers and the stage personnel and all that [whispers] The Clash is here. The Clash is here. And one of them even said to me, "Eh mate, The Clash is here." And I'm going, Who or what is The Clash? (AW laughs) Are we fixing to have a riot or something? The Clash is here. And they came backstage and we met The Clash. And they were real nice, telling us how much they dug the music, and invited us to come over and do a tour with 'em. And of course, we were like, Sure, no problem. Give us a call. And I don't think we heard from them for a few months down the road. And a few months down the road, they called up, Alright, you boys ready to go? Come tour with The Clash. And they lined it up. Somebody lined it up. I don't know, through the booking agency, and we went over and did our first tour with The Clash.

AW:

In Europe?

JT:

Yeah. And boy, man. It was damn near total disaster.

AW:

Really? Oh how?

JT:

Ah, we're playing in front of the most serious punk rock group in the world; I mean they had already outgrown the Sex Pistols and everything. And I mean I'm talking about your serious hardcore punkers. You know, your head bangers, your slam dancers, spiked hair, your spitters. You know. Throwing shit at the stage and everything. And it's like here we come out there to open for The Clash—a bunch of goofy hicks from Lubbock, Texas. (AW laughs) And we all pretty much had long hair and stuff, and they hated long hair.

AW:

They hated long hair? (laughs)

JT:

Oh yeah. No. Long hair—your hair had to be either spiked or greased back or something. And oh Jesus, it was near disaster. So the shows, it was all we could do to get through 'em.

AW:

So I guess the bar fights in the Cotton Club were good training? (laughs)

JT:

(laughs) Pretty much. I tell you.

AW:

Now it's interesting to me that if The Clash liked you so well to have you open, that their audience wouldn't cut you some slack for—

JT:

I know; well that's just narrow-minded people you know. And Joe Strummer and Mick Jones were both very open-minded people. As I got to know them and everything, I noticed what a prolific sense of music they had. I mean, they listened to everything. I'd go on their tour busses and they would be listening to reggae, or they'd be listening to Chuck Berry, or they'd be listening to George Jones. They loved George Jones. Just a real eclectic taste in music, but unfortunately their following and all that wasn't really that open-minded.

AW:

And you know, sometimes that does happen, doesn't it? That an entertainer or a band gets, in a sense, trapped by an audience, you know. I think of a guy we both know, Robert Earl Keen. I remember some of those times that I'd try to go out and hear him, and it would be the fraternity crowd, and the rest of us would leave. And I remember talking to his bass player at the time, who was from Lubbock and who said it was kind of a good and bad story. That they had that kind of

following but that in a sense they were kind of stuck with it. Did you ever feel that way with The Ely Band? Your following was also a lot more eclectic, wasn't it?

JT:

Yeah. No, we never were really categorized much in that we certainly didn't have a frat following (laughter). You know, we were more like of the Delbert McClinton—who else? Something like that. We were—The Ely Band has been referred to as the ultimate roadhouse band—the ultimate bar band. We just took that bar band and moved it to the big arenas. (laughs) But basically we still pretty much remained a bar band, you know, all the time. But it's the playing. Everybody just played so good, and it just gelled so good. And those songs. Ely's got that real unique voice, and the whole thing just clicked.

But, would you like something to drink?

AW:

No I'm doing just fine right now, Jesse, thank you.

JT:

Let's see. I guess as long as I'm on The Clash, I'll tell you—we played the Hollywood Palladium, opening for The Clash. You see we toured with them in the United States as well. As a matter of fact, when we were travelling by tour bus from, I believe it was Houston, headed out to—or, hell, it might have been Dallas. It makes more sense that it was Dallas. But we played Houston, Dallas, San Antonio it seems like, but I don't know. Drove out to L.A. and played The Hollywood Palladium, but on the way, you know we had some time to kill, and Joe and I both really wanted to play in Lubbock with The Clash.

AW:

Yeah, that would have been really—

JT:

Well it wasn't on the tour schedule or anything, but we talked until we was blue in the face, and finally talked them and the management agency into coming to Lubbock and doing a show with The Clash. Do you remember that old joint—it was down on 4th Street, called Rox-Z. R-O-X-dash—

AW:

Yeah, I think now it's—it's been a jillion things, but it's not far off University or College. Kind of across from where Fat Dawg's used to be.

JT:

Yeah. Just a little ways down, just a couple blocks down on the other side of the street from where Fat Dawg's was. Well we actually got them into Lubbock, which was phenomenal for those days because they were playing arenas and stuff.

AW:

Oh yeah, so what year would that have been? Do you remember?

JT:

Ooh. Maybe '79—'78 or '79. I'm so bad with—

AW:

The reason why I was asking is that I didn't move back to Lubbock until the middle of '79, and I think I would have remembered that coming to Lubbock.

JT:

Well that's one reason I really want to dig through those trunks and dig out a bunch of those tour itineraries. But I'll take you back there in a minute and show you where those trunks are. (laughs) And you'll see what I'm talking about.

AW:

So what was it like to play Lubbock with The Clash?

JT:

It was great.

AW:

What kind of crowd—was it the hardcore punk crowd? Was there much of that in Lubbock in that time?

JT:

Yeah, there were a lot of punks that wouldn't normally come out—wouldn't come to the Ely Band shows or anything. But of course they were real calm, I mean—

AW:

Comparatively?

JT:

Well I mean, compared to spitting and throwing shit at us and everything. That's for sure.

AW:

Well so did the cowboys, the normal crowds that you would have had back in those days at the Cotton Club, did some of those people come out to hear you and then get to hear The Clash?

JT:

It seems like—there surely had to be a few of ‘em. It’s hard to remember—you know we were right in the middle of a big tour and we just barely talked ‘em into stopping there. But I remember we did a sound check, and I had a big old Oldsmobile. One of those huge old Oldsmobile 98s or something—hold about six people comfortably. It was still daylight after the sound check. And I got Joe Strummer and Mick Jones and seems like a couple of the other guys, a couple of the roadies and stuff, and I took them on a Lubbock tour. I was the tour guide.

AW:

Really? (laughs) Where’d you take them?

JT:

I just piled them in that old Oldsmobile. Oh I took them to the roller rink. Oh they really wanted to see the roller skating rink.

