



**THE VELVET UNDERGROUND**

**with Lou Reed, Maureen “Moe” Tucker, Doug Yule, and David Fricke**

**December 8, 2009**

**LIVE from the New York Public Library**

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**Celeste Bartos Forum**

**PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER:** Good evening and welcome to our closing night of our Fall 2009 LIVE from the New York Public Library season, and what a way it is to close the season, you must agree. You might be interested to know that the event tonight was sold out in three minutes and twenty seconds. My name is Paul Holdengräber, and I’m the Director of Public Programs, now known as LIVE from the New York Public Library. My role, or rather my goal, as many of you know, at the New York Public Library is to make the lions roar. The lions, as I told Lou Reed, though he didn’t believe me, are

called—have names, actually—Patience and Fortitude. Fortitude is on the side of Forty-Second Street. My ambition is simply to make a heavy institution levitate, create each and every night a form of cognitive theater, an embodiment of cognitive theater, and I think tonight will be no exception.

I need—no, I want—to thank a few people who have made this evening possible. Please hold your applause until the end of this list. First and foremost, my assistant Meg Stemmler, who tirelessly and joyously has carefully overseen every aspect of this evening. I would also like to thank Tom Sarig, Lou’s assistant, who helped lots along the way. In our press office, my heartfelt thanks go, as always, to Jennifer Lam. Thanks also to Joshua Machat, Charles Miers, and Pam Sommers, all from Rizzoli. Together we have done some marvelous work. We invited Umberto Eco, Spike Lee, and now are featuring the Velvet Underground book, which Johan Kugelberg has edited, *The Velvet Underground: New York Art*, published by Rizzoli and available for sale tonight thanks to our excellent independent bookseller, 192 Books, so thanks to all of them. Get your signed copies after the conversation—go get them. It is fabulous, it is a beautiful, gorgeous book, with contributions by Lou Reed, Maureen Tucker, Doug Yule, Jon Savage, and Vaclav Havel. A warm thank-you, also, to Johan Kugelberg, the editor, for loaning us tonight some of the exquisite Velvet Underground memorabilia. Check it out, everyone, before you leave this hall. So thank you, Johan Kulgerberg, Tom Sarig, 192 Books, Jennifer Lam, all at Rizzoli, and Meg Stemmler. Thank you very much.

**(applause)**

A quick word about LIVE from the New York Public Library and this evening. First I would like to encourage all of you to join our e-mail list. Find out what is coming up this spring, be it Garry Wills discussing the relationship between the executive power of the American presidency and the atomic bomb, or a tribute to George Carlin, or a tribute to Voltaire's *Candide*, or a conversations I will be having with William Kentridge, Krista Tippett, Christopher Hitchens, Malcolm Gladwell. Find out how we will end the season with an evening devoted to soccer, the World Cup, and the relationship writers and others entertain to this sport, as well as an evening on the same subject, that is, sports and the relationship to writers, but this time it will be about Ping-Pong.

Lastly, become a member of the New York Public Library. As a member you will get discounted tickets to all LIVE events. Do it today, join the membership group that is growing every day. Go to the table and join the New York Public Library. Become a Friend of the New York Public Library. For forty dollars a year you will get discounts. If you ask me, that's quite a cheap date.

Now, turn off your cell phones. Soon David Fricke from *Rolling Stone*, who will instigate the conversation and who I also wish to thank warmly, will be joined by Maureen Tucker, Doug Yule, and Lou Reed. They will talk, then they will answer a few questions. Write them down and we will choose a few good, short, and legible ones. Then they will

sign *The Velvet Underground: New York Art*. But now at this very moment, sit back, or forward, relax or not, and for a moment, enjoy the flight.

**(applause)**

**(“Heroin” plays)**

**(applause)**

**DAVID FRICKE:** That record, that song, is one of the reasons why I wanted to make my life in music, and it—which is one more reason why it’s an honor to be able to say, “the words, music, and rhythm of the Velvet Underground: Lou Reed, Maureen Tucker, and Doug Yule.” **(applause)** Not here but also vital to the story, the late Nico, John Cale, and the late, very great Sterling Morrison. **(applause)** Now, part of the occasion is celebrating this new book *New York Art: The Velvet Underground*, which is an amazing volume, but it’s kind of an anniversary as well. It’s actually a little strange to say this out loud, but on December 11 of 1965, the Velvet Underground played their first paying gig at Summit High School, so we’re practically forty-four years to the week, and, from what I understand, you only made eighty bucks, it’s true, and they were the bottom of the bill. Do you remember at all what your ambitions were as a band? Obviously, it’s your first paying gig, it’s the first time you played outside New York. Any recollection of—were you more shocked than the kids that you played for?

**MAUREEN TUCKER:** I don't think so. I was shocked, because my drums fell apart.

**DAVID FRICKE:** The drums fell apart?

**MAUREEN TUCKER:** Yeah.

**DAVID FRICKE:** Good way to start.

**MAUREEN TUCKER:** That was the beginning of my career.

**DAVID FRICKE:** How did you actually get the gig, because it was through Al Aronowitz, the writer, and this was actually before Andy had seen you, how did Al come to know about you?

**MAUREEN TUCKER:** Barbara Rubin was a mutual friend of Andy and Al, and she had brought Andy to see us at the Bizarre, but I don't—she brought Andy. She brought someone who liked us.

**DAVID FRICKE:** I'm just impressed that your first gig was at a high school.

**LOU REED:** We played the Café Bizarre.

**DAVID FRICKE:** No, that was two weeks afterwards.

**MAUREEN TUCKER:** That was afterward.

**LOU REED:** It's not the kind of thing you remember—Summit, New Jersey.

**DAVID FRICKE:** Well, I guess it's the thing is that you think of what the pop and rock scene was in 1965 and '66 and you clearly had real ambitions as songwriters, as musicians, and doing something that was not of the norm and yet you threw yourself into, you threw yourself into something that was kind of risky. You know, you were doing something that people had not heard, and certainly, as events proved initially, were not quite prepared for.

**LOU REED:** Yeah, **(laughter)** that's true, but we were around a lot of filmmakers and musicians and people who were part of what they called "the underground" then and very much part of that, so playing a high school in Jersey we thought of it kind of a different way, but we never got paid before—right?

**MAUREEN TUCKER:** That's the first time I had played with you guys, I don't know if you had gotten paid before.

**DAVID FRICKE:** Well, apparently Angus MacLise actually quit because you were getting paid.

**LOU REED:** No. He quit because he said, “You mean to tell me they tell us when we start and then when we’re playing they tell us when to stop?” And he left.

**(laughter)**

**DAVID FRICKE:** That was his line in the sand.

**LOU REED:** That’s hardcore.

**(laughter)**

**DAVID FRICKE:** That is very hardcore.

**LOU REED:** And those are the people we were with, so we’re very much like—I thought we were easygoing because we said okay, but it would turn out to be a lot different.

