

KOSTAS INTERVIEW PART FOUR

00:00 Kostas: So, can you still hear me?

00:03 Blackmon: Yeah, I'm listening.

00:05 Kostas: All right. Let me friend. The first one is called "The Sky Is Falling." Well, I might have tossed it, hold on. You see, that's what happens when you get stoned here.

00:30 Blackmon: Yeah. Well, I wouldn't know anything about that.

00:35 Kostas: No? Well, don't, don't listen to me then. All right. So this is how it goes: "Chunks of blue come crashing down. The sky is falling. Clouds are smashing to the ground, the sky is falling. The stars are tumbling everywhere, fly like missiles through the air. Lemmings run and scream and swear the sky is falling. I would rather laugh than cry. I would rather laugh than sigh a happy ending's what we need the sky is falling. Every morning in the land of sin. Every morning as the day begins. The foulest smells are in the air. The smell of death is everywhere. Wet markets there have got it all, from the biggest to the small. Penguins, penguins - where are you - monkeys, rats and bats, snakes and skanks, and dogs and cats on the menu every night. Tasty morsels of delight. The sky is falling."

01:52 Blackmon: Oh, man. That is cool. It's timely too. We're living in some crazy times, man. That sounds really cool.

02:07 Kostas: Yeah, yeah. It's, you know, part poem and part song, somewhere in between. This next one is called "The Corona Blues." So just picture a little [humming].

02:25 Blackmon: You all right?

02:27 Kostas: I'm sipping on a little vodka while we speak, so. "Every day, every day feels like Monday, and every day drags on slow." Bella's barking in the back there, that little bitch, she's interrupting my poem.

02:48 Blackmon: [Laughing]

02:51 Kostas: Bella, that damn dog. So all right. "Every day feels like Monday, and every day drags on slow. I'm dressed up in my Sunday best, but they ain't no place to go. And every day, what they're saying: don't change my attitude. I'm just the dead man living with a Corona blues. You can't see the bullet coming. So you go and hide. But you're not quite sure if it followed you inside. Everybody, keep your distance, about a coughing length away, or you might just be ahead (??) [03:31] for the judgment day. Corona Blues, Corona Blues. Every day I'm waiting to hear some good news. Ain't nowhere to go, nothing to do, but sit at home alone with these Corona Blues. Corona Blues, Corona Blues. Direct from China, delivered to you. Everywhere the wind

blows, folks are confused. The whole world is suffering with the Corona Blues. The whole world's come down with a Corona Blues.

04:06 Blackmon: Man. You know, the thing I always loved about you as a writer is that you wrote whatever was going on around you at the time. Where, in a lot of that, it could be love, and it could also be social commentary, like what you're doing tonight. And so many people just sit down to write something that, you know what I mean, that it always appeared to me that you were writing what you were feeling or it felt recently that informed what you were doing. Is that true?

04:40 Kostas: I think so, and I think that everybody has a streak like that. In them, you know. Anyway, yeah. It's what we do sometimes, tinkering. We - you and I wrote that song "America" one time. That was kind of like a situation like this. Do you remember?

05:08 Blackmon: Yeah, I do you remember. I remember both of us having tears in our eyes when we finished it. This one kind of snuck up on us, where we're at right now, and that one was just like a shock to the system. We couldn't believe it. We couldn't believe what was going on. Do you know what I mean?

05:32 Kostas: Yeah, that was instant shock, and this is delayed shock.

05:36 Blackmon: Yeah. And, you know, I was surprised, back then when that went down. With the exception of as far as songs that ended up being on the radio, Alan Jackson had a song that I thought was sincere and authentic, called "Where Were You When The World Stopped Turning" and it sounded to me like that was a true reaction to his feelings. But I was surprised at the time that more songs - they seemed more opportunistic to save people's careers with a patriotic Hail Mary than people really expressing anything of authenticity. You know what I mean? A lot of the stuff that came - there's a lot of people throwing shit out there about that, then?