AW:

Where Buddy had played?

JT:

Yeah. Well by then, that movie with Gary Busey had come out. Took them out there. And then of course I took them to Buddy’s grave, which is a real funny story. Topper Headon, their drummer, he was there, I remember him. And for some reason, I still remember this guy’s name. There’s a grave right next to Buddy Holly. You know Buddy’s right there, with himself, his mom, and his dad—are all buried there, three of them in a row. But then right over there next to Buddy on the other side. And everybody’d thrown picks on the grave, you know, and all this. And this guy’s name in that grave next to Buddy is Lee Reed. I don’t know why, still to this day remember that, but Topper said, “But everybody comes to see Buddy. But what about poor Lee?” (AW laughs) I about died laughing. Just took them on a little Lubbock tour. Seems like I even took them to Prairie Dog Town.

AW:

I was going to ask you if you did Prairie Dog Town? (laughs)

JT:

I do believe I did. Yeah. What a hoot.

AW:

One of the few places on earth where there's a park for rodents. (laughter)

JT:

"What about poor Lee?" (laughter) But that was a hoot. But anyway, we got out to L.A. and we played the Hollywood Palladium—you know, the big ballroom out in Hollywood [where] they used to film, a long time ago, The Lawrence Welk Show, they'd film there. And oh man, this gig was, if I had to list the one absolutely worst gig that I've ever played at in my life that would be it.

AW:

Worse than the Banditos and the firecrackers?

JT:

Oh yeah. Way worse. That turned out to be fun. (both laugh) We got to kick a bunch of Banditos down. But this gig got to the point of danger and disgust and everything. And I'll tell you who else will second that motion in about a New York second is Lloyd Maines. You ask Lloyd, next time you talk to him, "Hey Lloyd, I heard y'all played a great gig with The Clash at the Hollywood Palladium one night." (laughter) Really, do that.

AW:

I will. In fact, I may see Lloyd tomorrow. It'll be fresh on my mind. I'll ask him. Well now is this the one where they were throwing stuff at the stage and—

JT:

Oh mother. I mean—spit coming off—hawkers like, not just (makes sounds) spit and bottles, beer bottles, guys were taking coke—you know the coke cups with ice in them, and rolling them up like baseballs and throwing them as hard as they could. It was almost damn near a riot, and then it's like Gregg Wright, our bass player got hit right in the forehead with a bottle and everything—cut his forehead pretty deep, and Greg was so disgusted by the whole thing that he didn't even bother. He didn't stop playing, but he didn't even bother to brush the blood off. He just let it flow down his face. So Gregg's whole face was blood red. And I'll never forget this, Lloyd would be embarrassed about this, but I looked over there at Lloyd, and we're all just like, Wow! Should we leave the stage or what? And I look over at Lloyd, and here's mister calm cool collected Lloyd Maines, you know—never a single hair out of place. And there's this hawker, this big hawker about this long, slinging off his nose like this as he's playing. That's a sight I'll never forget.

AW:

And of course, being Lloyd, he doesn't quit playing.

JT:

No. And the guys started charging the stage, and jumping up on the stage. And they had to get every bouncer they had in the building to be on the stage and I mean they had opened the back door, which was behind the stage back there, down a little hall and down the stage and everything. And they had them—it was just like a factory, man—they had them coming. They was up on the stage, some big old burly guy had them by the belt and by the scruff of the neck, passed them on to the next one. Next guy got them through there and out the back door. Threw them out on their face. Here comes the next one, out the back door. It was unbelievable. They were like charging the stage. I know I got in a couple pretty good kicks and punches as they was going by. (laughter)

And then later on that night, the tale gets worse. This almost broke the band up, this whole night. This story gets worse. This guy that we had had—back then, you know, we weren't using just really totally professional, you know, guys that were hired out of L.A. to come tour with us—or Nashville—road guys—professional road guys. You know, we just hired a bunch of old Lubbock buddies to come along with us and join the party and move equipment. And this guy, he was working with us, you know, doing some road managing, doing some setting up, doing a little bit of everything and all. And so we had left immediately after that gig; we had hopped on an airplane that night to get back to Texas because we had to go somewhere the next day—start another tour or something. That's the way it was back then—man, I mean it was one—

AW:

So what did you do with your equipment when you had to do that?

JT:

Oh they'd drive 'em in trucks.

AW:

Yeah, but you'd fly, and then the trucks would get there a few days later?

JT:

Yeah, and the trucks would just drive straight through. But we'd like fly back and you know, have at least a little time at home. They wouldn't even go back to Lubbock. They'd just go straight—wherever it was. But it's late at night, and this old friend of ours had been working, and they had a bunch of art for sale in the El Paso Airport—on the wall. And somebody had printed up—oh it would be about, I don't know, maybe two and a half by three feet size picture, framed and everything, and it was all for sale at the airport. And of all things, there's a picture of a bunch of damn beer cans, laying in a pile. It was an oil painting of a pile of beer cans, and I must admit it was a pretty cool painting. (AW laughs) Well our old buddy, he decides he liked that, so he decided to get it off the—just pulled it down off the wall and go walking through the airport

with it, thinking he's just going to walk it on the airplane, I guess, and everything. And he's got a neat painting of a bunch of beer cans.

So we had some down time there, you know waiting time. I had went off, walked off down the hall, just walking, went and used the restroom—just getting up, killing time basically. They'd all been down in this other area. And I decided to walk back there where they all were, and these long halls, and at this time of night they were pretty much deserted. And I look up (laughs) and the first thing I saw was this group of people walking towards me from way off down the hall, and I didn't really notice or pay that much attention or anything 'til we got closer, and then I looked up, and I noticed it was most of the band. See they didn't have Ely; they didn't have me, but just about everybody else. And one of the first things I saw was Lloyd, you know. And then the next thing I noticed was there's two cops—two El Paso police officers escorting them through the airport. And I thought, Well what the hell is this all about? And boy I got up there, I'm going this way and they're coming this way. And I got up there and look, and boy first thing I noticed was Lloyd. Man he's red in the face and boy his [inaudible]. I'd never seen him mad like that or anything like that.