**DAVID FRICKE:** How would you describe what the shows that you played, when you were playing to the underground films, when you were doing things with Angus and Barbara Rubin. What were the shows when you improvised with films?

**LOU REED:** You know, in those days the movies that they made didn't have sound, so they would get us and we would sit in back of the screen and play along with whatever it was—

**DAVID FRICKE:** Did you walk in with a particular idea of how to start a piece or what the film was?

**LOU REED:** No, no.

**DAVID FRICKE:** It was just plug in and go?

**LOU REED:** No, no, I mean, we knew who the—we didn't do just anybody's film, it wasn't Disney.

**DAVID FRICKE:** No, Jack Smith was not Disney.

**LOU REED:** That's the background we had.

**DAVID FRICKE:** Would you incorporate actual—some of the songs you were writing at that point as well? Because “Heroin” and “All Tomorrow's Parties” were already—

**LOU REED:** No, those songs were separate from—these other things were just for movies.



**DAVID FRICKE:** So, really, that high school and the Café Bizarre was the first time you truly played those songs in public.

**LOU REED:** Yeah, I mean, I don't know that the high school counts for anything. You know, we were pretty desperate.

**DAVID FRICKE:** At the Café Bizarre, one of the things, actually in the book there are a few photos of that run, which I found really fascinating, because I'd never seen them before, and what struck me was that the place—you were playing not even on a stage, you were on the floor, and there were a few tables around, and you kind of had the space to play whatever you wanted, and yet you still got fired for playing “Black Angel's Death Song.” When Andy brought his people down, he actually increased the audience that you were playing for.

**LOU REED:** There was no audience, and we weren't being paid, we were being fed. Like, we did five sets a night—

**MAUREEN TUCKER:** Free hamburger.

**LOU REED:** For a free hamburger.

**DAVID FRICKE:** Were the burgers any good?

**LOU REED:** It was a tourist trap, David.

**DAVID FRICKE:** in other words, no.

**LOU REED:** But some Navy guys were there one night and we were playing what we play and they said, don't play anything like that again, so we did, and all hell broke loose, you know, chairs flying and all that kind of stuff. People—you know, if you had long hair then, you were looking for a fight, so a lot of people looking for a fight.

**DAVID FRICKE:** I think one of the things that is interesting about that period that people don't take into account now was actually how small the scene, so-called, was, that it was not—you know, we can fill this room tonight, the way we do, but the audiences that you played for were not very big. They were very select, and they were people that were in a sense fellow travelers, you know, people who were in those scenes, making the films, and could relate to what you were singing and writing about. Did you feel that that was an audience to build on, or did you feel you were basically playing to friends?

**LOU REED:** We weren't that advanced. We were just playing. We were playing to play. Nobody had any plans for anything, you know, it was—

**MAUREEN TUCKER:** We were playing for *us*, really.

**LOU REED:** Yeah, that's what we liked to do, and there was a background in back of it that made it that way.

**DAVID FRICKE:** But you also—you certainly believed that there was a future in this, because the songs that you were writing—as you said the other night—you were writing “Heroin” or writing “All Tomorrow’s Parties” while you had a day job over at Pickwick Records writing “The Ostrich” and “Cycle Annie,” you clearly believed that there was some kind of future in what you were writing and the music that would in a sense have to go with it.

**LOU REED:** Well, the songs that became the Velvet Underground songs, those I was like an English major, so I'd had this idea about, you know, write that kind of stuff to a rock song, that was over there, and then for them over here was straight stuff, but I never thought this would—I wasn't thinking about accomplishing anything. It never got that far, it was just—it would be great to even be able to play it.

**DAVID FRICKE:** Were you surprised that when Andy saw you and decided that this was something that he wanted to be involved in, that suddenly the step had gotten a lot bigger?

**LOU REED:** Warhol was one of the greatest people I've ever met in my life, and without him, you know, it's kind of inconceivable where it would have gone, you know, because he was like the big protector.

**DAVID FRICKE:** How would you characterize his role? Because as a producer he let you do what you wanted to do, he put you in front of audiences, he really—for him this was not merely an art project.

**LOU REED:** We—well, we played all these galleries. We couldn't get hired anywhere, so if he had a gallery opening, he took all of us. That's how that worked. He fed everybody, and when they hired us to make a record, it wasn't because of us, it was because of him. They didn't know us, they thought he was the lead guitarist or something. **(laughter)** They were incredibly stupid, **(laughter)** and they never listened to the record, they never listen to anything, they're just stupid. And he just said, "whatever you do, don't change anything," and so he was like the guard dog. And they say, "how did he produce it?" Well, he really did it, he would really be there, and he'd say, "oh, that's great," and then they'd say, "what about the—" "No, no, that's great. And it stayed that way and that's why the records sound the way they sound, that's why nothing got changed, because Andy said, "don't change anything, leave it alone, just do exactly—the exact same thing you're doing, don't let them near it." And that was the, you know, the unifying principle, there it was.

**DAVID FRICKE:** You played that first gig in December, Andy saw the band a couple of weeks later. By March, you were recording the first record.

**LOU REED:** In one day.

**DAVID FRICKE:** In one day. Maureen, what was your impression of Andy, because you were really sort of, were dropped into this maelstrom pretty quickly.

**MAUREEN TUCKER:** My impression of Andy, did you say?

**DAVID FRICKE:** Just on a day-to-day basis.

**MAUREEN TUCKER:** Oh, I loved Andy. I had a lot of fun with Andy. Lou had a much closer relationship with him and a much more scholastic relationship than I did, but I really liked Andy a lot. Yeah. I did a little typing for Andy.

**(laughter)**

**DAVID FRICKE:** That was helpful.

**LOU REED:** What it was, was, Andy had done this thing, it was so fantastic. He wanted twenty-four hours in the life of Ondine—

**MAUREEN TUCKER:** Ondine and or Brigid, I think was—

**LOU REED:** And everybody else, and he was trying to get somebody to type this thing up and so Mo was typing it up, but she didn't like some of the language, so Maureen would take it out.

**MAUREEN TUCKER:** But I left the proper number of spaces so they could go back.

**DAVID FRICKE:** So you were actually Andy's editor as well.

**LOU REED:** It's, you know, still published. It's called *A*.

**DAVID FRICKE:** And you can read it.

**MAUREEN TUCKER:** Andy actually—I was—one day I was, maybe the third day I was doing that, I was typing and the word had gotten to Andy I guess that Mo wasn't putting in the icky words, and Andy came over and he sat on the desk and said, "Oh, oh, Mo, someone said you're not putting in the dirty words," and I said, "No," and he said, "Well," I don't remember exactly, of course, "Well, why not?" And I said, "Well, you know, I don't like that—" "Oh, okay, can you put the first letter?" And I said no.

**(laughter)**

**DAVID FRICKE:** Last night you were talking a bit about your experiences at Pickwick Records, and one of the things that you said that I didn't realize was that when the

Primitives, which was yourself, Tony Conrad, John, and Walter DeMaria, went out to promote songs like “Cycle Annie” and “The Ostrich,” you actually didn’t play gigs but you lip-synched to the records.

