

**A Conversation with Tom Wilson**  
**by Frank Goodman (6/2006, Puremusic.com)**

As good fans of Puremusic have gathered, we are very enamored of the music scene we have slowly discovered in the land up North. The more we look, the more we find.

Blackie and the Rodeo Kings was the most amazing act we came upon, simply because it's made of three huge talents that have careers, indeed, legacies in progress, of their own. In this conversation, we focus on the most successful and most explosive of the trio, Tom Wilson. (Rest assured, we will be covering recent records by Stephen Fearing and Colin Linden in the next issues.)

Tom Wilson's group Junkhouse hit it big in the '90s in Canada, with several Top 5 records. He's led the rock 'n' roll lifestyle that goes with that kind of carnival ride. He's much better now, in a great relationship with Canadian comedy star Cathy Jones, who's even one of his musical co-writers. He's a complex and endearing personality of the first order, and we enjoyed the hell out of talking with him. Tom's a painter and a poet, a storyteller and a house frickin rocker when he turns that on. He's got a boatload of presence and a low voice that would upstage Darth Vader.

Wilson's so compelling, he makes this writer want to go to Canada and check out more of this scene for myself. So I'm headed up to the Hillside Festival in mid-summer in Guelph, near Toronto. I'll see if I can't come back with some live video of Tom doing his thing and collaborating with others, planned or otherwise, for your enjoyment.

The Canadians, they've got something going on that shows me what's inadvertently being left behind here. Maybe part of it is that their government is more supportive of the arts in general. (They are not, for instance, starting wars all over the planet that use up all the nation's capital, and then some.) Also, they may not be as celebrity-obsessive as we are. But there is a depth to the music they're making that I find very interesting, indeed.

Since the last Blackie album, *BARK*, Tom also released a record with Bob Lanois called *The Shack Recordings*, to critical acclaim. Check that out, and by all means get his latest, *The Dog Years*--this is one great record.

**Tom Wilson:** Hey Frank, it's Tom Wilson.

**Puremusic:** Tom, how you doing, man?

**TW:** Well, I'm pretty good. It could be better in some ways, but in other ways I'm fantastic.

**PM:** Yeah?

**TW:** I just got Revenue Canada calling me for the first time in eight years.

**PM:** What does that mean, our IRS, like?

**TW:** Yeah, that's our IRS.

**PM:** Damn.

**TW:** Well, you know, I'm a musician, and also I've been through a bit of a personal hell for a while that I'm out of now.

**PM:** Right.

**TW:** And when you're living in hell, you're not really concerned about paying taxes.

**PM:** The least of your worries.

**TW:** You're more interested in actually paying your dealer.

[laughter]

**PM:** Yeah, that's right.

**TW:** To tell you the truth.

**PM:** Been there!

**TW:** Yeah. But now that that's over with, now I can actually pay Revenue Canada.

**PM:** Right.

**TW:** We're going to find out what they want, anyway.

**PM:** Wow.

**TW:** I've got that. And I'm just in the middle of doing a painting. And I'm having a really busy morning.

**PM:** You know, I was sorry that the painting on the inside of the record, you couldn't quite see it, the way the plastic case sits. You see an eye back there, but I wanted to tear the plastic off and check out the painting, but you can't really get there.

**TW:** I know. And my manager said, "You know, you sell these paintings, you give them away as gifts." I sell them for, sometimes, a lot of money. He says, "Let's put one of your paintings on the album cover. We'll be selling these like hotcakes." I mean, the idea is kind of to exploit every bit of your talents, and I respect that. But I just kind of didn't want to use my art that way right now for an album cover. And it's kind of a thing in this business, you've got to keep your stick on the ice, so to speak.

**PM:** [laughs] That's the Canadian analogy.

**TW:** That's a Canadian analogy! [laughs] You just don't want to exploit everything.

**PM:** You got to have some things that are precious.

**TW:** Yeah, some things. And I mean, I do these paintings--and to tell you the truth, I do the same painting over and over again.