And I said to the guy, "What in the hell is going on here?" And one of 'em cops said to me, "You better keep going, buddy, unless you want to go with 'em." Well they took these guys to the little detention unit they got there in the airport, you know, busting them for stealing that painting even though it was just one guy, God. Well they wound up letting everybody else go, except the guy that actually got the painting. Well they took him on down to the jail house and arrested him for theft. Well in the meantime, the guys all missed the flight and had to stay up all night 'til God knows what time the next day to get back on another flight. And man, I tell you, we got back to Lubbock the next day and the doo-doo hit the fan, man. (AW laughs) They said, That guy—he is fired; he is out of there. Lloyd and Gregg both said it, Either him or us are not going to be at that gig. (laughter) Make your decision right now. So anyway, needless to say, that was one heck of a night.

AW:

Yeah it sounds like it. I guess there wasn't much decision-making to go—to decide on Lloyd or the roadie. (laughs)

JT:

Or some old drunk friend of ours that [inaudible] and steals paintings off the walls. Boy that was—especially for them—it was a long night. Golly. Because they missed the flight.

AW:

Well now, not long after that, would have been that Lloyd left the band anyway for the Maines Brothers Band, right? That would have been '80, '81?

JT:

Yeah, uh-huh something like that. Yeah, I tell you, I need to dig those dang things out—that I got all these itineraries. But like I say, I'll show you in a minute where they're at.

AW:

Well, tell me—you know I was listening to that album you gave me the last time I was here, *South Side Guitar*, which—you're right, that's a great record.

JT:

Good guitar playing on there.

AW:

I love it.

JT:

I call it a guitar album for guitar players.

AW:

Well it's a great record. So I got back to Lubbock, and I dug through it and got out those first two albums of yours and listened to them. And I remember, particularly the one with "Gangster of Love" that you did at Caldwell's, right?

JT:

Yeah.

AW:

And I remember when you were cutting that because I was back in Lubbock by then. Now tell me how—or what it is that you did to—or what sort of pushed you on to do your own album.

And I know last time we talked, you were talking about playing in Italy and having a following of your own in Europe. How did those things come about?

JT:

Well, because of my—can I take a just a little break.

AW:

Yeah let's put this on stop for a minute.

(Pause in Recording)

AW:

And we're back. This is Jesse again, and it's still the 21st here in Austin, and we're getting ready to talk about how Jesse wound up being well-known in his own right, particularly in Europe and his own albums. So how does that happen, when you're part of a band?

JT:

Well, interesting story. I had already toured in Europe so much with not only Joe Ely but by then I had also done tours with Jimmie Gilmore, with Butch Hancock, with Jimmie and Butch together, with some English friends of mine too.

AW:

Who were the English friends?

JT:

Terry Clarke and Michael Messer.

AW:

I don't know about Michael Messer.

JT:

One of the world's foremost National Steel players and collectors too.

AW:

Really? And Terry Clarke. What was Terry Clarke's big hit?

JT:

Well there's a Terri Clark here in the United States that's a girl.

AW:

Well no I'm thinking of a Terry Clarke that's a guy.

JT:

The English guy. Yeah uh-huh. I don't think he's had anything like a big record, but he's just had a constant steady output of albums and CDs and stuff. We did an album together called *Rhythm Oil*.

AW:

Really?

JT:

And he's just had a constant steady output of albums which has gained him quite a following over there, and then he got to be real good friends with Rick Danko. Remember Rick? You know Rick died.

AW:

Yeah I know.

JT:

And Rick Danko kind of took him under his wings and took him on tour with him a lot.

AW:

This was after Rick left The Band?

JT:

Yeah. And he just got a real steady—

AW:

I just remember when I was over in England that everyone knew Terry Clarke, and I was trying to remember what I saw. Anyway, I'll look that up. So you toured with those guys?

JT:

Yeah, so in other words, I had already toured over there enough that I would walk on stage, and before the show, and we'd all walk on stage and I'd be getting my share of, "Jesse!" [chants his name]. So enough people knew. Well I had already been on tons of records, and you know there's a whole circle of people over there that follow all that, all the Lubbock stuff and everything. And so of course I had played so much on everybody else's albums, and Terry Allen's stuff and all that stuff that people knew who I was. I mean I wasn't a star or anything like that, but they all knew—you know kind of like what Terry has going over there. You know he's not like a real big star, although he's getting bigger and bigger, but everybody knows who he is. And he's got his own—

Well and anyway, I came into some money at one point. And I had a bunch of money, it seems like I wound up with about ten, twelve thousand dollars. And I thought well, What am I going to do with this money? And I hate to just take money and let it trickle away, because I am real bad about doing that. I think most people are. If you don't do something with it and do it in a hurry, well that old hundred dollars here, two, three hundred dollars here, da-da-da-da-da-da, and before you know it, you turn around and that small of an amount, ten, twelve thousand dollars is gone and you're like, Well what happened to all that money? (laughs)

But so anyway, I had plenty of guitars, had a good car. I've never been a car person anyway. As long as I had something dependable and sturdy, it was fine with me. And it finally hit me, Yeah

you know what I need to do is make an album. Because I had always to do—well see for one thing, I was always out of all those players, with that whole circle of singer-songwriters, I was always more the blues player, even more so than Lloyd. Because Lloyd was killer country player and Lloyd could play the hell out of blues, and even back then, he picked up on a lot of it after I started playing with him and everything and learned a lot. But then again, the other side of that coin is that I learned a hell of a lot about country playing from him. But in other words, I had always wanted to do that kind of album with the horn section, with the keyboards, and make it that direction, and so I thought, That's what I'm going to do. I'm going to make—so I did it at Don Caldwell's and the name of that first album was *Last Night*. I believe that's the one with the gangster song on it, isn't it?

AW:
Yeah.

JT:
Yeah uh-huh. And I just heard a bunch of great players there. Had old Steve Meador on drums. Great drummer. And oh God I'm embarrassed—what's the bass player's name?

AW:
Well I should know.

JT:
You might know who I'm talking about.

AW:
Yeah I just looked at the record.

JT:
But anyway, I had some real good players on there, and finished it all up. Mixed it out, and then did the old tried method—which is—took it out there and started shopping around. Shopping your type. Oh brother. That's a mess. (laughs) You know the old story of you hear it hit the can before you done, the story? And all, but shopping it around and everything—it got through some friends of mine in England. Well there was a real cool little blues label over there and they were putting out some real good people too. American blues artists and English blues artists. There's a lot of good English blues artists. And I swear, it's like a stereotypical kind of, "I got discovered" story. But I was sitting at my house, I lived out at the lake at that time, sitting there and the phone rang one afternoon.