**LOU REED:** Our one record.

**DAVID FRICKE:** Your one record.

**LOU REED:** Yes, and none of them were on it except me.

**DAVID FRICKE:** Well, that was easy for them then, they didn’t have to learn anything.

**LOU REED:** “Do the ostrich—put your head down on the floor and have someone step on it. Do the ostrich.”

**MAUREEN TUCKER:** “Do the ostrich, put your head between your knees.”

**DAVID FRICKE:** Well, you can give us a verse.

**LOU REED:** That was it.

**DAVID FRICKE:** You heard it. Actually, Doug, not to be left out here, you told me a story this afternoon that's not a little too dissimilar to that, which is how you really got first started in the rock and roll business.

**DOUG YULE:** Well, they were looking for someone with long hair to play in front of a—to dance in front of a band, the Barbarians.

**DAVID FRICKE:** This was in the Boston area, right?

**DOUG YULE:** In Boston, the Barbarians. And my roommate and I and a couple of other people got dragged down there, and the Barbarians didn't show up, but we started playing with their instruments and eventually wound up in a band, **(laughter)** and that's kind of the way I got into rock and roll.

**DAVID FRICKE:** And this was the Barbarians who recorded “Are You a Boy or Are You A Girl?” for Laurie Records, so look it up. Maureen, did you ever actually see Angus play?

**MAUREEN TUCKER:** I'm not sure if I'd seen him play, I had met him, I had met him a couple of times, but I don't think so, actually.

**DAVID FRICKE:** I guess I just wanted to try and get some sort of a sense of your drumming style versus his apparently free-form concept of keeping time and being in a



band, because obviously what you were doing—it had a lot to do with the way these songs sounded, and just that beat—it’s so steady, it’s so firm, and it refuses to go away. It’s a really powerful concept.

**MAUREEN TUCKER:** Well, that’s the kind of drumming I like to listen to, so that’s what I try to do.

**DAVID FRICKE:** Because you actually once told me that your two big influences, two of your big influences were Charlie Watts and the Nigerian drummer Olatunji, who did *Drums of Passion*. Did you try to create some sort of a drumming style, because did you even play with a band before you played with the Velvet’s?

**MAUREEN TUCKER:** I played with a little, a cover band, we had one show on Long Island, we played, we rehearsed for about a week and played at a bar where the next night the drummer got shot, so I was lucky, **(laughter)** but that’s my only experience besides playing with these guys.

**DAVID FRICKE:** I guess Sterling knew your brother Jim. What did he say in terms of what they wanted or needed?

**MAUREEN TUCKER:** Well, Angus had quit, and they had gotten the high school job and needed a drummer fast, so Sterling supposedly said to Lou, “Tucker’s sister plays drums.”

**LOU REED:** “And she’s got a car.”

**DAVID FRICKE:** “She’s got a car.”

**(laughter)**

**MAUREEN TUCKER:** I didn’t hear that before. So Lou came to see if I could actually keep a beat, came to my house, and the next—we practiced two or three times, maybe, probably once, and that’s how we got started, but I was still temporary, in my mind, for quite a while.

**DAVID FRICKE:** You were playing standing up.

**MAUREEN TUCKER:** No.

**DAVID FRICKE:** When did that come about?

**MAUREEN TUCKER:** I think when started playing, like at galleries, as Lou was saying, that kind of improvised stuff, it didn’t fit, in my opinion, to be going, you know, tik-tik-tik and I wanted a deeper sound also and I was not really trying to sound African but sort of in a way trying to.

**DAVID FRICKE:** How much did—Lou, how much did her playing not influence, but just give you a feeling for the kind of rhythms that you wanted in the songs that you were writing? Obviously some of them were already going, but when you got to “White Light” and “Sister Ray,” and things like “The Gift,” you know, that beat is really essential, it’s seminal, I can’t imagine any of that music any other way.

**LOU REED:** I’ve tried since then to get a drummer to do what she did and it’s impossible, they can’t, you know, but one of the big things was getting a hi-hat out of there, and what she was doing was very tribal and incredible amount of unrelenting energy pushing at the thing and if we sped up she sped up instead of having a drummer who will sit there trying to hold the beat down. Our songs speed up and slow down all over the place on purpose.

**DAVID FRICKE:** You even said this afternoon that your favorite place was to stand next to her drums to play.

**LOU REED:** I always stand next to drums. I love being feeling the drum. I remember when we played the Dom, remember you had a problem with the drums, so we went out and got garbage cans.

**MAUREEN TUCKER:** They worked pretty good, too.

**LOU REED:** Then think about steel drummers, there it was except in a rock band, a rock situation.

**MAUREEN TUCKER:** Every night there was a little pile of garbage under the—these were used garbage pails I used, and each night we'd clean it out, of course, and then the next night the pile was smaller, so finally all the garbage was gone, and there was no pile.

**DAVID FRICKE:** This is the glamour of the avant-garde. I'd like to talk about Sterling for a bit, because we talked a little bit about it this afternoon, but he is essential and in many ways he doesn't always get the recognition and the affirmation that he deserves. How would you characterize him as—just as a person. What that person did as then reflected in his guitar playing. You know, what was the measure of the man?

**MAUREEN TUCKER:** I loved Sterling. I've known him since I was ten, he was like my brother. I really like his lead guitar playing, but he was also—and I didn't really think about it at the time—but I think he was a really good rhythm player. I very often tried to hear what he was doing and do something along the same line.

**DAVID FRICKE:** How essential, Lou, was he to just again the concept and the execution of the songs as they started—as you played them?

**LOU REED:** He was a great guy to have as the other guitar. I mean, his rhythm parts were fantastic and it always had this particular sound between him and Mo locked

together like that. That was an amazing thing to be able to play against. It was the greatest luck in the world, having that kind of lock going on, so wherever me or Cale went there was a place to come back to, they weren't shattered or anything.

**DAVID FRICKE:** Because it was sort of an interesting—it's almost like a selfless way to play guitar because he wasn't really into playing a lot of leads. That rhythm was very important to him. And as you told me once before, he was also a great bass player.

**LOU REED:** When I was mixing things I would sit and just listen to that strum, it was like an amazing strum he could get out of an electric guitar. To this day, to this day, I don't think there's much going on that could come close to what the Velvet Underground did, does, is, not even close, not even in the universe.

**(applause)**

**DAVID FRICKE:** It's true.

**LOU REED:** We were not kidding around. For real. Loved Andy. Loved that Andy—he knew exactly what it was.

**DAVID FRICKE:** Did he have a particular favorite song from the first album?

**LOU REED:** "All Tomorrow's Parties."

**DAVID FRICKE:** What did he like about it?

**LOU REED:** I never asked him that.

**DAVID FRICKE:** He just said he liked it and that was it.

**LOU REED:** He just said, “Oh, you know, that’s my favorite.” **(laughter)** I said, “Me, too.”

**DAVID FRICKE:** Doug, when did you actually first see the Velvets? Did you see them play in Boston before you joined? Because I think Sterling actually stayed with you for a while while they were up in Boston.