06:27 Kostas: Yeah. It's kinda strange. But I think that it's just part of the writing process. I think a lot of songwriters, that I'm aware of, you know, would do something to that effect, as well. You know, come and touch the reality of the world around them, and put it down in musical form. It speaks to your artistic side, and also to your philosophical side as well, you know?

07:16 Blackmon: Yeah. Well, I think that the whole need to song write in the first place is a need to communicate with people and a need to connect with people. I think, you know, there's a part of that anyway, to say, this is how I feel and maybe you feel that way too! So, tonight, that's exactly what I wanted to talk tonight about was songwriting and your thoughts on some different elements of songwriting. I think, sometimes, it's hard for us songwriters to - I mean, there is a magic element to it. You know, that you spend years absorbing your influences, and somehow they get mixed up in you and come out as you. You know, through your lens and perspective of your life, all those influences. But there are some tried and true practices that people find that work for them. And so I just want to, if that's okay, throw some questions out to you and get

some thoughts about what you learned about other songwriters and then yourself and, just anything that comes to mind really. Because I think that thinking about the future and all these kids, I'm around, you know, like they're just, you know, trying to figure out craft at this point. Some of them aren't even to the - you know, they're not - they may be figuring out who they are but, there's as much figuring out who they are as people as they are songwriters, you know what I mean? So, can I just start throwing out different topics and getting you to talk about them?

09:23 Kostas: You bet. Let's see what happens.

09:26 Blackmon: Okay, so the first one I want to talk about is rhythm.

09:32 Kostas: Oh, I love rhythm.

09:34 Blackmon: I know you do, and one of the - and we've never talked about it, but it shows in how you play guitar and how you phrase melodies. One of the things that I really - I think I quit playing with a pick after I'd been hanging out with you for a while. The reason why was because you have this style of - nothing, either one of us can play with a pick. But you have a style of playing where the rhythmic thing between your thumb and fingers when you're strumming; It's not like a flamenco - It's not like a flamingo guitar player, Kostas, it's per se. But you have this thing where you can downstroke with your thumb and then kind of delay your downstroke with your other fingers, and then upstroke or - I just, I'm just curious about that style, how that's everything.

10:45 Kostas: Well, that style is a direct reflection of what I hear. So as the melody comes out, or whatever melody I'm involved in, it has to come out through this thing inside of me - its rhythm, I think, yeah. So, I don't know how else to describe this, goddamnit.

11:30 Blackmon: Well, there's a percussiveness to it, almost like you got a little band going on.

11:35 Kostas: Well, that's what I'm listening to, there's a band in my head! And in order to keep up with them, I gotta lay down that rhythm. Because it reflects the drummer, it reflects the bass player, it reflects the motion in the chord, and also maybe a riff And that's all part of what I hear, and that's all part of what I like to lay down when I'm actually played - or playing, you know. It's just, that's where natural is to me.

12:08 Blackmon: And you really couldn't do that with a pick either, I don't think as easily. I guess you could kind of play with a pick with your thumb and index and then do that with your others, but it seems to come natural to you to play without a pick when you're doing that.

12:24 Kostas: Yeah, well, I was, you know, through from about 64 on, you know, folks thought that I was playing lead, but I was - God, I just don't, I never thought myself as being a good guitar player with a pick. And then somewhere in my 60s, 10 years ago or more, you know, my right hand, my rhythm, my chopping hand. I can't hold the pick much anymore. So I just thought

to myself, well, use your fingernails on each finger in such a way that each finger is going to go down on the strings, and each one has got a job to do, you know. And so you just kind of play with it and train yourself to kind of play in that style. It never - I'm never good at being a perfectionist, but I'm good at hearing and feeling. Yeah.

13:41 Blackmon: In a way. It's not the same thing, but in a way, it reminds me of the way that old-time banjo players, before they got to the Earl Scruggs style, you know what I'm saying? In the way, they kind of - it's different because they didn't have the bass notes going, but still.