AW:
Lake—

JT:

Lake Travis.

AW:

At Lake Travis, okay.

JT:

Yeah. And it was this English voice, "Jesse Taylor, please." And I said, "Yeah this is Jesse." And he said, "Jesse, allow me to introduce myself." And then he went into this spiel about how he has a record label in England and they had gotten their hands on one of these demo deals that I had been sending out. You know I'd been mailing a ton of them out to all of—any label that had anything to do with blues at all, and this was really pretty much the first response I had gotten back. And I said, "Yeah?" And he said, "Has some picked that up yet? Are you on a label?" I said, "Well no, as a matter of fact." And he said, "Well we want it." (AW laughs) And I was kind of like, Excuse me? He said, "We want to release the tape and put it out on our label." And I'm like, Really? But at the same time, I'm like, Who is this guy? Because I'd never heard of him or I'd never heard of the label. And so I kind of said, Well yeah, great. I said, I'm flattered and that's nice. And I said, Can I get back with you? (laughter) Can I call you tomorrow? He said, "Oh please do. Please do." And I said, "Okay I'll get back with you tomorrow." I hung up and immediately started calling all my friends in London.

AW:

Yeah, to see who they were.

JT:

Yeah, trying to find out who—you know I called Terry Clarke and Michael Messer and Slim. Did you ever meet Slim—the big fat accordion player?

AW:

Yeah.

JT:

(laughs) He's a great guy. I love that guy.

AW:

Yeah. It's been a long time.

JT:

And they all, and other people I had spoken to as well, they all said, oh yeah Bedrock. Very nice label. Perfect for you. Perfect. And these are guys that I know quite well that are in the music

business. And I thought, Hmm, well I better find out what they've got to offer. And of course it was your standard deal. We will press it, package it, get it in the stores, da-da-da-da. And then once all of our cost is paid back to you, well then we share the—just totally standard deal and all. And after a few more days of thinking about it and talking to a few more people, I thought, Well man, this sound like the way for me to go. And so I did, and that's how that first one got going there. And it did quite well over there actually. I mean I didn't get rich off of it or anything, but I did break the profit margin and got some pretty dang good royalty checks out of it. You know, like I said, I didn't get rich or anything. But there for a while, I'd get a nice little check for a thousand bucks or something, every few months which was cool. Wound up paying for it, you know.

AW:

Well it's a good record. I like it.

JT:

Well the second one would have been—what was the second one? Was that *Texas Tattoo*?

AW:

Yeah. You recorded that here, didn't you?

JT:

I did three. Yeah, that I recorded here. And that I had a backer. A guy came in and backed the recording project and put it out and it did pretty good too. I'm missing one.

AW:

Yeah because those are the only two I have besides the *South Side Guitar*.

JT:

What do you have? Oh you have the *South Side Guitar*. But there's also the *Rhythm Oil*.

AW:

Yeah, now I don't have that, I want to find a copy of that, I'd like to hear that.

JT:

Yeah. Guess who wrote the liner notes?

AW:

Who?

JT:

You're going to flip. Johnny Cash.

AW:

For *Rhythm Oil*? Really? I am! I wish the tape would show my flipping right now.

JT:

Michael Messer, the guy I was talking about, was one of the world's foremost National Steel players and collectors. His brother, Alan Messer, is a famous photographer that lives in Nashville. And he's a real close friend of mine too. And that was put out by an English label too. But Alan said, "Well let me talk to Johnny." He was real close friends with Johnny and June and the whole family. He'd go for Thanksgiving dinners and everything.

AW:

Well wow, that's very interesting.

JT:

But he said, "Let me try to see what I can do with Johnny here." Johnny Cash wound up doing the liner notes for the deal. And then of course the *South Side Guitar* was once again, same thing. A backer, a friend actually that had started the label. So this was not just a guy that came in with some money and said, Here I'll pay for you to do an album and you go do it wherever you want to or whatever. This guy actually had the studio and the label and everything.

AW:

But did he come to you and say, Do a guitar-only album, or did he just want a Jesse Taylor album? Or had you decided what you wanted to do?

JT:

Well he had heard me talking about wanting to do a guitar album forever and ever. And he had heard all the stories about John Reed and I going way back—playing—and both loving that same kind of music and knowing that style and all and everything. And it was actually, well even though John and I had been talking about doing that for twenty years at least (laughs), he actually said, "Well, let's do it. It's time. I'll pay for it; y'all do it." You know we got Nokie Edwards on there from The Ventures.

AW:

Yeah, you told me the story about that. And I've got to say, it's nice having him on there, but the guitar I like is hearing you. That's what makes the album for me. But it's a good record.

JT:

Oh golly. I've got—people love that album. You wouldn't believe some of the email stuff we've gotten from all over the world that Brad Brobisky—the guy that did it, you know—has gotten back from that. It's like, boy people are just falling down. We played a South by Southwest showcase last year, and this guy came up to me at that showcase, and he was damn near about in tears, man. Saying, Oh I can't believe it, it's here. He said, "Mate I'll gotta tell you mate, I come all the way from fucking Australia to hear this set." I don't know whether that was the truth or not, but from the way he was acting, I believe it was, man he was about in tears. "All the way from Australia." And now he's got my hand in both his hands and won't let go. Oh wow, thank you man. I mean, what do you say?

AW:

Yeah, it's kind of hard to say anything more. (laughs)

JT:

Well, glad you like it.

AW:

Well that's good. I think they're all good records.

JT:

Yeah. But you see how I used my blues background in all those records because I mean golly, I can play the other, the singer songwriter stuff, you know all the time forever with all my singer songwriter buddies. You ought to hit me up for one of your albums one of these days.

AW:

I'm going to.

JT:

Alright. You let me know.

AW:

In fact, the last one, I think Lloyd did some stuff here. And you were—I can't remember what—because we talked about it. But I've got another one coming out, and I'm trying to regress in age, and I'm writing stuff that sounds like the sixties. It won't be blues, but—

JT:

Oh it don't matter. I'm into anything.