**DOUG YULE:** Yeah, in the apartment that I was staying at in River Street. The first time I saw the band was at a Harvard party and John was absent that night, he was sick, and it was a real dark crowded room and it was just—it was very intense, a lot of energy, and it sort of changed my life, just because I started thinking of music totally differently at that point, from that point on.

**DAVID FRICKE:** What were your impressions of, say, the songs because in time you would actually end up playing a lot of those songs, too?

**DOUG YULE:** Just the energy and the—it was real basic and real in your face and you couldn't get away from it, even though it was in a small room.

**DAVID FRICKE:** Did you get a sense of what they were about, the kind of people that were populating these songs?

**DOUG YULE:** No, not for many years, but I liked it the first time I heard it, it was an instant thing. And I almost didn't go that night, someone said, "Oh, come on, we'll go to a party."

**DAVID FRICKE:** What was it like to actually sing some of them because you would end up singing things like "Candy Says" and "Who Loves the Sun," did you get a sense of who these, like "Candy Says" is about Candy Darling.

**DOUG YULE:** No, I was really naïve. I really didn't know much of anything. I grew up on Long Island and very seldom came to the city, and you know so I really—it was just a pretty song to me at that point but over the years.

**DAVID FRICKE:** What was Sterling like as a roommate, if he stayed in your apartment?

**DOUG YULE:** He was—Sterling was great, he was very large, yeah.

**DAVID FRICKE:** Very tall.

**DOUG YULE:** I remember him doing interviews in motel rooms and I'd be sitting on the bed listening to him holding forth with the press the way he did, but he was a great roommate, I had a really great time.

**DAVID FRICKE:** I remember interviewing him and he was very fiercely outspoken, articulate and literate and I remember that at his memorial service Dean Wareham of Luna said that he was—Sterling was the only guy he knew who could talk about *Moby-Dick* and the rock band Moby Grape with equal passion and authority, which was one of the favorite things I heard that day. Lou, in writing the songs particularly for the first record, the ones that Nico ended up singing, did you feel you were writing for that voice or was that voice good for the songs? At what stage were those songs—

**LOU REED:** They were done—I wasn't writing it for her voice, it was just they fit her, cause Andy said, we needed a chanteuse.

**DAVID FRICKE:** He used the word chanteuse?

**LOU REED:** Yeah, because none of us were good looking enough (**laughter**)—"you've gotta have somebody." So there she was.



**DAVID FRICKE:** Did you try her out on different songs other than the ones that she ended up singing?

**LOU REED:** Oh, there's a whole bunch of songs that we did that aren't recorded that she was singing on. There was one, one of my favorites, a long one called "Melody Laughter."

**MAUREEN TUCKER:** Oh, that song drove me crazy.

**LOU REED:** In a good way or a bad way?

**MAUREEN TUCKER:** Bad.

**LOU REED:** Oh.

**MAUREEN TUCKER:** No, no, no, only because it could be anywhere from five minutes to forty and it was total lunacy except for me counting literally, counting in my head trying not to lose it.

**DAVID FRICKE:** Well, the bootleg version I have is twenty-nine minutes long, so I know exactly what you're saying.

**MAUREEN TUCKER:** Twenty-nine minutes of torture for Moe.

**(laughter/applause)**

**LOU REED:** Sometimes we tuned for twenty-nine minutes.

**MAUREEN TUCKER:** That's true.

**DAVID FRICKE:** Actually, Lou, I wanted to ask you about some records that you've talked about, singles that you've talked about over years that are favorites. I don't know how much they've influenced you or just been a model for what great songwriting can be. One of them is by the Excellents—"Coney Island Baby."

**LOU REED:** One of the great songs, doo-wop songs, just a doo-wop song, it's a really good one, but that's what it is.

**DAVID FRICKE:** Is that a New York group?

**LOU REED:** Brooklyn.

**DAVID FRICKE:** Brooklyn. Did you hear it on the radio—like on the radio, Alan Freed or whatever?

**LOU REED:** I must have, you know, I listened to the radio a lot then, but it was that kind of a song, that kind of group. And the b-side was very good.

**DAVID FRICKE:** What was the b-side?

**LOU REED:** I think it was “Tell Me Why,” but I’m not sure. Those kind of songs made me think that I could write a song, and when I was fourteen in high school, I did. I wrote a perfect mimic of those kind of songs.

**DAVID FRICKE:** “So Blue.”

**LOU REED:** “So Blue,” and the other side was “Leave Her for Me.” I didn’t even sing it, I was just the background guitar player. But on that record was Mickey Baker.

**DAVID FRICKE:** Oh, from Mickey and Sylvia.

**LOU REED:** And King Curtis. And I was trying to study the Mickey Baker guitar chord book, same Mickey Baker. There’s no way. He could stretch from here to here. It was unbelievable.

**DAVID FRICKE:** Another record that you’ve mentioned, and actually it’s one of my—

**LOU REED:** Can you imagine, you're fourteen years old and you're playing with King Curtis? I mean, not in the same room at the same time, **(laughter)** but still, King Curtis, my God. Mickey Baker. I used to go up to Harlem with all these songs after that to try to see if I could get the Jesters or the Flamingos or the Diablos to record one of these things that I was writing out on Long Island.

**DAVID FRICKE:** Is that, I guess that was another song that you've cited is "The Wind" by Nolan Strong and the Diablos.

**LOU REED:** Poetry in rock. There it is. If I could really sing, I would be Nolan Strong.

**DAVID FRICKE:** Did you ever try?

**LOU REED:** Not that kind of singing, no.

**DAVID FRICKE:** When did you actually figure out the kind of voice you had.

**LOU REED:** Took a long time to figure out how I could earn my stripes to do certain kinds of things. So I put my energy into the phrasing. And all the rest of it because a limited range is a limited range.

**DAVID FRICKE:** Because you sort of came to accept that your range was very specific.

**(laughter)**

**LOU REED:** Yeah. And now—but now they have software.

**DAVID FRICKE:** But they can't do it like you, no software.

**LOU REED:** It took a long time, it was like anything else. I didn't grow up in a farm listening to certain things and doing this, that, and the other thing, I was from the city and all this so you only get it by playing, so like, lots of playing, playing over and over and over and over and over, we used to have a thing in the Velvet Underground, because we knew—we knew all this. It was like a ten-dollar fine if you play a blues lick, it was like, not allowed, because it was not legit. They had all these white guys out there playing blues, didn't want anything to do with that, wanted to create our own legit, pure thing. I was telling Maureen the thing about her drumming is it's incredibly pure, there's no one else like that, no one else even thinks like that, can do it like that.

**DAVID FRICKE:** A lot of your seminal, like records, which are rhythm and blues records, Nolan Strong, The Excellents, Eddie and Ernie, "Outcast."

