

Interviewee: Lew Andre Mathews

Interviewer: Norie Guthrie

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Interview Transcript

Norie Guthrie: My name is Norie Guthrie from the Woodson Research Center at Fondren Library in Rice University. I am interviewing Lew Andre Mathews. Today is June 28th, 2018. This is part of the Houston Folk Music Archive Oral History Project. Can you tell me about your early life?

Lew Andre Mathews: Early life. Well, I grew up, um, my father was in the Air Force, so I grew up travelling the world. Every year or two we'd move between France, Okinawa, different parts of the U.S., Kansas, Texas quite a bit. Um, a couple of times in Texas. Um, South Dakota, gosh. Anyway, um, and while we were in France, it was Christmas, and my parents gave me – I was probably 9? Gave me this toy Roy Rogers guitar, which really – had nylon strings on it and plastic frets, and I started playing that and singing a little song book that came along with “Home on the Range” and wore that guitar out in 3 weeks, so my dad, uh, broke down and bought me a, a real classic guitar. A, a classic style acoustic guitar and, uh, and that was a little bit large for me at the time, so, but I, I kept that up until I was probably 16 when I bought my first electric guitar. We were stationed in Kansas at, at that time around Salina, and, uh, a high school friend of mine, we started a little, uh, surf music band 'cause that was popular in the early 60s, so we did “Pipeline” and “Wipeout” and all that kinda stuff and, uh, and that was neat, and then, uh, we went our separa-, separate ways. I moved to California and my senior year in high school in Vanden and, uh, which is next to Travis Air Force Base in northern California, um, and I got in a band there, and I can't remember the name of it. I think it was called These Times or something like that. Uh, um, and, uh, we played high school dances and stuff, so it was a lot of fun, and then, uh, I worked, uh, after school at a grocery store. Saved up money and bought a real guitar and a real amp, and, uh, then went to, uh, college in Alabama, so I moved to Alabama and got in a band there, and then, uh, decided to drop out of college after about a year. Me and a drummer headed back to California and putting together another band with some people we knew out there, so and that goes on and on, you know, as you travel and grow and, and, um, I was living in Phoenix, um, and, uh, got out for a job 'cause I couldn't support myself playing music back in those days. I was offered a job in Houston, so in '72, I moved to Houston with my girlfriend who became my wife, Nancy, um, and, the, within, uh, a few months, I had met some people. Actually, my next door neighbor – we rented a home in northern Houston. The north side of Houston. Just outside the loop, and, um, I, my neighbor, Jim, was selling a Jeep, and the guy that bought it was, turned out to be Vince Bell, so I got to, I met Vince, and he told me about Anderson Fair, and, uh, and, uh, told me to check out the Old Market Square, and so I did, and I found, ran into some people there, and I got a gig with a band on Old Market Square, and we played, uh, down at Willie's Pub which was kind of subterranean, right on the bayou.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lew Andre Mathews: And, um, did that for, gosh a year or two before they closed all the head shops and whatever was down there. It was kind of like a crazy mall underneath. It was painted weird and the hallway wasn't straight, and it was kind of cool, but Willie's Pub was at the end of it, and there were other little headshop type placed down there, but that was sort of the end of the Old Market Square scene. It was dying out about that time, and, uh –

Norie Guthrie: What was that band? Um, what kind of music did you guys play?

Lew Andre Mathews: The band, we did cover music and some original music. The band was called Sweet Peter.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lew Andre Mathews: Uh, Larry Glass was the band leader, and I think Lynn Delgado was, uh, the lead singer, and, um, Don Becker was, uh, the bass player. Um, and, um, and I actually worked with Don quite a bit over, for a few years with other bands and groups and different things and, and Don became, uh, bass player for Vince Bell, uh, for a while. Um, and, uh, yeah. I remember my first time going down to the Anderson Fair. I took an old guitar that my uncle had – my grandmother gave it to me. It was my uncle's guitar. He had brought back from Hawaii. He was in the navy during World War II. Went down with a submarine attack on his, his ship, but, um, she gave me that guitar, and I, I used it to learn slide because it had a resonator on it, like a little Hawaiian slide, so I learned how to play slide on that thing, and I remember taking that down there one night, and you know, I, can I play a couple songs and it's like, yeah. After Don Sanders takes a break. He was, uh, in the main room, so I played a few songs, and, and, uh, that sort of introduced me to the folk scene in, in Houston, and, um –

Norie Guthrie: What was, um, and so this was 1972. Right?