13:58 Kostas: Yeah, it was percussive and rhythmic.

14:03 Blackmon: Yeah. Yeah. Let's talk about melody because you're known as a melody man. I mean, people love your melodies and they're unique. Like you can hear certain melodies and know they're yours, I think. Besides just feeling them there has to be some - I'm trying to think - not guidelines because every song's different. You feel different. But what have you learned about yourself over the years and melody?

14:45 Kostas: Well, the songs that I started writing in my - in like, say '69. I could still do some of those songs today, or tonight if I wanted to, but you know, they're still there, but I don't think about them. And then from that point forward, I just, melody's always been important to me. I got it probably from having listened to a lot of wonderful melodies, and I do fall in love with melodies. Sometimes, when you first hear a melody, it just kind of leaves an implant that stays with you for the rest of your life, because you always remember that melody, you know. At least in my head, that's what has happened. So I've got melodies scattered over each decade, going back into the 50s, and even into the 40s, and possibly earlier if you want to take into account Steven Foster, and you know, some of those older cats back there, you know, but coming forward from that, because I, I don't know music prior to that, you know. To me, music is a part of rhythm. When you can combine rhythm, with music, then you've got two-thirds of the right equation. The third part of it would be the lyrics. But music with rhythm creates the production of a song. Go ahead.

17:11 Blackmon: No, you go ahead, sorry.

17:14 Kostas: So, that to me, identifies what the song is: once you can put the production around it, then you pretty much know how you want to hear it. So that is part of something that you do, as you work on a song. Bring it together, you're bringing the rhythm, the melody, and the words together to form what that sound will be. You inject into every idea all that is in you, and of you to inject into it. Otherwise, you know, it's just kind of sitting there waiting for another day to come along. And that happens a lot to all of us. But I'm just saying, this is probably better to finish an idea than it is to just let it sit there for the next twenty years. If that makes sense to you, Odie.

18:31 Blackmon: It does. That's one thing I noticed about you, is that you didn't get - you usually always finish a tune, and if you need to come back to it, you would. But you would, you know, put a bow on it for the day, anyway. Yeah, George Harrison said that. to always finish them, at least for the time being.

18:55 Kostas: Exactly.

18:57 Blackmon: Talking about melody, how much do you - in a lot of these things we talk about, are learned instinct, I think. But it's important to talk about them to young songwriters so that they can kind of look down those roads. But, how much thinking or feeling are you doing, about the lyric being the melody and the melody being the lyric, are matched? You know what I mean?

19:28 Kostas: How they work together?

19:30 Blackmon: Yeah precisely, how much do you think about them? Their relationship? In meaning and feeling?

19:41 Kostas: Yeah, well, that's basically what you're trying to do. All right. As an individual who has always loved music and always loved it for what it was, and me just accepting it for what it was, you know. The expectations come when we try to figure out what to do with music, you know. And, so I think, as an individual who's always loved music in my life, and was attracted to it, like, you know, a magnet pulls steel, you know, like, it's a form of love for me. So I always strive to figure out what to do with it. One of the things you can do with music is to turn it into, you know, a way of making money. You know, writing a hit song. If you want to write a play, write a play. If you want to write, anything you want to write, I mean, you just go ahead and do it because, you know, the world's a canvas, and it's up to us, as individuals, to put something on it, you know. This was my life, this is who I was, this is what I did. So, you take that, and put that weight on your shoulder and go forward and make something happen, and you make it happen because it's there for you to make happen. And if that's what you have to do in life, you do it and enjoy every minute of it. Because first and foremost, it has to be understood that you fall in love with music. It's a reflection of one of our voices within - within me through music. **God (??) [22:31]** understands us better than he does through words. So that's kind of where I live, you know, always have, and that directs pretty much what I think about everything. But through the eyes or the ears of that little news in the cave that I go into every now and then just to have a visit with that guy.

23:04 Blackmon: Lyrics: do you tend to start out with a title hook? Or do you start out with music and find a title hook? Or do you do both?