**LOU REED:** If you scratch any of my songs, that's what they really are, sure. But to me it's like a sonnet, it's about fourteen lines and there you go, ABABAB.

**DAVID FRICKE:** One other record I want to ask you about—Ornette Coleman, *Lonely Woman*.

**LOU REED:** I'm doing this radio show, *Me and Willner*, called *New York Shuffle* and the theme song is "Lonely Woman" by Ornette and I finally got to actually play with Ornette and Don Cherry, major thrills. But Ornette changed my way of thinking about playing guitar forever.

**DAVID FRICKE:** Did you go to see him when he was playing in New York in the early sixties?

**LOU REED:** Oh, yeah, I couldn't afford to get in—I'd be outside by the grating or a window.

**DAVID FRICKE:** What was it about his playing, his concept of harmony, melody, rhythm, that you felt was applicable to the guitar?

**LOU REED:** I don't know, it's just there are certain people with such genius, within five seconds you know who it is, that kind of melody. Wim Wenders once said to me, "What's your favorite, favorite song of anything?" I said, "Lonely Woman." That melody—no one else can do melodies like that right up to now.

**DAVID FRICKE:** It's interesting because—it's also a very beautiful, mournful, it's not by any means free jazz, it's actually quite beautifully constructed.

**LOU REED:** It was also R & B. And on *Change of the Century* the track called "Ramblin'", wow.

**DAVID FRICKE:** Well, that's the blues again. In a way, it's as if you found a way to take that blues element and shear away everything that was clichéd about it and just go to—as you say, go to the pure source.

**LOU REED:** I got to play with Jimmy Scott and at one point he said to me, "You're okay with this. You don't have to think about that anymore, you don't have to worry about that, it's okay," so I took that to heart. This is like twenty years later or something.

**DAVID FRICKE:** Doug, what were your—you're not getting away—what were your seminal influences, records that mattered to you, things that maybe prepared you for stepping in to be a member of the Velvets?

**DOUG YULE:** Well, I listened to everything that my parents and my older sister listened to, so it was everything from classical and jazz, early jazz and mainstream jazz to, you know, fifties doo-wop and popular music and everything, just, and all together.

**DAVID FRICKE:** Is there a particular style of playing and singing that you think prepared you for joining the Velvets? Because in a sense you kind of jumped in pretty quick. You joined at the beginning of October and about a week later you were playing in Cleveland at La Cave.

**DOUG YULE:** It was actually three days, two days.

**DAVID FRICKE:** Three days?

**DOUG YULE:** Two days, yeah.

**DAVID FRICKE:** Without much rehearsal, I'm guessing.

**MAUREEN TUCKER:** He was a trouper.

**DOUG YULE:** I went to Lou's loft, and we rehearsed for two days, just learning songs and going through them and going through them and going through them.

**DAVID FRICKE:** What was it like being in the middle of the sound? You had seen the band play and clearly it had had an effect on you, but then to step into the middle of it.

**DOUG YULE:** I don't know, it was just the band, you know, we were just playing. I was sort of running to try to not make too many mistakes and trying to keep up, but it's not



that same sort of essential—I don't know—the clarity that exists within a group makes it easier to get into it, to just become part of it, you know, it's not like a lot of complicated arrangements, a lot of it's just paying attention and listening.

**DAVID FRICKE:** Did he change your style of drumming in any way? Was there a difference in playing with a different bass player creating that bottom?

**MAUREEN TUCKER:** No.

**DOUG YULE:** No, she changed the way I played bass.

**DAVID FRICKE:** How, what did you do different?

**DOUG YULE:** Well, for one thing, when Moe plays drums it's just—it's complete power, she's just—she's holding that bottom down totally and she's in control of it. I've never seen anyone work as hard in a show as I've seen Moe work.

**MAUREEN TUCKER:** Me and James Brown.

**(laughter/applause)**

**DOUG YULE:** You work harder than he does. No, but she would finish—on a hot night, she would finish and she would just be drenched in sweat, I mean, literally, just

working—working to do what she does. But because she was so solid, it opened up areas for me on the bass that—because I have a very melodic sense of the bass, because I’ve played baritone and tuba, and so it’s a little different than a lot of bass players, and because she’s so solid, I can—I could move around more, you know. So it made it really—it was like heaven for me, I used to like it.

**MAUREEN TUCKER:** Cool.

**DOUG YULE:** I never found another drummer that you could do that with, you know?

**DAVID FRICKE:** What could you actually hear onstage?

**MAUREEN TUCKER:** Mostly Lou, because he was a noisy little guy. He was right next to me.

**DAVID FRICKE:** He’s not here, so you can say whatever you want.

**MAUREEN TUCKER:** When he was doing feedback it was just like a wall went up and I couldn’t hear anything from anybody else, but when he wasn’t doing that. I listened to Sterling mostly who was next to Lou, or tried to hear him anyway, and as I have told you this afternoon, there were times when I didn’t know where the hell we were in the song and had to look at Lou’s mouth to see where he was in the lyrics, because I really couldn’t hear anything. I mean, you hear a cacophony, but that doesn’t help.

**DAVID FRICKE:** Was the volume a problem? Because one of the things that you listen to those records and even on records they sound intense and loud and very assaultive.

**MAUREEN TUCKER:** It never felt like—to me anyway—it never felt like we were too loud. However, my ears ring now.

**DAVID FRICKE:** What was it like in the studio? You listen to a record like “Sister Ray” and it just sounds like it was just complete—

**MAUREEN TUCKER:** Well, obviously, of course not as loud as onstage, but still you had to have that—you have to have—when you’re playing rock and roll, or any music, I suppose, you’ve got to have volume or you just don’t feel it. Actually Lou remembers this, I’m sure, I think it was when we were recording “Sister Ray,” and the poor engineer was ready to cry because the needle was like bonk, and the engineer didn’t know what to do.

**LOU REED:** Don’t you remember what he said?

**MAUREEN TUCKER:** No.

**LOU REED:** He said, “I don’t have to listen to this shit.” **(laughter)** He says, “I’m going out, and when you guys are done fucking around, let me know.”

**(laughter)**

**DAVID FRICKE:** I don't know. I define "fucking around" differently.

**LOU REED:** You know, when you say, "us and them mentality," it was no joke, and it was every last centimeter with those people.

**DAVID FRICKE:** You generally felt like you were outcasts.

**LOU REED:** Not outcasts, they're stupid.

**DAVID FRICKE:** At war.

**LOU REED:** Not outcasts, trying—we were trying to do a very specific thing, we're not dumb and to have to sit there and listen to that stuff from those people, endlessly fighting with them, endlessly fighting with them, and when Andy was there he was like the shield, but when he wasn't there, it was just us, so it got hard.

**DAVID FRICKE:** When you left Andy, was that liberating in some way, that you were now on your own and pursuing your own destiny, or did that make it harder because you had more of *them* to deal with?