Lew Andre Mathews: '72, '73.

Norie Guthrie: Um, what did Anderson Fair look like at that time?

Lew Andre Mathews: Pretty much the same as it looks now except, I think some of the doorways have moved, and, uh, the, uh, expansion of the studio was added in later. Um, but, uh, it was beginning, it was, they had the room, the big room where you listen now, and they were still working on modifying that. Uh, but, um, there was the spaghetti lunches and, and I actually played, the first time, you played the lunch time, you didn't play in the big room 'cause they're doing construction or whatever in there to make it a listening room, and you played right there by the front door, and, uh, so that was, that was, that was interesting, and, uh, got to meet some of the folks. Walter Spinks and Franci Files who, uh, were working there. Running the club. Tim Leatherwood came a little bit later. But Roger Ruffcorn, I got to know. I got to know the folks, and you know, hey it was fun. 'Cause I was actually working a straight job too, so, uh, if I could, I would come down for spaghetti lunch once a week if I, if it, if I could find time to leave north Houston, to get, swing by there for lunch. It would work out great. Um –

Norie Guthrie: What was it like kind of being in both worlds during that time?

Lew Andre Mathews: Well, it was tough in, in, uh, the artistic way because you have to kind of stop what – you get in an artistic mood, and you have to stop and go to work. I mean you got to get up and go to work every day, so. That's kind of difficult, but it's doable, um, if you have steady gigs or stuff like that. It's doable. Um, I liked the money was great because, I was making really good money, and, uh, most of the folks around the Fair didn't have jobs or have other jobs, but, uh, I was doing engineering work and drafting the, and design work for the Bell Companies. Those phone, phone systems and, uh, so I was making good money there, after a few years of that, I started taking 6 months off 'cause there was so much work in Houston, I could take 6 months off and play music, and then go back to work for 6 months.

Norie Guthrie: Okay.

Lew Andre Mathews: Take 6 months off, go back to work for 6 months. Um, but after a while, the, the, the, the free range jobs started drying up, and I started, uh, going out of town. Uh, well, we moved to California, and I ran, uh, an office there for a company, and, um, and got in a little band there. Everywhere I went, I would join a band, 'cause I was primarily an electric guitar player, but the thing about the Fair through, like, the early '70s is like, it's a, it was my first experience of just people with acoustic guitars doing their music, and that really, really pulled me in to the songwriter aspect of it, and, uh, although, you know, I was more of an electric player. I, I bought a Martin guitar from Bianca DeLeon, and I, I still have that guitar today. I still play it, and, uh, I got into the acoustic thing. Open tunings and all of that, and it was, I did that for a couple of years just as a solo artist, and that was a lot of fun. That was actually easier to kind of like do my day job and do my solo thing 'cause bands are always confusing trying to get people together, and they come and they go and material changes and – but, uh, that was cool.

Norie Guthrie: So, when did you, um, what were the years that you did the solo?

Lew Andre Mathews: Probably, like, uh, '74, '76.

Norie Guthrie: Okay.

Lew Andre Mathews: Along through there.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lew Andre Mathews: It was after Sweet Peter broke up. I, I, I started playing with the acoustic idea –

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lew Andre Mathews: – and writing my own songs, and I was, it was interesting. Uh, it was a new thing for me, so.

Norie Guthrie: Did you in, did you enjoy songwriting?

Lew Andre Mathews: Yeah.

Norie Guthrie: Yeah?

Lew Andre Mathews: I still do.