**PM:** Really? I've known guys that do the same painting over and over. That's amazing.

**TW:** Yeah, and I write a script from my notebooks and from my song lyrics. And the bigger the canvas, Frank, the more stream of consciousness it becomes.

**PM:** Damn.

**TW:** So I just finished an eight-foot canvas that is in my dining room right now. And I'm supposed to sell it to a guy. Here's my other problem is that I'm doing these giant paintings, and I'm supposed to be selling them, but I start liking them so much that I start keeping them.

**PM:** And it's a whole wall!

**TW:** Yeah. And God knows, with Revenue Canada calling, I need the money. But anyways, so I'm starting another canvas as a gift to Roseanne Cash.

**PM:** Wow.

**TW:** I did a painting for her, and I put it up in my bedroom just to have a look at it to see if it made the grade to give to Roseanne, and I kind of fell in love with the painting. So I have to do another one for her.

[laughter]

**PM:** That's okay. She won't read this interview.

**TW:** Okay, good. I mean, if nothing, I'm honest.

**PM:** So we haven't seen each other I guess since the Blackie gig at Joe's Pub [NYC]. It was eighteen months ago.

**TW:** That's right, yeah. And I was in a gnarly mood that day.

**PM:** Oh, I thought you were great!

**TW:** Oh, yeah? Well, I wasn't in a gnarly mood with you, or actually anyone in particular, it was just I was a little bit road weary, I think.

**PM:** Ah, yeah, well...

**TW:** And that happens. But I remember that gig.

**PM:** Oh, that was a great gig with the Coen Brothers there and all. That was fantastic.

**TW:** Yeah, that was really fun.

**PM:** In the context of the trio being there, I couldn't get some background that I wished I had later. Like maybe you'd indulge me a taste and tell me just a little bit about your hometown, Hamilton, and what kind of atmosphere you grew up in.

**TW:** Well, Hamilton is kind of the Liverpool of Canada, maybe a smaller version of the Pittsburgh of Canada. It's kind of hard-nosed. It considers itself really tough, unless a Hamiltonian is talking to somebody from Windsor, Ontario.

[laughter]

**TW:** In which case we kind of back down a little bit. Windsor is right beside Detroit, and Hamilton is really close to Buffalo. So I think that you can kind of almost equate border cities as holding a lot of the same personality.

**PM:** Absolutely. Certainly in Texas and New Mexico, it's true, too, yeah.

**TW:** Yeah. Well, I'm heading down there. I'm heading to New Mexico for a vacation.

**PM:** Nice.

**TW:** I'm willing to find out about that. I grew up in a neighborhood--the Escarpment that I grew up on is what Niagara Falls goes over.

**PM:** Is it the same Escarpment that Sarah Harmer talks about?

**TW:** That's absolutely right.

**PM:** Amazing.

**TW:** I grew up on that. And she grew up on--actually, if you look off the end of my end of the Escarpment, there's like a horseshoe, and she grew on the side of the other one, on the other side it.

**PM:** I see.

**TW:** But the Escarpment goes all the way down to West Virginia, and it goes all the way up to Northern Ontario.

**PM:** I had to meet some Canadians before I ever heard the word "Escarpment."

**TW:** I've never heard it anywhere else, either. It's funny, because in Hamilton we call it "the mountain."

[laughter]

**TW:** But it's no mountain, I'll tell you that. Anyways, where I grew up--a lot of the parents, when they started to have kids, started to move up to the mountain, thinking that it had backyards for their kids, and it was a little more refined, and it had kind of new fresh neighborhoods. But it didn't end up that way. It just ended up a bunch of kids from the streets in downtown Hamilton moved up to the mountain and just beat the shit out of each other up there.

**PM:** Unreal.

**TW:** It's really what happened, to tell you the truth.

[laughter]

**TW:** And it's amazing, because it was a time when I was in like--see, my father was blinded in the Second World War, so we had no money.