**LOU REED:** I was watching Andy, it's like, you know, he would move on to other things at some point, and he had said to me, he said, "You know, you should make your mind up what you want to do. Do you want to keep doing art galleries, or do you want to do something else and branch out?" That was it.

**DAVID FRICKE:** Looking through the book, you look at particularly that year of '66, some of the gigs that you end up playing, you look at these posters, there is one from I guess September of '66 where you're playing the Chrysler Art Museum in Provincetown, Massachusetts, which is very—it's got a nice tony sound to it. Well, about a month later you're playing a Halloween Mod Happening at Leicester Airport in Leicester, Mass. You played in an airplane hanger.

**LOU REED:** Let me tell you what happened with that.

**DAVID FRICKE:** Please.

**LOU REED:** It was an airplane hanger and we were you know tuning and all of this and it's like a football field, it's an airplane hanger. And I'd put a new set of strings on the guitar, so they were long, I hadn't cut them yet, and I'm turning over there and suddenly Sterl said, "Don't move." I said, "Why?" and "Don't move!" so I didn't move so it's like the guitar string had hit the mic and it wasn't grounded and it had burnt it, straight down to the peg and then a little later a guy from the Yardbirds did get electrocuted that way.

**DAVID FRICKE:** Wow, that could have been the end of the Velvet Underground very quickly.

**LOU REED:** Yeah, no one knew anything then about any—about like the whole idea of electronics or an amplified voice was pretty new, amplifying anything, having the voice be amplified, miked. Mixing was unheard of—it was whoever was loudest.

**DAVID FRICKE:** I guess in a way Andy's great strength was he recognized what you did and what was possible, but as an actual rock manager to take a band outside, as you say, outside the art museums, it was—he had—he just didn't have that language together.

**LOU REED:** Have you checked what his last painting sold for?

**(laughter)**

**DAVID FRICKE:** Well, yes, actually, I did.

**LOU REED:** Twenty-three million.

**DAVID FRICKE:** He's doing much better than most band managers, yes. Well, then, actually, let me ask you this: the difference between being art and the life of a working band. Could you tell the difference as soon as you went out and started doing things on your own with the third record, because you toured a lot from '68 through '70.

**LOU REED:** We were just doing what we do. It's not like we changed it or did something. We went out minus Andy, minus all those people who would go out, and we did the same thing minus all that, and the jobs were very limited. Where'd we play? Ohio and Boston. Big venues for us.

**DAVID FRICKE:** Actually, you played in Boston forty times between '68 and '70. You spent more time at the Boston Tea Party than you ever did in New York.

**LOU REED:** When Andy was out of it, that finished us for New York, because when we played in New York, first it was the Polish National Home and then it was a gymnasium, and the minute he went there, these money guys came over and took it, so it became like the Electric Circus. I've always hated businesspeople.

**(laughter)**

**DAVID FRICKE:** With some good reasons.

**LOU REED:** You might say that.

**DAVID FRICKE:** What was it about Boston?

**LOU REED:** The Boston Tea Party.

**DAVID FRICKE:** That was the room.

**LOU REED:** That was it. Well, because, they would hire us.

**DAVID FRICKE:** Good reason.

**LOU REED:** And then out in—what was it, Akron, Cleveland—

**DAVID FRICKE:** Cleveland, La Cave.

**MAUREEN TUCKER:** Cleveland.

**LOU REED:** They would hire us, those two places. Since, so one day I'm going through the airport or something and this guy comes up to me and says, "remember me?" And I'm like, "oh, please," you know, like, "I was in the second row in 1973," okay, great for you, you know. And he was the owner of La Cave, and it had become a software store and he was now a computer person.

**DAVID FRICKE:** Well, you didn't do as well in San Francisco.

**MAUREEN TUCKER:** We kicked ass.



**LOU REED:** Well, we did pretty good.

**DAVID FRICKE:** You had a very interesting love/hate relationship, because your first trip there was not very good, because you played at the Fillmore in '66, and yet you went back there and spent like a good month there in '69.

**LOU REED:** *We* were okay, it's the press wasn't okay, *Rolling Stone* wasn't okay.

**(laughter)**

**DAVID FRICKE:** Wait a minute, I was in high school at the time, so don't—

**(applause)**

**LOU REED:** Ralph Gleason.

**DAVID FRICKE:** In the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

**LOU REED:** Fancy, fancy, he writes an editorial in *Rolling Stone*, about how, “if you're for free speech, if you're for Lenny Bruce, you're stuck with trying to defend the likes of the Velvet Underground.”

**(laughter)**

**DAVID FRICKE:** One of them, actually—I can quote this.

**LOU REED:** You brought it.

**DAVID FRICKE:** I brought it. “Camp plus con equals nothing.” He really went to town. “It was all very campy and very Greenwich Village sick.” **(laughter)** San Francisco had some issues at the time.

**LOU REED:** It wasn’t San Francisco; it was him and *Rolling Stone*.

**(laughter)**

**DAVID FRICKE:** No, actually, this was in the *Chronicle*.

**LOU REED:** Okay, the *Chronicle*. We never had a problem with the people. I mean, we walked into the—I don’t know if it’s the Fillmore or the Avalon—

**DAVID FRICKE:** The Family Dog and the Matrix.

**LOU REED:** —and their idea of a light show—their idea of a light show is they’ve got a little plate with some oil on it and they’re heating it and a picture of Buddha in back. **(laughter)** Californians. I said, “okay, you’ve gotta be kidding.”

**DAVID FRICKE:** But there was actually one thing—

**LOU REED:** But the people were great.

**DAVID FRICKE:** There was actually one thing you said that was interesting in an interview later.

**LOU REED:** Only one?

**(laughter)**

**DAVID FRICKE:** Well, no, there were many but I don't have time for them all. You were talking about vast objections to the whole San Francisco music scene, talking about the Airplane, the Dead, with the exception of Creedence, who I like a lot, like he's doing this—"he" meaning John Fogerty—he's doing this incredible linkup between this old force and he's still got a contemporary feel. Was he somebody you really listened to?

**LOU REED:** You know, secondhand quotes, I never take them very seriously, when someone says, "You said," and they're reading from what, from what, you know, like did I say it? I don't know if I said it. You'd have to ask me now. I don't know who you're quoting quoting.

**DAVID FRICKE:** Actually, I'm quoting you.

**LOU REED:** No, you're quoting me from someone else quoting me.

**DAVID FRICKE:** It's actually *Third Year Magazine*, and it's reprinted in the *New York Art* book.

**LOU REED:** What does that mean?

**(laughter)**

**DAVID FRICKE:** I don't know, it's in the fucking book, I don't know.

**LOU REED:** I mean, I love Johan, but there's two mistakes on page 2. **(laughter)** I mean, that's part of the whole thing. Andy always loved it. You know, Wikipedia had, you know, the entry on me, at the beginning, it says, "Lou Reed, born Louis Firbank."