23:20 Kostas: Yeah, it's like this. It's just fun. Whichever approach you want to take.

23:32 Blackmon: I'm asking you questions through the eyes of students.

23:36 Kostas: And I'm just answering it through that same set of eyeballs. It's just fun, whichever way you want to do it. Learn to do it and always, what the hell?

23:47 Blackmon: Yeah. I think that's good. Because I think some people just get stuck in one or the other, like, country writers tend to write from hooks and titles, and a lot of pop writers just kind of jam around and find some music and then kind of find their way, you know, great advice to do it all.

24:10 Kostas: You bet it's all there, you know.

24:13 Blackmon: Do you, do you feel like you've had equal success either way?

24:18 Kostas: I suspect that that's the case, you know. I've never really studied what way things happened, you know, but just off **caught the cuff (??) [24:29]**, you know, probably is true.

24:34 Blackmon: You know, what seems maybe hard to me, is sometimes when you have a set melody or somebody with a set melody they want words to or set with no flexibility, like I've heard of guys going to write with some of the Swedish track guys programmers, you know, and they'll have a melody set already played on piano and they want words perfectly for that. Or, it seems to me at some point, it's all gotta come together. I mean, even if you start one way or the other, like you start kind of working with them together, at some point.

25:18 Kostas: Whatever you end up doing, you know, as far as your approach, if it works, let that be the way that it happened, you know. But, once you get there, then the important thing is to create the most perfect picture of your thoughts. And words are our objects that have a certain size to them. And so you're trying to find words that fit in that particular box, you know, that you need a word for. It's kind of a challenge, but it can be done and the great songwriters, that's right, I tell people that ask me, I tell them just pick up a lyric book of Paul Simon's or Chuck Berry's or Hank Williams or John Lennon and Paul McCartney or Bob Dylan, or you know, anybody Roger Miller or Heartland and Hank Cochran and, God knows Joe South and all the rest of the great country songwriters. And just see how they said the simplest thing in such a human way, and it fit the melody perfectly, you know, good enough to fool the rest of us into liking it, you know, and loving and buying it.

27:10 Blackmon: You know, something interesting about lyrics with - you introduced me to Harlan, and Harlan and I spent a day together. He was a little crabby the day I spent with him. He was ready for football season, and it didn't seem like it when I got there we were gonna write a song, but we took a stab at it and we talked about writing a lot. Then we went to the Longhorn and drank White Russians till we were silly. You know?

27:40 Kostas: This was going on behind my back?

27:43 Blackmon: Yeah and you set it up.

27:46 Kostas: That's great, I'm glad.

27:48 Blackmon: And I couldn't believe he got that fucking Cadillac and drove off. I was thinking, who can I call to come get my ass, man? Like, and that was lunch. That was our lunch.

28:03 Kostas: You bet, I gotcha. You know, I think Harlan had a special angel that followed him off the barstool into his Lincoln, and then just pushed him inside and drove him home. Somehow, miraculously, it would happen time and time again. One time he did take out a garbage can, and he told me about it.

28:30 Blackmon: Well, that's pretty lucky. I'd say one thing that he told me though - and when I wrote with Mack Davis, Mack Davis kind of lectured me on the same thing. Both of those guys were into perfect rhymes. Like they didn't want to fuck around with a near rhyme, you know what I'm saying? And from what I understood from both of them, that was the classic, timeless songwriter way that they grew up or was taught, you know? And to me, that isn't very rock and roll or it sure does limit, you know what I'm saying? I was young too, but it seemed like limiting, and I guess maybe there's a time and a place for everything, but what are your thoughts on rhyme and those sorts of things?

29:31 Kostas: Well, in accordance to where it's coming from, it's going to bring with that rhyme a certain rhythm, and a certain sweetness in the melody, you know. Beutealox and Felise had a lot of rhythm in their music, and a lot of rhymes that flowed along with every other aspect of the song, you know. I think each one of those individuals was just reflecting what came natural to them to do and how to approach it. So, each one, each songwriter is going to give you - that you listen to that you study - is going to give you a new perspective, and it then will mix with your natural ability and, you know, it's all good, it's all part of living, and it's all part of, you know, taking it in and letting it come out later, you know, or whenever it's gonna come out, you know.