**PM:** Damn.

**TW:** And I grew up in a working-class neighborhood that had so many divisions. There was a lot of joy in the neighborhood, but at the same time, there was Catholic, Protestant, Italian, Portuguese versus British Isles background. And people from Northern Ontario coming down to work in the steel company, who had never been in a city before. And people who grew up in downtown Hamilton that moved up there.

So the mountain at that time was its own melting pot. And as a result, there was some bonding that came together just because of the neighborhood. And I'm sure that, in another era, and the era that's coming up now, the dividing lines of those neighborhoods are becoming a little more fierce between upper middle-class and working class up there. I know that it was something that affected me and tainted me, and put a chip on my shoulder that I kind of appreciate sometimes, because it got me through the music business for the last thirty years, anyway.

**PM:** Right.

**TW:** So that was my upbringing. I think that I'm inspired by the city, and I'm inspired by that era of my own development. I'm not a self-proclaimed outcast, I was just naturally an outcast on so many levels because we were poor, because my father was blind, because I was an only child, because--there were a lot of reasons. And so it kind of helped my creative development and my imagination. And on the streets I didn't really have anyone to back me up, like an older brother, or anything like that. So I've kind of always been a bit apart, and very happy to be so.

**PM:** Thanks for all that, Tom. Wow.

I love this new record, *Dog Years*. It's absolutely great.

**TW:** I'm really pleased. Thank you.

**PM:** So many good songs, but I personally can't get enough of "I'm in Love With the System." That's a brilliant song.

**TW:** Yeah, I'm really pleased with it myself. [laughs] Who did I write that one with? I wrote that one with a guy from Hamilton, in fact. He's in a band called The Miniatures. But yeah, I love that song, too.

**PM:** Finlayson, Is that what it says?

**TW:** No. Josh Finlayson is a guy from the band the Skydiggers. The guy from The Miniatures is Ian Smith.

**PM:** I'm not up on the Skydiggers, I'm sorry to say.

**TW:** They're really fantastic.

**PM:** They are? Yeah, I got to get to them.

**TW:** One of the Skydiggers started a company called Maple Music here. You'd probably love the Skydiggers. They're like a modern-day *Sweetheart of the Rodeo*-era Byrds. But I do love that song "In Love With The System." A lot of the songs on there, I think that I kind of hit a bit of a high point in a lot of my writing, just in the amount of writing that I did last year. Right after Blackie and the Rodeo Kings came off the road, I kind of threw myself into writing. I was thinking I was writing the next Blackie and the Rodeo Kings portion, my portion of that record, when in fact, I was writing, I guess, the next project that came up was the *Dog Years*.

**PM:** Right. But you had *The Shack Recordings* in the middle.

**TW:** And I had *The Shack Recordings* in the middle, yeah.

**PM:** Damn!

**TW:** And we're planning on doing another Shack Recordings, maybe in June. We've already started it.

**PM:** *Dog Years* was a very interesting release on the heels of the exceedingly more intimate *Shack Recordings* with Bob Lanois.

**TW:** Yeah. Well, I mean, whatever happened out at The Shack is something that I've been wanting to do for years, and I really couldn't find anybody in my circle of friends or in my business associates, with record companies and publishers, anybody who understood what I wanted to do.

**PM:** And how would you have voiced what you wanted to do?

**TW:** Well, I had to find somebody that I could tell, "Listen, I want a record that sounds almost like a field recording. Come into my kitchen, and what I'm doing at my kitchen table I want to end up on tape. And I want to be able to do it on two-inch analog. I want an old Neve console, and I want a Studer tape machine. And I almost want the sound of the tape machine going on in the room when the music is going down. Instead of technology leading the way, I wanted it to kind of melt together with the creative performances, like it used to."