Norie Guthrie: Um, what other clubs did you play at during that kind of, um, solo period?

Lew Andre Mathews: God, Theodore's, um, I can't even remember the names of some of these clubs. Um, I shoulda boned up on, on, on this.

Norie Guthrie: There was, uh, Carnaby's?

Lew Andre Mathews: Carnaby's. Yup, played there.

Norie Guthrie: Carnaby's.

Lew Andre Mathews: Houlihan's –

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lew Andre Mathews: – No. 2. Um, oh gosh. Uh, a couple of places up on Richmond Avenue that, that are long gone.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lew Andre Mathews: And then, uh, you know, like I said, I went to California for a while and worked for about a year and a half out there and came back to Houston, and, uh, that's when I, I met Danny Epp's Band. Danny hired me as a guitar player, and he had gigs going, so we were kind of on the road around Texas, um, playing different places. The Texas Opry House was, uh, a, a big happening spot during that period. The late '70s. Um, we played there multiple times. Opened for David Allan Coe. Golly, um, I can't – did a couple of openings with Willie Nelson out at Gilly's. Um, and, um, we landed a shot, uh, a day gig for the band was, uh, you know we'd work from, in, in the studio out of Sugar Hill for 4 hours every day, 4 or 5 hours. Well from noon to 5.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lew Andre Mathews: We'd show up the studio, and lay down tracks for whatever they were producing for whoever, and, uh, that it included running up in on, uh, a couple of Freddy Fender songs and ten other people I don't even know that –

Norie Guthrie: Okay, so you were kind of, so you're in a sense like the, kinda like the house band for the studio.

Lew Andre Mathews: We were the studio band, the house studio band.

Norie Guthrie: Yeah. Okay.

Lew Andre Mathews: And we'd work in both studios. Studio A and Studio B.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lew Andre Mathews: Mostly Studio B. Um, that's where they would work up projects.

Norie Guthrie: Okay.

Lew Andre Mathews: When it got to a point, then they'd move it to Studio A and –

Norie Guthrie: So, what was, um, what was that experience like?

Lew Andre Mathews: That was kinda cool. That was my first real studio work, and, uh, I learned a lot about how to record and different ways of miking things and how to build it with tracks, layering things. Um.

Norie Guthrie: Did you find it difficult to, um, pick up on someone else's music and being able to spit that right out or –

Lew Andre Mathews: Not really. Uh, yeah, you either have a feel for it or you don't.

Norie Guthrie: Okay.

Lew Andre Mathews: You know, and, uh, I found that people would come in and just start playing a song, and then it would either fit with what I could do or it wouldn't, and, and I'd just take a quick shot at it, and most of it worked.

Norie Guthrie: Okay.

Lew Andre Mathews: Certainly I could do rhythm tracks all day long for anybody. You know? But for like doing instrumental leads and things like that. They were into a lot of steel guitar and stuff at that point, which I didn't play, so we'd just build the tracks for the other cast to come and overdub. The singers. Did two albums with Freddy Fender, never saw him at the studio. Well, I'd see him in hallway sometimes, but we'd build things up. Then he'd come in at some point and lay down his vocals, and it would get mixed, and we'd get to hear the mix. Sit around for that. That was fun working with. Mickey Moody, he was, uh, excellent engineer, and I learned a lot from him. How to mix, how to blend sounds and punch things in, punch things out.

Norie Guthrie: So, did you, so it's interesting, so does that mean that most of the artists that were having, uh, that were doing, that were recording pieces didn't take much of a role in kind of

thinking about their sounds? Like kind of crafting it, or they just kinda like let Mickey Moody do that work on his own?

Lew Andre Mathews: Uh, the way Huey, Huey, these were artists, artists that Huey Meaux signed, and he would want to do certain songs in, in a certain way, and we were able to do that rhythmically and set it up, and then he would have the artists record the vocals on it, and he'd put it out. Um, so it was really his show.

Norie Guthrie: Okay.