AW:

But you know I've got to say, I enjoyed your singing on those other two records. Like Billy Joe Shaver; it's an honest voice. To me that's worth so much more than the people who are always trying to sound like somebody else.

JT:

Oh yeah, uh huh.

AW:

And on the *South Side* Album, I also thought that the work that you did with the acoustic guitars was really interesting, and it really complimented the record as a whole.

JT:

I know. I thought so too. I thought that going out with that song "On The Banks of the Old Ponchatrain," with just me and John, two acoustic guitars; we didn't even mike—plug them in. We just played through the microphones.

AW:

Did you do it real time, the two of you playing together?

JT:

Oh yeah.

AW:

Yeah that's what it sounds like. It has that real freshness.

JT:

But I just thought that was brilliant, after all that heavy duty, knock-down drag-out guitar stuff. Then you end with this cool little ditty that's just like a couple of guys sitting around on the back porch, having a shot of moonshine, or something, picking their guitars. And the moon up there above or something. (laughs) I thought that was great. That was Brad's idea.

AW:

Really? Well I tell you, that was a great idea. It sounded so good, and I guess that's the thing. But the whole album to me, sounds, I know you probably didn't do the whole album real time, but it feels that way. It feels like you're all just sitting down to play.

JT:

Pretty much. Well we did a lot of it in real time. But we did some overdubbing too. Because you know, sometimes it's just better. It's easier to stay—for like John and I to not clash with what the

other guy is playing and to kind of stay out of the way a little bit, while the other guy is doing his thing. And then get that laid, and whoever comes on after the first one's laid can then work around what's been laid there a little bit better. But not all of it. We cut a bunch of it pretty much just straight.

AW:

Well in both cases, when you did it real time, but also when you did it with tracks and overdubs, did the two of you sit down and work out ahead of time who was going to do what? Or did you kind of feel your way through that too?

JT:

Well what we did was we picked out which segment, who was going to play on. And what the structure was going to be there. Because what we didn't want to do was both get to a verse and both of us start playing, and it's, oops, Sorry you go ahead, no you go ahead, oh no you go ahead. (laughs) So you know we had charted out the segments.

AW:

Right, but what I mean—yeah and I figured that—but it was almost like you had thought about the feel of each segment that each of you was going to do. Because it felt, I don't want to say rehearsed, but it felt like it was really thought out.

JT:

You know what I think that is, really more than anything? I think that's the difference—that what you're hearing there is the difference in John and I's style. Even though we are so much alike in our playing, we both have the same attitude about it, we both got the same approach and everything, but we play different. I mean, you can hear—you can listen to that album and you can hear—you can tell who is John and who is Jesse on there. And I think more than anything, that's our styles coming through. Not that we sit there and decided, Well I'm going to play this one harder and more driving. And John's saying, Well I'm going to play my part a little more low key and laid back and less note, or anything. That's just the difference in the styles coming out there. Who's to say which is better? You can't. I mean—

AW:

I don't think there is a decision to make on that, but it sure works together well. It's a really nice record, and I tell you it's really fun to listen to when I'm driving, too.

JT:

You know it's funny you should say that, because I hear a lot of people have told me, Man that is the perfect driving CD.

AW:

Yeah except you got to put it on cruise control because you wind up going eighty miles per hour.

JT:

Yeah, you get out on the open highway and play that out there over and over and over.

AW:

Well, the biographical stuff is fun, and I'm interested in the chronology, but it might be more fun to do that when we can go through that big box and find those itineraries and all. But if you're feeling up to it tonight, can we talk a little bit about the playing? And if you could, and I know this is hard to do, because playing is not about words, it's about the notes, but if you could talk a little bit about how you would describe yourself as a stylist. Because I know when I hear a record with your playing on it, I mean there are a few players, like Keith Richards, you could hear three notes and know it's Keith Richards. And it's about the same way with you—it's such a clear style. How would you describe it? And then if we can figure that out, can you talk about how it's come about? How you've developed?

JT:

Yeah. Well one thing I would say is I've always had a pretty strong—it's a technical term—and I know you know what I'm saying—the attack on the guitar. It doesn't mean you attack your guitar, but it's just a technical term. But I've always been a hard-edged player, and that's one thing that I hear that a lot of other guitar players say to me. They say, gol', man, you play so hard! It sounds like you're fixing to rip the strings off the neck or something sometimes, you know. But there's the blues stuff, even the slow blues stuff I play with a hard approach, a hard attack. Heart attack (laughs).

AW:

Yeah, that would be scary. (laughs) Well when you say that, do you mean that you have to play with a heavier gauge string and a physically stronger pick, and you actually hit the strings harder, or do you mean it's the technique and the way that you do it that makes it sound that?

JT:

Well for one thing, I do use a generally heavier gauge—I don't use those telephone poles (laughs) like Freddie King used to use. But I do use a heavier string and I do use a heavy pick, and I just—this is not something that I conscientiously do or started doing this way. But I just seem to be a hard—you know, I play hard. It's like I pick the strings hard, and I—what was the last part of the question?

AW:

Well it's just, you've already answered it in a sense by saying that it's not something you do conscientiously, you've just always played that way. And that was kind of my question is how you do. Because all of us would rather be distinctive than we would be good. You know—distinctive is hard to come by in music.

JT:

That, first off, as far as stylistic—yeah it's always been a hard-driving approach to the picking. It's like I've never held back. And I like playing real fast and furious sometimes, mainly because I can do it, (laughter) and because you know, I guess the other part is because I'm a showoff. No, but I don't know. I can do that, and then I can back down into the slow blues stuff, but I still even play that hard kind of with the picking technique, you know.

AW:

Now sometimes, Jesse, I hear players that they're fast and they're hard and they'll really dazzle you. But if you listen to them a while, all of a sudden you realize they've got some limited number of riffs and they play them in different keys, but it's the same riff. I don't get that feeling when I hear your playing. It sounds to me like you are a lot more driven by the melody than some set of tricks. Now is that—?