**PM:** Right.

**TW:** Like it did on John Wesley Harding.

**PM:** Exactly.

**TW:** Like it did on *Led Zeppelin 1*, and like it did on *Sgt. Pepper*, and like it did on *Kind of Blue*. That was the idea of technology really not leading the bull by the horns, but actually lending itself to the creative process.

**PM:** Right. Because any songwriter worth his salt knows that it's all about the kitchen table.

**TW:** That's right. And that's what I've always said, although--and I'm going to tell you something else that I'm not even going to--I pick up records by some of the favorite songwriters, and singers, and I often find them cluttered with information I don't need. People who are really genuinely fantastic songwriters and visionaries, that somebody decides that they got to try to get a hit, or they got to sound like something that's going on the radio at the time.

**PM:** Right.

**TW:** And I find it hugely disappointing all the time. I much prefer seeing somebody with an acoustic guitar playing me the song. The only guy I could find that understood what I was talking about was Bob Lanois. And he's been living in a shack since he worked with his brother, Daniel, on *So*, and *The Unforgettable Fire*, after that era he kind of dropped out and bought a piece of land in Waterdown, Ontario, on Snake Road, and has been living there for twenty-one years.

**PM:** Damn!

**TW:** So it's literally a shack in the woods. I don't know if you got the album...

**PM:** I did, and saw it pictured there, yeah.

**TW:** Yeah. And I'm going to tell you, also, that in the folk communities, it's funny--because for people, Frank, who don't listen to a lot of roots music/Americana, or acoustic music, and who know me from my old band, Junkhouse, and Blackie and the Rodeo Kings, even, it's like, "Wow! What is this? This is so..." People really get turned on by it. But it seems that in the real diehard folk communities and roots communities in Canada, it just got completely snubbed and--

**PM:** Really?

**TW:** --wasn't really accepted at all as a real [sighs]--as something that they wanted.

**PM:** Now, I thought that somewhere, with somebody, that was called Record of the Year.

**TW:** Yeah, it was. And where was that?

**PM:** Beats the shit out of me. I couldn't find that out.

**TW:** You know what? In Europe, and other places, it's been hailed as a great roots recording, and something really important. Who knows, maybe my reputation preceded me, somewhat.

**PM:** Yeah.

**TW:** And in Canada, which is an odd country to begin with, I think that I'm going to have to do *The Shack Recordings, parts Two and Three*, before anybody accepts it as a real venture.

**PM:** That's amazing, considering your reputation.

**TW:** Yeah, I know. It's also, you know, Canada eats its young. You know what I mean?

**PM:** Oh, it does?

**TW:** And I'm forty-six years old, so I guess they kind of gnaw away at the middle-aged, too. And they probably just kill the old.

[laughter]

**PM:** I didn't know they ate their young up there.

**TW:** Yeah, they eat their young pretty quickly. It's kind of a sad thing.

**PM:** That is messed up.

So how did the duet with Roseanne [Cash] come up? Is she an old friend?

**TW:** Well, I can't say she's an old friend, and I've only really met her a few times, really.

**PM:** She's nice, though, right?

**TW:** Oh, my God, she's just a truly lovely person.

**PM:** I don't know her personally, but mutual friends have always spoken very highly of her.

**TW:** I met her at a festival we did, and I think that she became a fan of Blackie and the Rodeo Kings, and she really loved what I did. And I, of course, love what she does. And from there Colin Linden came up with the idea of the duet, and that's how it came about.

**PM:** Yeah.

So it sounds like you're in a very good relationship with Canadian comedian Cathy Jones. Is that still happening?

**TW:** Oh, yeah. She's on her way here right now.

**PM:** Tell us about her, would you, before she gets there?

**TW:** Oh, she's flying in from Halifax.

**PM:** Oh, okay.

**TW:** She's a bit of a Canadian icon, a bit of a Canadian legend. I mean, I think that even more than music and songwriters, Canada is really known for its comedians.