30:51 Blackmon: In my mind, a perfect rhyme is something that you want to state solidly, and there's nothing wrong with the perfect rhyme ever. Sometimes the lyric, just, you know, just say what you want to say doesn't make that but also, maybe not a near, maybe not a perfect rhyme, is a way of conveying not quite as strong of sentiment, or some uneasiness, just as, you know, just like a different chord or something, you know what I mean?

31:21 Kostas: Well, striving to write the perfect rhyme, and in the right intellect for the song is, is what we all do in everything that we write. You have to put all things in perspective throughout the song and you also have to find the right words said in the context of your song, you know, whatever that might be. But it's all Greek to me you know, and it's all going to come out being what you wanted to say and be, and then if the groove and the feeling is right, somebody will come along and enjoy it as much as you did, and maybe somebody that knows, or wants to record a new song, you know? And that's a good thing.

32:22 Blackmon: You got a favorite song that you wrote?

32:27 Kostas: No, sir. I would say that every one of them turned around and blew a kiss at me.

32:40 Blackmon: That's great. What about co-writing? What's your takeaway as somebody that, you know, there's not a lot of folks in music row that write songs by themselves?

32:58 Kostas: No, not much anymore.

33:02 Blackmon: Not anymore. What's your pluses and minuses on co-writing?

33:11 Kostas: Well, it all depends on what you're aiming for. If you're - if the style of music you're aiming for is old-time country, you won't find it in too many co-writers today. Because they're not coming out of that school. But if you want to write a current song, about what kids are talking about these days, then write with somebody who's as current as you are, and as "hip" as you are, and shoot for what you want to shoot for from there, you know. I think that there's a time for every kind of writing and you can be introspective in your writing, you can be political in your writing. You can be, you know, crazy in your writing, you can shoot for, you know, any style that you want, that you like, you can go for a soulful song, you can write for a country soulful song, you know, it's all about choice when it comes to songwriting. There is a well there for me to go to, and I go to it all the time because I love to find new things in my head, that will make me wonder and take me to a place and make me wanna write words around it. And, you know, and to do so, with the idea of placing it on the radio, I think that then challenges you to number one, have a lot of faith in yourself. If the ability is there you know, then you go ahead and start writing these things. And cream always rises to the top, you know. So I would say to anybody that wants to pursue, you know, this lifestyle, and this particular avenue of songwriting, then it's there and it comes out of your choices. You know, your choices are made on who you think you are and what you want to do with what you are, you know, it's your life.

36:15 Blackmon: Tell me about the circle of songwriting. I heard you tell - you talk to the kids about when you were over here for the Boudreaux Felice Briant party.

36:26 Kostas: I'm not sure. Is there, like, a circle of music? Was that what you thought?

36:32 Blackmon: Well you were talking about a songwriter's career going in a circle?

36:36 Kostas: Okay. Well, the circle has to begin with your beginning, as far as I'm concerned, your first songs, your - you know, the first reaction to your first songs, you know, do they hold up, you know, are you performing them, you know, do people like them, that sort of thing. And then just, if, if that's what you like doing, then keep on doing it, keep on writing songs, perform them. And you can't perform them by yourself, or if you'd like to perform them in a band, then form a band around you, and go out and have fun and get drunk and play music and, and that's

all, you know, the rest of it, you know, just make sure you do it, you know, in Disneyland or such. Yeah.

38:01 Blackmon: You know, there are some things that I picked up as a young writer that stuck with me and I share with my students. And one was, I noticed when we started writing, you would always hum some kind of melodic riff, or some kind of intro turn around kinda, you know what I'm saying? Like, you usually sang something over the intro and turn around, and came up with something hooky, whereas a lot of writers, they just kind of play chords and leave that up to the studio musicians or whatever. But it always seemed like you had a good, at least a broad stroke was not a fun stroke. You know, that was a part of your writing process, was going ahead and putting melodic hooks into the musical sections.