JT:

True. Well I am—I do certain things trying to follow the melody and stuff, but also I take a lot of chances, you know. I just play a lot. As a matter of fact, just about my favorite review of me that I've ever read was some guy wrote in some really big newspaper somewhere, and it says, "Taylor's playing is completely unpredictable." What he said was, his exact words—this part killed me, he said, "He plays like he's running down blind alleys as fast as he can until he hits a brick wall and slams head-on to a brick wall. And then he gets up and runs just as hard the other way." (both laugh) and I think, you know that guy kind of nailed it. Because a lot of times I don't know where I'm going.

AW:

How do you save yourself? Because I never hear the brick wall, I never hear you hit the brick wall. How musically do you save yourself when you're doing that?

JT:

Well, you know, there's just a little—at that point it's like any player that's doing a lot of chops for long—you can't do them forever non-stop. There's got to be somewhat of a break somewhere. And I guess that's the point that the guy's talking about that he hits the break wall and then gets up and runs back. But I thought, you know that guy nailed me right there. And then

the other part that would apply to that question is that as I was growing up, I was exposed to so much different kind of music.

AW:

Because of the time, or because of the place, or...?

JT:

Well I think maybe more because of the place. And also maybe more because of what I was exposed to. Because like I was telling you, with Alfonso Gongora and those guys, well I sort of—I started picking up on Tejano music, and you'll still hear play those [mimics music line], the little two string stuff and all that in there. And in songs like "Spanish is the Loving Tongue"—the Joe Ely song. But then also you know through my father, what little he was around, he was a guitar player.

AW:

And your cousin, is that right?

JT:

Uh-huh. And there was a lot of direct, one on one, sitting around the living room, listening to these guys play country influence involved there. And then of course I got to be a teenager and it was Chuck Berry and Bo Diddley, and Buddy Holly, and all that kind of stuff. And then of course, the rock years—the English invasion. Well The Beatles, I love The Beatles. I think they're possibly the best band ever in the world. But they weren't that big of an influence on me playing. But The Rolling Stones were more so, because they were a lot more blues influence. The Who—I used to love The Who. The Yardbirds. All those kinds of guys. And then later on, when I started playing more and more and more blues, well I guess you take all that stuff and put it in a blender and blend it all in there together somewhere. And then you take the fact that I just naturally for some reason, played with that hard, hard approach, you know, to the playing and everything. And I don't know, maybe that's what creates a stylistic-type thing. Because I've had a lot people that told me, guitar players especially, have said the same thing: said I can hear three or four notes and know it's you.

AW:

Yeah. Well I think that's real—I mean that's one of the things that—not just the fast and all. But one of the things I like is that it's clearly you, it's clearly your style.

JT:

Yeah, I guess style comes from, well it comes from life for one thing and it comes from what your influences were. And rather than kind of keep them separate, you know like—oh yeah I

know how to play some Tejano music, or oh yeah I can play some country licks or blues licks or whatever. I seem to have just put 'em all together in one conglomeration of whatever.

AW:

But don't you think, Jesse, that's where all the best music comes from, is when those things—a lot of different things come together.

JT:

Well if you ask me, that's what they're saying when they're talking about originality. This is original stuff, this ain't a guy—I still to this day go out and hear bands—not knocking it or anything, where I'll hear a guy play a Chuck Berry song or a Freddie King song, and I mean it's note-for-note. And they can play it just great and all, which is wonderful and all that, but I can't do that. (laughs) I can't take the time to sit there and learn note-for-note, you know.

AW:

But Jesse, why? Why would anybody want to do that? You've already got Chuck Berry, listen to that cut. Play it your own way. I don't know, that's just something I really like about your playing. Well that brings up another kind of question for me. And I'm not trying to pat you on the back too much and make you blush on the tape recorder. But when you're as good a player as you are, you've developed such a style, where do you go from there? I mean, what is next? What is the horizon musically for someone like you, who has such a great style and plays it so well. Where is the envelope; how do you push it from here on, I mean, what do you do?

JT:

Now that's a good question. One thing that I do is I play a lot just sitting around the house, by myself, and try to keep those chops up, keep those licks up and all. But I don't know, as far as pushing it on into another dimension, you know—I don't know that I can do that or will do that anymore. All I know is what I can do right now, is make sure that what I do is still right there and happening. But I don't really see—like a lot of guys that evolve into like being a jazz player or something, I don't really see that happening with me.

AW:

I was just wondering; you showed me a painting this evening when we took a break. And I'm just wondering if that's what happens with your guitar playing.

JT:

Of what was it?

AW:

Your painting. You showed me a new painting.

JT:

Oh yeah.

AW:

Yeah. What did you call it? Bush mania?

JT:

Bush Man.

AW:

Bush Man. It has a lot of the same things about it that your playing does. Kind of a hard edge, and it's real inventive. And there might be a brick wall or two in there. (both laugh)

JT:

Right. Yeah that art stuff has really gotten to—you know I've really gotten into that. But I think that right now it's real important, especially at my age to continue to keep my reflexes happening. In other words, the old-mind-to-hand type deal because I just really don't know if I'll evolve to another style or try to integrate some other new style of playing into what I already know. Seems to me at this point, I'm basically sort of content to just—make sure that I can do what I do, and well.

AW:

Well I don't there's anything wrong with that, that's really kind of why I was wondering. When you get to this level, are you still trying to do something different? Or—I'm perfectly happy to hear you play the same way. I don't need anything new.

JT:

You know, there are some things that yeah, I'm still striving for. For one thing, believe it or not, this is kind of funny—I'm still trying to learn how to slow down a little bit.

AW:

You mean in life or on the guitar? (laughter)

JT:

No, in my playing. Because sometimes I think, you know that's real fancy and it's real show-offy and it works, for that matter. It's not like I don't do it to show off. It's just that I feel like at that point that's what that song needed right there. Or that's what that lead needed—to just rip off a really fast lick—fast lead and do all that. But what I don't like, are these players, especially a lot of the more modern rock players, that if you listen to a whole lead on a song, and it's like

these guys are playing [mimics virtuosic guitar licks without melody] and I'm going, wait a minute- slow down. (laughs) I don't want to get into that.

AW:

Well it doesn't strike me that you are. Because those are the people that I think of that have a mechanical approach, they have this riff and that riff and it will fall in this. And they're the ones that you hear about the third lead like that, you can pretty well predict what's going to happen.