**PM:** Really?

**TW:** Yeah. I mean, there are so many comedians in the mainstream of American culture, and so many comedians worldwide that just--

**PM:** Oh, yeah, that's right. *SCTV*, of course, yeah.

**TW:** Well, she was in *The Kids in the Hall* era. She came out of a thing called CODCO, which was out of Newfoundland. This was a theater troupe that kind of took chances. There's a big deal in Canada about Newfie jokes--you know, Newfoundland.

**PM:** Oh, really?

**TW:** Yeah. It was almost like--in the '70s, I remember, you went to the States and it was always "Polak" jokes, all these jokes about Polish people.

**PM:** Right.

**TW:** Well, the same thing was going on in Canada, only with Newfoundlanders. We didn't pick on a certain race. We just picked on an area of the country.

[laughter]

**TW:** And they had had enough of it, so they came to Toronto as like young sixteen, seventeen, to twenty year-olds, and made some noise. She kind of just started traveling on the road when she was a kid and became a Canadian TV star. And she's a standup comic.

**PM:** I saw a clip of her *Laughing Matters*. She's really funny. Her co-write with you, "Keep on Grinning," is one of my favorites.

**TW:** She's also written some stuff for the new Blackie and the Rodeo Kings record.

**PM:** Really?

**TW:** And she also was a co-writer on "Because of You." And the whole thing with her is she's a Newfoundlander. Now, these people come out of the womb with like a fiddle or a guitar in their hand. It's almost like probably what the tradition of Appalachian Mountain, or whatever area--

**PM:** Kentucky, right.

**TW:** Kentucky, yeah, where people are just naturally--music is part of their life. And it's still, to this day, even with TVs and internets and all the information that is flying around the world so quickly right now, you still go to Newfoundland, and every sonofabitch there can play guitar and sing.

[laughter]

**TW:** It's almost embarrassing. It's like they can sit down and--they should be on world stages, every one of them. So the fact that it's remote--and it's an island. I don't know if you know where Newfoundland is.

**PM:** I do, somewhat. But I wasn't sure that it was an island.

**TW:** Well, in relationship to North America, it's a third of the way to Europe. It's sitting out there. And when I say an island, it's big. It's like a land mass. But it's that much further off the east coast of Canada and the United States, that it's like almost a quarter or a third of the way into the Atlantic. And it's freezing cold. And it's poor. And everybody knows each other. And they're open-hearted--the most open-hearted, beautiful people that I've ever met since maybe Texans.

**PM:** There must be some amazing festivals out there.

**TW:** There are, although there's not enough population and not enough money, really, to support that kind of thing. Just a second. I got to talk to my daughter.

**PM:** Yeah.

**TW:** [to daughter] Hey, I'm just doing an interview. What are you doing?

[They have a short conversation.]

**TW:** Okay, go do your thing. [to Frank again] All right, she's going to work.

**PM:** How old is she?

**TW:** She's 19. And I have a son who's 13.

**PM:** Wow.

**TW:** And they're both fantastic.

**PM:** They both live with you?

**TW:** No.

**PM:** Close?

**TW:** That one is kind of living with her boyfriend. But my ex-wife and I live about a block away from each other. And her and her husband--the kids just go between the houses. It's a pretty great situation, I think.

**PM:** Amazing.

I thought it was a cool idea of Colin Linden's to cut this record in Nashville.

**TW:** Yeah, I think so, too. I think part of the idea was that he wanted me to get out from where people might be too familiar with me. As great as some of the people that I play with are, they know me too well, and have seen me go through quite a few transitions over the last little while.

**PM:** They've been on the whole roller coaster, yeah.

**TW:** Yeah, a bit of a roller coaster. And we needed a clean slate. Also, Colin Linden believes that I'm a great musician, and out of all the people that I've ever played with, he's really the only person that has said, "You're a fantastic musician."