39:02 Kostas: Well, in my head Odie, when I'm set on something that I like, then I don't hear that thing in my head, singularly. I hear it in conjunction with the rest of the band, doing what it's telling me what the melody is doing, you know. So I'm just kind of echoing back when I'm listening to at that moment. You know, it's kind of strange, but that's kind of what it ends up being.

39:39 Blackmon: I think that is an important skill for songwriters to practice doing.

39:42 Kostas: Well, absolutely. And you do so, you learn that skill by playing a lot of cover things because you learn, first of all, how to respond and to do a melody in a, in the setting of, you know, the way it was put down. So you learn how to play, you know, and listen to the music with that riff you know or, you know, whatever other song you might have - that might have some signature on it, but - hell Odie, I'm getting bogged into my brain here. What were we talking about?

40:36 Blackmon: Well, we were talking about you. The cool way you make up your own melodic riffs. And that's a natural, a natural part of your songwriting process.

40:37 Kostas: I'm ripping off the guy in my cave, you know.

40:51 Blackmon: Yeah. I hear you, but I'm just saying that there are a lot of people who don't think about that.

40:57 Kostas: Well, then they should start thinking about it because it's all there. If it's meant, if you're meant to get there and to do it, then you'll hear, you'll feel it, you'll do and you know, what the heck?

41:19 Blackmon: Yeah. but these questions and your answers are things that kids haven't got to yet. Like, you know what I'm saying?

41:29 Kostas: Oh, yeah, you're right.

41:32 Blackmon: Another thing that I noticed that was fascinating to me about you, as we became pals, and then I felt like I learned, like, I loved hanging out. But there would be times where I'd learn stuff about songwriting just from us hanging out, you know what I mean? Not write, not write songs. And one thing that I noticed about you is, and I don't know if you still do this, but when you'd be hanging around the house, whether it's vac, you know, picking up a vacuum and vacuuming or going around, doing whatever you were doing, you would constantly kind of, say these little rhyming couplets and stuff, like just kind of sometimes about whatever the hell you were doing. And I guess in my mind, at first, I thought you were kind of fucking nutty. I'm kidding. But seriously, you just playing with language, man? Do you remember doing that or still do that at all?

42:44 Kostas: Yeah, what I do, I sit down and I write my thoughts. Because it's a means of entertaining myself. And sometimes, I'll go back and read through my notebook and look at the things that my brain concocted and I get a chuckle, and then I might add a line or two to that thought, you know, and in the end, you end up with something goofy, you know? And believe me, goofy is where where where I live, man.

43:35 Blackmon: [Laughing] You know what, speaking to goofy, one of my favorite songs, we wrote that - it would have taken the right at artists, but it's a really great, good well-written song that I love was a song we wrote called "That's Why Dogs Have Fleas." Do you remember that?

43:56 Kostas: [Laughing] I think that was a great song.

43:59 Blackmon: And I love the lyric in there, about - a mature lyric about chasing she-hounds and you know, I never asked you, but I had to think you got that from the Osbourne Brothers tune, Tennessee Hound Dog where they talk about she-hounds?

44:14 Kostas: No, never heard the song.

44:18 Blackmon: Well, there you go. I don't know shit. But that was a fun one. You know what I mean? I really like that.

44:34 Kostas: Well, you know.

44:35 Blackmon: [Laughing] I guess dog songs are out.

44:40 Kostas: You know, what I was thinking of when we were writing that song, was there was a song that Jimmy Dean did, that came out and probably about time that he was doing Big John, about '63, '64, somewhere in there, he did a song. What was it? I'm losing it bad. We're talking about?

45:20 Blackmon: "That's Why Dogs Have Fleas."