**(laughter)** You can't buy this. And I couldn't get in there to edit it to change it,

**(laughter)** so then this moron from the *Daily News*, Hockney, whatever the hell his name is, so he does a real rip apart of me, and it says, Lou Reed, what is it, Lou Feinberg, Louis Firbank, so we got in touch with the *Daily News*, said, "I don't give a fuck about this, but you want to see my driver's license?" And they said, "We stand by our source."

**(laughter)** Okay. Next.

**(laughter/applause)**

**DAVID FRICKE:** Okay, no more secondhand quotes. One thing about the book, actually, *New York Art*, that I feel is really strong, is it is a really great visual history of the group and with the cover art, with the photo portraits, the things that Andy created with the banana. Obviously the visual was really essential to the life of the band and basically the legacy that we're here to talk about today, but did you have an early visual sense of what you wanted the Velvets to look like, to project? You were actually—you know, early on, even before Andy saw you, you were playing with underground filmmakers, which is about imagery and presentation. Did you have any idea what you wanted the band to look like, to feel like, to present outside beyond the music?

**MAUREEN TUCKER:** I don't think any of us had a vision of let's sound—our wardrobe—

**DAVID FRICKE:** All that black.

**MAUREEN TUCKER:** Sound like this—is that what you mean, just sound like.

**DAVID FRICKE:** All that black. Well, I mean, that's just part of it, really.

**LOU REED:** Part of the black thing is because Andy was projecting movies and the sunglasses was also the same thing, it was blinding and the strobes, and he was so smart.

He would take some of these movies and pictures and make them in geometric shapes, no curves, and then project it on black, so we were like human screens for his potpourri of images. I mean, there's a famous photo with John and a big thing of an eye and it's his eye, and you know random, but we never—you know, so we just stayed that way, which is also the cheapest way.

**DAVID FRICKE:** That's true. Did you talk much with him about the visuals like the banana? Did he say, "I have a great idea for your album cover—a peelable banana."

**LOU REED:** No, what he said was, "Ooooooh, what are we going to do? **(laughter)** We have to do a cover, oh, Moooooe," **(laughter)** and someone—who knows where the idea is, because everybody was there. But, I mean, the thing about the banana is you peel it. That's when the fun started for Andy. No one ever saw a pink banana. Then later on he did the same idea with the Rolling Stones except he put a zipper on it. He already did that. **(laughter/applause)** How many years behind?

**DAVID FRICKE:** Well, it's also it seems like in many ways he had a real passion for what you did and that gave him almost a license to do what he did in terms of things like that, the cover of *White Light/White Heat*, the idea of the visuals. You know, you were part of something very seminal for him as an artist.

**LOU REED:** I love the cover of *White Light/White Heat*. All these reprints, I don't know if they keep the original one was one of the guys there had a tattoo, a death's head tattoo

on his shoulder, and you can only see it—No one knew this, but when they put shrink wrap over it, it disappeared, so it looked like a black cover, but then when you took this thing off, imagine, when people were stoned, “aaaah! What’s that? The cover’s moving!”

**DAVID FRICKE:** Actually the book has the original still from the movie from which the tattoo was taken, it’s really worth seeing. I’d never seen that photo before.

**LOU REED:** The original Andy movie.

**DAVID FRICKE:** Yes, the original Andy movie. Because there was actually a wonderful picture—this is pre-Andy. Donald Greenhouse had done a series, I guess a bunch of photos.

**LOU REED:** I grew up with Donald. I knew him since the fifth grade. Fifth grade in Atkinson Public School.

**DAVID FRICKE:** Shout-out. There’s a photo of the four of you with Angus standing on the stoop on Ludlow Street—

**LOU REED:** On Ludlow Street on the stoop.

**DAVID FRICKE:** And it’s a really great portrait, because John has the suit and he’s all dapper. Sterling is up in the corner looking kind of, I don’t know, he’s just looking at

things very askance. Angus is wearing this satin bomber jacket, he sort of looks like one of the gang members in *West Side Story*, but with a beard, and you're wearing a burnoose.

**LOU REED:** Angus's burnoose.

**DAVID FRICKE:** Ah, it was Angus's. It was an interesting visual mix. Did you—and this was clearly a portrait, too, of some kind. This is what bands do.

**LOU REED:** Just having fun. I guess someone said, "Do you have a photo of the band?" and we said, "No." "Donald, can you take a picture of us?"

**MAUREEN TUCKER:** I don't think there was an awful lot of planning going on, early on. There wasn't by me, anyway. I think all of us were pretty much—I always say this and it sounds trite but having a lot of fun and doing what *we* wanted to do and with no plan—so many people really do think that—and I've been asked this a lot—as if we schemed with the sunglasses. "Wow, who told you to wear sunglasses?" and things like that. And that's just us, that's the way we were. Always wearing black, that's—we didn't all say, "hey, let's wear black, that's cool." That's just the way we were. And I think that we all were ourselves in all ways including music and I—it's hard to explain what I mean. I think the different personalities were really very different, and when we all came together musically, it was just a whole different sound. I didn't know—I couldn't play a role for a million dollars, honestly, thank God. Because once you know how to do that



you can't resist. And my—basic, it's not even a skill, my basic playing is because I didn't know how to do other stuff, and I didn't want to know.

**DAVID FRICKE:** There's actually a kind of discipline in that. Knowing that this is the pursuit and not to add things that are unnecessary or to add something that someone else tells you is cool. Just, "This is why we are together and playing this music at this particular point, and I think one of the reasons that we're all here, why that record means so much to me, why any of those four records mean so much to me is that they're evidence of a band that decided, "This is what we are going to do," and the pursuit of that is paramount and everything else is just daily life or occasional trouble, the odd brick wall, but you were determined to go from start to wherever the finish was. That's not a question. That's a statement. **(laughter)** It's a statement of affection. It is actually quite strange, however, to see the Velvets' name on a lot of psychedelic ballroom posters because you played at places like the Avalon, the Hippodrome in San Diego, and you were actually on bills with—actually there's one, it's a really beautiful poster at the Shrine Auditorium in L.A. and you were on the bill with the Butterfield Blues Band and Sly and the Family Stone.

**LOU REED:** It must have been great.

**(laughter)**

**DAVID FRICKE:** If anyone finds the tapes, please bring them to our attention.

**LOU REED:** I would like to see that.

**MAUREEN TUCKER:** I don't remember that.

**LOU REED:** Can you imagine?

**DAVID FRICKE:** Did you ever get a sense of like when in playing—

**LOU REED:** We opened for Bobby Blue Bland. Our first gig in San Francisco was a blues club where somehow in downtown San Francisco, we were booked into this black club where we're opening for Bobby Blue Bland. We're playing exactly the same music. And they were very polite to us. **(laughter)** You've gotta imagine doing "Heroin" in this club in 1966.

**DAVID FRICKE:** And then he comes out and does "Farther on Up the Road."

**LOU REED:** And then he comes out and does "Shine Your Love Light," you know, and we all swooned. And another first gig was, what was it Vancouver, the opening act was a woman contortionist, do you remember that?