**PM:** That's amazing.

**TW:** Yeah. Especially from him, because he's probably about the best musician that I've ever played with.

**PM:** Scary good.

**TW:** So that's a really great compliment. He wanted me to play with people that he thought I merited playing with, really. He wanted to put together a band that I could lead that he felt wouldn't be necessarily a challenge, as just more of an--

**PM:** An inspiration.

**TW:** An inspiration, yeah, that's absolutely right, an inspiration.

**PM:** Some of my favorite bass players--Bob Babbitt is a trip, right?

**TW:** Well, they're all fantastic.

**PM:** Yeah, but I love Gary Tallent and Dave Roe, too.

**TW:** Gary Tallent and Dave Row. And Colin Linden played bass on one song, too. But I'd say that when writing the type of music *The Dog Years* is, which is kind of like what I did in rock 'n' roll, with Junkhouse--it's all about bass. I've never been a guitar wanker. I've never been a guy that wrote rock 'n' roll based around--

**PM:** Guitar licks.

**TW:** Yeah. Or flashy guitars. It's always been about the bottom end, and it's always been about the bass.

**PM:** Yeah. And I mean, your voice, too, is all about the bottom end.

**TW:** Oh, yeah, yeah.

**PM:** I was interested that he pulled in [drummer] Tom Hambridge on that record, who did a great job.

**TW:** Oh, yeah. Well, there was one point where we had two drummers playing.

**PM:** Brian Owings, too.

**TW:** Yeah, the two of them together--

**PM:** Wow.

**TW:** --which was pretty exciting.

**PM:** Yeah, I love both of those drummers.

**TW:** The bottom end--you know, bass and rhythm are really the most important things, to me, in rock 'n' roll. And that's kind of where we went with that.

**PM:** Yeah. Hambridge is a very good songwriter, too, and a good front man.

**TW:** I didn't know that.

**PM:** Yeah, he's really good. He's done a lot of work with Lynyrd Skynyrd and George Thoroughgood, and all kinds of stuff. He's a very interesting character.

**TW:** The main thing I know about the guy, he's a riot to hang out with.

**PM:** Yeah, he's a great dude.

**TW:** He's a great guy. And I find that the older I get I just want to work with people who are happy to be working, and like to hang out, and that I get along with. The struggles--I don't feel like struggling over my music. We struggle over everything else in our lives. I don't feel like struggling about the music.

**PM:** Right. But most important, it feels like the essence of who you are and the essence of what you do is really coming through on the record, and that's what's beautiful.

**TW:** Yeah.

**PM:** And that's Colin, in great part.

**TW:** Yeah, for sure.

**PM:** But even more than Colin, it's really about you, because the only way that that's going to ever happen is if a person can reach that essence, first of all, and whether or not they're able to share it.

**TW:** Yeah.

**PM:** And that's you.

**TW:** Well, Colin's job is kind of that also. Working with Colin is like working with somebody who is not only your friend, but also somebody who's kind of a fan. You really can't buy attention like that. And the other thing about Colin is that when you're about to enter the cheese factor--

**PM:** [laughs]

**TW:** --if you're trying to put the cheese whiz back in showbiz, Colin will stop you from doing that. [laughs] Colin is the guy that puts the song first, and puts music first, and the intention of creating music is a righteous one to him. So as a result, the songs kind of don't necessarily speak in any modern music or hit format language. They speak in a language of their own, and they're kind of individual beautiful ideas. And when you put on the record at the end, that's what you get.

**PM:** Yeah. I say to some of my American friends and Nashville friends, when I rant on about the Canadian scene, I say, "The thing is that they remember things that we're already forgetting."

**TW:** Yeah. That's really interesting. And I wonder why that is. Let's just say that that is really the truth, because it sounds really good to me.