45:23 Kostas: Yeah, there was a song called "I Won't Go Hunting With You Jake, But I'll Go Chasing Women." And that's why dogs have, or get fleas, or have fleas is along that line. It's just remembering stuff that, you know, and you try to reinvent it in today's world. There is that element about me. Where a lot of what my melody might be, my feeling might be, the words might be saying, goes back to whoever's listening. I've heard that before somewhere, you know, but in essence, it's it came from that, possibly, but it's a new thing in and of itself, but it might have, you know, it might also remind you of another thing. You know, and that's okay for music to do, you know. You can be creative with what comes out of the past, so long as you're not plagiarizing somebody. You know, if you're taking, you know, an old Everly Brothers feel and, you know, just recreating it, reinventing, seems so different. I think that's fine we all get inspired by different styles, different songs that we love, you know, they say, wow, you know, and then something sparks inside of you that might have been born of what you just listened to, you know? Gosh, that's kind of like what generally happens.

47:39 Blackmon: Well, I was trying to think if there were any other songwriting questions, in particular, I had for you. I mean, to me, you're such a feel person, does it feel good? Does it feel like what I'm feeling like either today or have felt recently or in the past, it seems like the feeling is one of the most important parts of your process.

48:08 Kostas: It can be, but a steady- you know, like you can't allow feeling alone to control what you end up doing in a song, it has to be a blend of all things coming together in this perfection, you know, the perfection of what the song is. Anyway, so you just remember to enjoy the process, just always be real, and go in search of new oceans to float over and new skies to fly over, and new valleys to ride across. Mountains and all that shit.

49:19 Blackmon: Let me ask you this while we're talking about it, and this is more towards the business. But I remember a time where I felt like, I saw it happen to you and then I saw it happen to me, say after I started having some success. My publisher was booking up my catalog in a way that I couldn't keep up creatively you know what I'm saying? I wouldn't. Tell me about that, like the balance of working hard but creating, and getting burned out and all that, you know, 'cause I think it's a real thing.

50:00 Kostas: Well, think about it, and you'll understand that who we are is a balance between who we are naturally and, having a balance in your life. You know, if your life becomes out of balance, if you're doing too much of one thing, then it becomes - it affects you, it affects all parts of you eventually. So you have to stay balanced in your, in your lifestyle, you know, don't get too damn busy, writing songs, you know, if you feel like your publisher, or the commitments coming in are too much, then back, you know, slow it all down here, you're in command. But it does happen, it's happened to you Odie, it's happened to me to where, you know, you can go through a 10-year period, going from fast, to faster, to really, really fast, to really, really, really fast and even faster than that, and so on. I mean, for 10 years, you just keep bloating and trying to, you know, find something that I mean, it's kinda like, you know, don't kill the golden goose, you got

to slow down a little bit. And, generally speaking, you only learn to slow down after you've gone way too fast for way too long. Because nobody listens to advice, you know? So I don't expect anybody to listen to anything I gotta say here, but.

52:16 Blackmon: Well, there's a lot of pressure that's put on young writers by publishers, and they don't know. You know what I'm saying.

52:24 Kostas: Yeah, well then, just don't forget you're in control of, you know, what your day's gonna be, in the end. Work with the people that want you to work.

52:39 Blackmon: Yeah, man. I think that there's one other question I wanted to talk to you about we missed when we were talking about your time in Nashville, and I wanted to touch on it, and that was your solo record *Xs In Moderation*. How did that come about? Was it **Renee (??)** [53:09] during (??) [53:10] the capital (??) Capitol (??) [53:11]

53:03 Kostas: Absolutely. She was part of it. She went to Capitol. And I think it might have been in '95 or '96, but she had this wonderful idea to find four songwriters that she really enjoyed. And, to go through get Bowen to give her the budget, I think she had \$45,000 for the record, somewhere in that vicinity, that was their budget. So she got four people that she enjoyed, I guess, to put a little project together, and then we actually went out on tour. The four of us including.

54:02 Blackmon: who were the other three?