JT:

I used to do a lead. A couple of leads, a couple of songs on Billy Joe Shaver's new album, which I don't know when it's supposed to come out or what's going on with it. But Billy, he's such a nut, he kept saying, "Man, I want you to play something that you ain't ever played ever before. I want something totally different." And I ... hmm. That's a difficult thing to do—play something totally different. Well I don't know if I know anything totally different. But anyway I'd try something else, and Billy would think, "Aw no, that's still not it. Let's do it again." So we must have about done twenty takes on both of these songs, and finally I just started playing some real kind of—not feedback, but sustained type-notes—sustained through the amplifier.

AW:

Were they longer notes?

JT:

Long and whiny. (AW laughs) You know, whining long notes. And Billy goes, "That's it, that's it." [inaudible- recorder moved] So I don't know when it's supposed to be out or what, but it is quite different.

AW:

Well I'll be anxious to hear that.

JT:

Yeah.

AW:

And you were playing an electric guitar then, since you mentioned an amplifier?

JT:

Yeah, playing electric guitar but instead of doing like real—it's like I'm not even really doing real leads. I'm just kind of playing tones for the lead. It's hard to describe. But instead of taking off on a normal lead, I'll play [mimics sound] Something like that.

AW:

Well just even to hear you do it vocally like that it, it sounds like something that would go with Billy Joe, too. Well, cool.

JT:

[mimics Billy Joe's voice] "That's it, that's it, that's exactly what I'm looking for right there." After about twenty times. I told him, well thank God. This was getting old. (both laugh)

AW:

Alright, well let's—I can't think of any more questions for this evening, I know I'll come up with some more. Have you got anything popping out of your head right at the moment?

JT:

Oh I want to tell you this story that I forgot to tell this one. This one is totally out of context, and totally chronological out of context.

AW:

It's alright, we can cut and paste.

JT:

This is back when we were doing those first tours all over United States and everything. But you ever heard the story about Lloyd and Jesse on the New Jersey turnpike?

AW:

No. (laughs)

JT:

We were up in New Jersey and we got that big old RV pulling a trailer and it's late at night, and colder than a witch's tit up there man, I mean. And the trailer hitch—on one of those curves coming off the turnpike, one of those exit deals, the trailer hitch broke. You know, and fortunately it didn't break all the way off or anything, but it broke enough to where it started hitting the pavement and it was like, Whoa—we cannot go any further. So there's only one thing to do. And that's stop, take the trailer off, unhook the trailer, and the guys go into town—it was the hitch on the RV that had come loose. The ball part, you know and everything. Well obviously we're not going to be able to leave that trailer on the side of the New Jersey turnpike.

AW:

Not with your equipment in it, no. (laughs)

JT:

It's full of equipment—thirty thousand dollars-worth of equipment and stuff, and so somebody's got to stay. Oh God. Lloyd looks at me and I look at Lloyd, and I said, "Well, let's go." So Lloyd and I, we volunteer to stay, and it's cold and getting colder. So we get out there, and they take off and here we are on the side of the New Jersey turnpike. And somebody dug through the cabinet there in the little kitchenette part of that thing and dug out a pint of whiskey. So me and Lloyd take that pint of whiskey, and put on all the coats we can and everything, and get on out there and you know we had managed to get it off the road at least. Still dangerous though. And we get it off on the side of the road and we're standing out there, and it's getting colder, so we start doing slugs out of that bottle. And you know Lloyd hardly ever drinks that much. He's very much a social drinker type guy. Well Lloyd was hitting it, too. (AW laughs) Lloyd and I were hitting it; we were slugging down that bottle. It just started getting colder and colder; you could see your breath, you know. And pretty soon, well not pretty soon, but a couple of hours later—this thing, it took forever for them to get all the way back in there at this time of night and find somebody to do that hitch. And of all things, a couple of big old—polite terms—heavy-set women (both laugh)—big old heavy-set women, I mean like about three hundred pounds apiece heavy-set.

AW:

Oh gosh. Really heavy-set. (laughs)

JT:

They stop. And you know, the first thing that's surprising to me was that two women like that would stop with two guys standing on the side of the road. I don't know I guess they saw us out there and thought, Oh those poor guys. And I guess maybe it was obvious that we were having problems and everything. They stopped and asked us if there was anything that they could do for us, and we're not—well not really—oh yeah, I forgot. Let me back up. By this time we had already went over into the ditch and everything and dug up every little stick of wood we could and everything, and had started a semi-little camp fire outside, (both laugh) but it wasn't doing much at all. We were still stomping around like this and trying to keep warm. And these girls said, Well we work at the telephone something or the other, I don't know what. It wasn't a telephone company or something. But anyway they had—they said, We've got a bunch of phone books in the back of the car.

And so me and Lloyd said, Yeah. So these girls unloaded this trunk full of phone directories, (AW laughs) like this, and we already had a little fire going, and they went ahead and took off. And we thanked them and everything. And they took off. So we started ripping these phone books, ripping pages out of them and stuff and throwing them on that fire. Pretty soon, we got the fire going big enough to where we could—and I mean we had stacks of phone books. (AW laughs) Pretty soon, we had ripped enough pages out of it to get the fire going to where we could just—at the binding there, of course we were tearing phone books—to where we could rip them

into fourths and put the whole fourth on there, and that would almost act like a log, you know. Be a thing to get them going, and pretty soon we were doing about half a book at a time, and boy before you knew it, man we had a big old fire going out there on the side of the road. And there was no traffic.

AW:

And no policemen, no firemen?

JT:

No. this was way out in the middle of nowhere. It was an exit ramp off the turnpike. Wasn't on the turnpike, and it was out in the country, way out there. I think those girls were the only car we ever saw come by there. So before you knew it, well after about an hour or two, we had a roaring fire going. And boy we had been hitting on that jug of whiskey and everything. Boy me and Lloyd are out there telling stories, and talking about this, talking about that. Hey, throw another phone book on the fire! (AW laughs) Here have another slug of this. Yeah. Yippee. Boy we're having fun now! And finally after about six or seven hours later, here comes the Ely band hauling back up the deal. And them guys, they were just like worried sick, worried to death that Lloyd and Jesse was going to be out there by the side of the road with hypothermia, freezing to death. They pull up behind us, come to check on us, and boy we got a fire going. About six feet flames leaping into the air, and we're chugging that whiskey. Hey y'all, where y'all been, boys? Y'all come on and join us over here. We were having a good old time, and they were just like, Oh man. We've been worried sick about you guys, and y'all are over here having a party!