**PM:** [laughs]

**TW:** I'd like to believe that that is the truth. Why do you think that is? I wonder.

**PM:** Well, I think there's a whole lot more bullshit going on down here.

**TW:** I got a theory about that. I got a theory about that in relationship to cities. If you look at music that comes out of Toronto, most of the people making great music and most of the people that you would know, they are not from Toronto. You know what I mean? Gordon Lightfoot was not from Toronto. Ron Sexsmith was not from Toronto. You know what I mean? Endless amounts of people that you figure are from--Neil Young, not from Toronto. Guess Who, not from Toronto. And look at New York--Bruce Springsteen, not from New York.

**PM:** Right.

**TW:** A lot of the great music that happens in major cities is not from the city itself. And as a result, if you're growing up in Hamilton, Ontario--or like Ron Sexsmith lives like half an hour away from me in St. Catharines, Ontario--you aren't influenced, and things aren't forgotten, and the trends don't change as quick in your life as they do in the big cities, and you're not as worried about keeping up. And I think that's almost the same as what you're talking about, maybe with Canada and the United States. Canada is kind of a little bit off the beaten path compared to the American culture. And as a result, we don't pay attention to it as much as maybe Americans do who are in the middle of it.

**PM:** And it turns out to be a beautiful thing.

**TW:** Yeah, I think so. It's honest, anyway, and it comes from the right place.

**PM:** Are you going to tour solo behind this record, or with a band?

**TW:** I'm touring with a band right now, with the rhythm section from Junkhouse and a guy named Jesse O'Brien, who plays with Levon Helm. He started playing with Ronnie Hawkins when he was ten years old. He comes from the Buffalo school of piano playing, Stan Celeste school of piano playing, which for a guy who's thirty years old, there's nobody thirty years old that plays piano like this. You've got to be sixty and over to play piano like this.

**PM:** Wow.

**TW:** So he's playing. It's just a four-piece band, me on acoustic guitar, and no other guitar player, just a keyboard player.

**PM:** Oh, so he's the solo guy.

**TW:** Yeah, he's taking solos.

**PM:** Beautiful. And is it piano, or he takes an organ out, too.

**TW:** Piano and organ. Yeah, he's got piano and organ and clavinet, and all that great stuff.

**PM:** Oh, beautiful. I love a band like that with no electric guitar. There's too many electric guitars now.

**TW:** Me, too. It reminds me of the first time I ever saw Elvis Costello. You know? Which was just Steve Nieve on keyboards, and that was it.

**PM:** So after this, what, the fourth Blackie will come out?

**TW:** Yeah, the fourth. We've recorded two albums worth, twenty-eight songs. We recorded it in Woodstock, New York.

**PM:** Where?

**TW:** Bearsville, the old Bearsville Barn.

**PM:** Really?

**TW:** Yeah.

**PM:** It's closed now, right?

**TW:** We were the last session in there.

**PM:** Damn.

**TW:** Yeah. And Garth Hudson came by and played, and our friend Malcolm Burn came by and played. Daniel Lanois has written a song for the album. A lot of great stuff going on for this record.

**PM:** So you recorded twenty-eight songs!

**TW:** In six days!

**PM:** Wow. Will they release the two albums separately, a year apart, or as a double album, or what?

**TW:** I think we're going to do them a year apart--maybe less than a year apart in Canada.

**PM:** Right.

**TW:** It's coming out in Canada on September the 15th, I think, and I hope it comes out in the U.S. around the same time. We're planning on touring. We're doing a bunch of dates in Canada through the fall, and then going to Europe and the United States in the new year.