54:05 Kostas: Joe Galucci, Vesiner was - John Vesiner, and Pat, Pat Garrett the kid.

54:20 Blackmon: No Pat, the guy they were going through - yeah.

54:23 Kostas: Pat Algere, yeah. Yeah. So, that was pretty neat, because we didn't know each other prior to that venture and so sitting around, days upon end, going on tour from major city to major city across the country playing little venues in each town, from Chicago to - I don't know where else we went - throughout New York, Frisco, LA, Boston, I have - you know, there are just 15 or 20 cities probably, that we went and played at and had fun doing, you know.

55:15 Blackmon: And, who produced it?

55:18 Kostas: I had a friend of mine at the time by name of Val Gray. As you know, I've stated before, you know, I'm a fan of the music, whatever generation I was in. And back in '66, I started, I heard this band on a radio called the Beau Brummels. Yeah, the Beau Brummels. Anyway, so they did a couple of songs. Number one, they did "Laugh, Laugh," you know. Then they did a couple of others, you know, they were pretty successful back in through about '67 or so. You got to remember that most bands back then only put out one album unless they got lucky and found an audience. But these guys almost found an audience. And there are people today

who still enjoy listening to those albums that they had, about two of them, I think, three or four maybe, ten or twenty possibly, in any case, Odie what was I talking about?

56:53 Blackmon: Well, Val was your producer for *Xs*.

56:57 Kostas: Oh yeah, Val Gray was in that band The Beau Brummels. So, when I first met him, he was hanging around over at Manuel's. And he was back there, you know, in the back room with all the crew back there. And I was introduced to him and me, you know, once I realized that he told me that he used to play with them, you know, I was starstruck so I had an instant admiration, you know, for him just because he was one of those guys that, when I was a kid, I - you know, heard their band and loved their shit. So, I started hanging out and asked him if he wanted to produce the record, and he said sure, so we went off and did our project, you know. I think it's a pretty good-sounding record.

58:06 Blackmon: I do too. There's a song on there that - I don't, I'm trying to think - I think you wrote with Helen. Who'd you write "Full Deck Of Cards" with? Was that - it was either Dean - it was either Dean, Miller, or Helen, or that girl from Montana? I can't think of her name right now.

58:31 Kostas: No. Helen Darlin recorded it.

58:36 Blackmon: Oh, she recorded it. Well, I liked your version. I like your version. And then on there too, you had "She's Not The Little Girl." Trying to think who you wrote.

58:52 Kostas: Was it "She's So Lonely?"

58:56 Blackmon: Oh, yeah, that one too. Who? Who did you write that with?

59:00 Kostas: Myself.

59:05 Blackmon: Just you? Did you spend any time with Roger Miller?

59:10 Kostas: No. With Dean, I wrote with Dean. But that would have been after the album, you know.

59:18 Blackmon: I see.

59:21 Kostas: But I like Dean.

59:24 Blackmon: Yeah, he seems like a nice guy.

59:27 Kostas: And he's, he's got an old world heart, you know? Man Odie, it's too bad your 1900 miles away because I'm cooking up some beans here, and it is smelling good but I better - It is smelling good, brother.

59:54 Blackmon: Sounds good. Maybe the next time you come to town you can show me how you do that.

60:01 Kostas: I can do this, I will do it.

60:04 Blackmon: Hey, I want to thank you for the garden book you sent me, man. I got it today in the mail.

60:11 Kostas: Oh you did, I'm so flattered.

60:13 Blackmon: Dede mailed it to me, thank you very much.

60:17 Kostas: Well, I was waiting for spring.

60:20 Blackmon: Well, you know I have enjoyed gardening quite a bit in my life out, and where I live now I can't have one because of the deer and going in, I don't want to go into the cost of fucking huge fence to do all that but, but thank you for thinking me.

60:42 Kostas: You're welcome, I hope you enjoy it.

60:46 Blackmon: I got out in the world today and Joe had to go to the bank and had to go.