AW:

(laughs) Did you have to play that night?

JT:

Oh no, we were just going somewhere, that was all.

AW:

Oh good. It's the life—

JT:

But that's another one to be sure and ask Lloyd about. Ask him—

AW:

About the phone directories.

JT:

Tell him, “Jesse said y’all played a really killer gig at the Hollywood Palladium.” And then ask him about the night on the New Jersey turnpike. But them guys, they were just almost like mad at us (AW laughs) because they went to come back to be our saviors and rescue us and everything. Instead we are down there, and we’ve already downed about a half a pint of whiskey, got a roaring fire, we’re laughing and telling stories.

AW:

Well at some point, you’d have run out of phone books though. (laughs)

JT:

Right. Thank God for them girls. Our angels.

AW:

Yeah that’s pretty amazing that your angels would bring you phone directories. (laughs)

JT:

Phone directories—yeah, a whole trunk full of phone directories.

AW:

That’s cool. You know I was just thinking, I need to find you an extra one of these recorders and just send it down here so that when we think about these, you can put them down.

JT:

Then I can just sit here and tell stories all day—talk to myself. [in fake old-timer’s accent] Well I remember the time—

AW:

How far was it to school? (laughs)

JT:

Yeah, and I’m sure by tomorrow I’ll have thought of twenty others.

AW:

That’s alright. I want to do it again, I’m having fun. This is plenty fun.

JT:

Well anytime you get down here. And also in the meantime, I will get to those trunks, but I mean they are so buried back there right now. I didn’t even want to—but see we are in the middle of clearing stuff out of here.

AW:

Yeah, it actually looks a lot more open than when I was here last time.

JT:

Yeah, we got a bunch of it, but that room is still—we got a storage—one of those, you know it's a storage place, and it's nice, and it's got heat and air conditioning and climate control.

AW:

Well, and when you're ready, even if I haven't called and said I'm going to be down here, when you're ready for us to haul some of that stuff and give it a home there at the Collection, you just call me, and I'll make some arrangement to come down.

JT:

Yeah.

AW:

And then it would be really fun to, while we're actually looking at the stuff, to do a little recording—talking about what it is.

JT:

Oh yeah sure. Because see that will bring back a ton of memories there. You've got to keep in mind a lot of this stuff happened so fast and furiously, there for years at a time that a lot of it just turned into a blur.

AW:

Oh yeah, well when you get to be our age, Jesse, there's a lot of that that's a blur. There is for me—that you have to remember. But it's still interesting stuff, and it's fun—road stories are really fun. But I'm really happy that we got to talk about the guitar playing stuff today too.

JT:

Yeah, you bet. I hope that sort of answered your question.

AW:

No it did.

JT:

It's kind of a tough question there. But it's like I say—the blender—throw it all in there and blend it in.

AW:

No it's a great answer. And it's an answer—that's not only great because it's your answer, but it's great because it makes sense to me—that when I hear your music, when I hear Joe's music, when I hear Lloyd playing, when I hear old Buddy Holly, when you hear Waylon—one of the things about people from our part of the world is that blender. Everybody that I just mentioned has all these influences, and rather than trying to be like one of 'em or switch gears, it all comes out something different.

JT:

Oh yeah. And to me, that's one of the things that's very definitive of Lubbock music and Lubbock musicians, is the Lubbock musicians seem to, for some reason, all have those various aspects of influence in there, more so than most places. You know what I mean?

AW:

Yeah, I do, and I'm not sure I understand why. I mean, we hear all those people say, Well there's nothing else to do, but I know that's not really the case. But it is interesting that all these people from Lubbock have the influences, but then they do something unique with them. I mean Jimmie, Butch, Joe—I mean anybody that we've mentioned, has that. And do you have any thought about why that is? Is it something to do with the place or the people?

JT:

I don't know. A lot of times I thought it was possibly a lot of the isolation up there, you know. Because Lubbock is really, aside from Amarillo, you know Lubbock's about the only stop off point between Louisiana and those bigger towns in there, and Los Angeles. It's like—and also the other thing I forgot to mention, I meant to mention this—is the fact that because we were on the great High Plains and everything, well late at night, man you could get all those radio stations. You know, we'd get Wolfman Jack out of Del Rio. We'd get that one—what was—there was one that was a really famous one out of Louisiana—blues, rhythm and blues, and soul music.

AW:

Yeah I know which one you're talking about. I can't recall the letters. We had KOMA in Oklahoma City; we listened to that one.

JT:

Yeah there was KOMA as well, which was great—great for the rock and roll stuff and all. But there was one out in Louisiana that played pretty much exclusively blues. Like I mean they'd play Howling Wolf, Freddie King, Jimmie Reed, and all that stuff. And I know we'd flip around on the radio dial late at night, and all of us Lubbock guys back then were real late-night people—

we'd stayed up all night long all the time. Talk and play and try to find radio stations, and dug through each other's old albums and all this kind of stuff.

AW:

Yeah, I don't know we lived through it, to be honest. Staying up all night, and then I had go work at the grocery store in the daytime. I don't know how I did that; I couldn't do it today. Well do you think there's anything connected to all this that has to do with the fact that Lubbock is a new town? I mean Lubbock is not a hundred years old yet, and when were kids in the fifties, it was still pretty small and it was still pretty new. Does that have any impact on it, as opposed to being some place that's a lot more settled and been there a long time? I've wondered about that.

JT:

I don't know, possibly. Possibly it could be that ideas that were not just musical or art or anything to do with the arts, but ideas just in general were probably coming to people's heads real fast about all that stuff because they didn't have all that older stuff—they were making it up as it goes.

AW:

Well and there wasn't so much of a class structure as I remember it when I was a kid. Like there is in places where it's more set. I mean there were rich people and poor people, but I don't remember thinking about rich people being different except they had more money. They weren't different otherwise.

JT:

That's true—they were mostly a bunch of cotton farmers or ranchers.

AW:

Yeah, like Terry says, "flatland farmers." Well I'm going to shut this off, and I want to talk to you a little bit about doing something.

End of Interview