**PM:** Great.

**TW:** So I mean, we just have to keep coming to the United States. We just find that people really like us.

**PM:** Yeah. And more and more people got to know about you. I talk up Blackie a lot myself.

**TW:** Yeah.

**PM:** Have you done any acting, Tom?

**TW:** Yeah. I'm a terrible actor.

**PM:** [laughs]

**TW:** But my next wife, Cathy, wants me to start acting.

**PM:** Yeah, because you seem like a natural to me.

**TW:** Yeah, well, I guess I could be. The movies that I've been in have gone straight to video--

**PM:** Right. [laughs]

**TW:** So I mean, I'm not very encouraged by that part of it.

**PM:** But a lot of reasonably good movies do. Can any of them be found?

**TW:** Yeah. Well, I was in a Bob Dylan movie. I mean, I didn't have much of a part in the Bob Dylan movie. I had no speaking part--called *Streets of Fire* or *Hearts of Fire*. I forget what it was. Bob Dylan was in it. [*Hearts of Fire*, 1987] And then there was movie called *Hurt Penguins* I was in. I was the guy in the band. And I actually do have an acting part in that. But I went to say the lines--actually, I'm supposed to come off stage and go over to a table of girls and say, "Hey, we're all going back to Trudy's house, you know, why don't you come back with us?" Which, by the way, I've said a million times in my life.

**PM:** [laughs]

**TW:** And when I went to do it, my drummer was sitting at the table with the girls, right, acting, too, looking at me, and my mouth froze up. And he looked at me like--he thought I had a stroke--

**PM:** [laughs]

**TW:** --because I couldn't speak. Oh, my God, it was terrible. So that was another hot one. And then there was a movie called--well, Dolph Lundgren was in it.

**PM:** Oh, great...

**TW:** It was called--anyways, it was a big shoot-up movie. We're in a scene in a bar--I'm in a band, by the way. I'm a guy in a band. I got cast as that guy.

**PM:** You got typecast.

**TW:** Oh! Junkhouse is in that scene. And it's kind of a dirty scene where they come into a bar and they take all the gays and all the people of color and shoot them up against the wall.

**PM:** Nice.

**TW:** Nothing like that kind of excitement to build your career.

**PM:** [laughs]

**TW:** Now, that was called--damn--oh, *Red Scorpion*.

**PM:** Oh, oh, sure. I've seen it a million times. I've just never rented it because it had Dolph Lundgren in it.

**TW:** We were in *Red Scorpion II*.

**PM:** The real debacle, the sequel.

**TW:** Yeah. I can't even watch the movie. If I wasn't in the first five minutes of the movie, I'd never watch it.

**PM:** That's funny.

**TW:** It's terrible.

**PM:** Any place you like to go, exotic or otherwise, to leave it all behind?

**TW:** I'm doing that next week. Well, first of all, I've landed on my feet in such a way that my next wife is flying in with her daughter. And we get together with my ex-wife and her husband and my kids, and we all go away camping together. And we do that this weekend. We do that

Victoria Day weekend every year. And then Cathy and I are flying to New Mexico. I've been dying to drive in the desert my entire life. I've never had a chance to do it. This is it.

**PM:** Wow.

**TW:** So I'm going to get away from it all, yeah.

**PM:** Well, I spent some time in New York recently with our friend Shawna Cooper. [www.momcantcook.com--a Merchandise/Mgt. Music Business Canadian I met at SXSW through the CD designer Michael Wrycraft.]

**TW:** Oh, yeah!

**PM:** And so I think I'm going to come up to Hillside. [The Hillside Festival in Guelph, outside Toronto, end of July. It's so good it sold out before the roster was announced!]

**TW:** Hey, that would be great, because we're all going to be there.

**PM:** Yeah, I want to check that out.

**TW:** I'm going to be there playing, and Cathy is going to be there doing something.

**PM:** Great. Well, I want to meet her, too. And I want to see you.

**TW:** Oh, she's a lovely gal. You know what? The more Newfoundlanders you can meet in your life, Frank, the better your life is going to be. That's all I can tell you.

**PM:** [laughs] Well, then, that's the bump I'm looking for, I'm sure.

**TW:** Yeah, man.

**PM:** Well, I wouldn't be surprised if our next conversation has to do with the next Blackie record. And it's a gas to talk to you today, Tom.

**TW:** Thanks, Frank. And you take care. And I'll see you at the end of July, in Guelph!