**MAUREEN TUCKER:** Something crazy. I don't remember exactly, yeah.

**LOU REED:** Compatible booking.

**DAVID FRICKE:** You had a great booking agent. You know, one minute it's Sly and Bobby Blue Bland, the next minute you're doing circus acts.

**LOU REED:** Weird, right?

**MAUREEN TUCKER:** We were diverse.

**DAVID FRICKE:** Well, in a way you were actually kind of at the—that period was really the forefront of a lot of what people take for granted now, which is the mechanics of touring, of putting together bills. And you were like a lot of bands in that period you were kind of out in the unknown.

**LOU REED:** I remember when we went out with Andy and were driving back from L.A. and Nico was driving—

**MAUREEN TUCKER:** Oh my God, Nico driving.

**LOU REED:** Oh my God. And we got stopped by the cops and this guy said, “Who's in charge here?” and there's Nico, and everybody pushes Andy in front. It was fantastic.

**MAUREEN TUCKER:** That's when they told us to get out of town, literally.

**LOU REED:** They said, “You’re really near the state line. Why don’t you cross it?”

**(laughter)**

**MAUREEN TUCKER:** And the bus was broken, so we couldn’t.

**DAVID FRICKE:** Nice reception.

**MAUREEN TUCKER:** The bus was broken, remember? It was—so we had to—they let us stay overnight at a motel, but he actually said to please be across the state line by noon tomorrow. And all we were doing was making music.

**DAVID FRICKE:** I’m looking at him.

**PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER:** I think we’ll take questions from the audience.

**DAVID FRICKE:** Okay, if you got something. What have you got for me?

**PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER:** We got about a hundred and twenty and I decided to only take a hundred and ten. So, the first question is, “As a group, what is your most sentimental memory of Mr. Warhol?”

**DAVID FRICKE:** Or as individuals.

**MAUREEN TUCKER:** One of my sentimental memories is chasing Andy around the Factory to get five dollars for gas to go home.

**(laughter)**

**DAVID FRICKE:** That's romantic. Did you get it?

**MAUREEN TUCKER:** Yes.

**PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER:** Two—

**DAVID FRICKE:** Did you actually ever—did you ever meet Andy?

**DOUG YULE:** Once.

**DAVID FRICKE:** Can you tell us? You've got a mic.

**DOUG YULE:** It was at a party at the Factory. It was just after I joined the band, and you know, we were just all hanging out there, that's all. That's the only time I ever met him.

**DAVID FRICKE:** What was it like to be at the Factory? Because that must have been—  
was that a first-time visit for you?

**DOUG YULE:** It was kind of like being on acid, you know. Just eyes wide, you know,  
like, it was very intense. A lot going on.

**PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER:** Could the Velvets do what they did in 2009 as a new band?

**MAUREEN TUCKER:** Yeah. **(applause)** Oh, absolutely. We're us, we would still do  
the same thing we did then, I think.

**DAVID FRICKE:** Well, actually, that's sort of goes with something that I had been  
thinking about, which is that, you know, that what you did musically, the things you were  
writing about, the people that were populating the Factory, the streets, the scene itself,  
were very much of a specific intersection of art, film, music. There was an energy at that  
particular time. Can you imagine something like that happening now with say a younger  
band, a younger mirror image of yourselves in New York the way it is now? Because the  
city has changed in good ways and in ways that I know a lot of people aren't as happy  
about.

**MAUREEN TUCKER:** I haven't been here for a long time. I haven't lived here for a  
real long time, but from what I hear and read I don't think so. I think New York has made  
it very difficult for artists of any genre. So this—I was just saying to one of my kids I

guess today, when we were running around, I didn't live in the city but the guys did, and you could get an apartment for a hundred dollars a month or maybe even sixty even, and that you could scrape together, but you sure as hell couldn't scrape together what you need to have an apartment today, so any young artists, or photographers, writers, whatever, you can't live in New York and I think that takes a lot away from New York, really takes a lot away from it.

**(applause)**

**DAVID FRICKE:** How has New York changed for you? Like, what do you see? Because you write about New York. You wrote an entire album called *New York*.

**LOU REED:** I think that although the price has gone up, there's a lot of places in Brooklyn.

**(applause)**

**DAVID FRICKE:** Brooklyn in the house.

**LOU REED:** And it's a lot of great groups in Brooklyn and all these young bands can record without having to go to recording studios, so you don't need money for that anymore. So that's something where they have a real advantage.

**DAVID FRICKE:** There's no more "them."

**LOU REED:** What do you mean?

**DAVID FRICKE:** Well, the stupid ones. "They."

**MAUREEN TUCKER:** The ever-present "they."

**LOU REED:** You know, if you want to have a live drummer, you need a studio. That's the problem. It's a whole different world if you have make-believe drums, but if you want to have a real drummer, that's going to drown out everything else and get you thrown out.

**DAVID FRICKE:** Some things never change.

**LOU REED:** They're out there, I mean, you know, there are these groups all over the place. But is it intersecting with everything else? I don't know, because I'm not part of that.

**PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER:** The question here maybe goes to that point. What are your thoughts about the enormous proliferation of unofficial Velvet Underground material circulating via the Internet?



**LOU REED:** I wish I had read that clause that says “future technology.”

**DAVID FRICKE:** Or the one that says, you know, for rights in the whole known universe. I’ve seen that on a couple of contracts. Are you surprised by the amount of material that has come out, things that were recorded? Obviously the Robert Quine tapes that became that box set a few years ago.

**LOU REED:** Long before that. This magician from Penn and Teller. He comes over once and says, you know, “I’m the head of the Velvet Underground fan club,” and he gives me a bag of thirty cassettes of—how he ever got it. I mean, that’s pre-Internet. I mean, it was always there it was just never so much of it available to everybody. But now you go to YouTube and there it is.

**DAVID FRICKE:** Were you surprised even then that the band was documented as thoroughly by unofficial—by just fans, guys with tape recorders going or club owners just running the reels.

**LOU REED:** I’ve never understood it. Not for a second.

**DAVID FRICKE:** But has it helped increase the legacy in any way. Does it matter in addition to the four records?

**LOU REED:** I’m just a songwriter.

**DAVID FRICKE:** I'm a collector.

**PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER:** Before we go to the last question, I want to thank everybody for coming. I also want to tell you that there will be a book signing, which will last about sixteen minutes, so stand in line quickly, and the last question is how would you feel if you were asked forty years ago, if you knew forty years ago that you would be interviewed here at the New York Public Library, would you have believed it?

**MAUREEN TUCKER:** I wouldn't have. I wouldn't have. I know that.

**LOU REED:** I was not capable of thinking forty years ahead.

**(applause/laughter)**

**PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER:** Thank you very much.

**DAVID FRICKE:** The end. Thank you.

**(“White Light/White Heat” plays)**