Lew Andre Mathews: And, um, we did one off the books project that was really great. Uh, Rex Bell, Mickey White, and I with, along with Pete Gorisch and Billy Block. We did the, uh, after closings, sessions, a few of them at night over there with Lucinda, and, uh, that was her first CD, and, uh, they laid down the rhythm tracks with the – again, I took about 30 minutes and put my guitar leads on all the tracks. There were about ten songs, so and that was pretty fast. Went right through them. Just basically one take, 'cause I knew her stuff pretty well, so it was, and it worked out. It worked out fine, and, uh –

Norie Guthrie: Did you know her stuff from playing with her previously or from just, um, being in Anderson Fair?

Lew Andre Mathews: Um, around the Fair. The Fair was the hub of the folk scene in Houston, and I had met Lucinda in other, other deals 'cause we're playing the same clubs at different times and –

Norie Guthrie: Okay, so the session work would have taken place in, so that would have probably been in the mid to late '70s. Right?

Lew Andre Mathews: Late '70s. Yeah.

Norie Guthrie: Late '70s. Okay.

Lew Andre Mathews: Mid to late. Right.

Norie Guthrie: And then, um, when did you end up, um, some other things I have on here are playing with, like, Lightnin' Hopkins and the Hemmer Ridge Mountain Boys.

Lew Andre Mathews: That was in the late '70s. Um, Owen Cody who, who played with the Danny Epp's band was a violin player and he had afro hair like out to here, and, uh, he was quite an interesting character. Didn't wear shoes ever, and, uh, he was gonna sit in with the Hemmer Ridge Mountain Boys, and they were playing a show at Fitzgerald's and, uh, Mickey wanted, he, he asked me if I would lend my guitar to Mickey, and I said okay well I'll, I'll do that, you know, and, um, so I had something else to do. Another gig or something somewhere else, and then I got to Fitzgerald's later or kind of like in the middle of their opening show, and, um, and Cody introduced me to Mickey and Rex and Mike Edwards was playing drums, and, um, um he said, Mickey who's, let him sit in, so Mickey gave me his old guitar to play 'cause he was playing

mine, and it was, wasn't strong, right. It was, no wonder he needed a guitar, but anyway, I played the heck out of it, and, uh, they, they loved it, and, uh, I joined the band thereafter. You know? And, and we played together for 4 maybe 5 years, uh, as a four piece. I think they started out as a two piece. Backing up Townes and, uh, then they added Mike and they were doing the Hemmer Ridge Mountain Boys, and then they added me and it was a lot of fun. Crazy times.

Norie Guthrie: Did –

Lew Andre Mathews: – wild bunch.

Norie Guthrie: Did you end up, um, playing with Townes at all during that time as the usu-.

Lew Andre Mathews: Not during that time.

Norie Guthrie: Okay.

Lew Andre Mathews: It was probably '86 or '87. Um, Danny Epps and the Wild Crew. I had moved to Austin, and, uh, we went out to, uh, Danny and Jeff and Tom, myself, we all went out to harass Townes, had this little blue houseboat out at Briar Cliff, so we had a case of beer and we got there, and we were joking around and talking and having fun with Townes and Danny decided he was gonna throw him overboard, so Danny picked Townes up, and he was throwing him overboard, and Townes grabbed the rail to try to hold on and it must've dislocated a finger in his left hand, and he had a gig that night, and I reset it in the houseboat, so I, I reset it back into place, but there's no way he could play a, a show that night so I actually played for Townes not with him. I played acoustic guitar and, uh, fortunately Mickey White was there to really, he knew Townes' material much better than I did at that point, but, uh, we played the show. Down, it was on South Congress. I can't remember the name of the club. It was a big, had a big glass, tall ceiling place. It's gone now, and, but, uh, that was the only time I actually worked on stage with Townes, but I had met him at the old core when we were playing with Sweet Peter, when I was playing with Sweet Peter down at the old market square, and he was working at the, uh, Old Quarter, and I would go down and see him, uh, after we would get off or, you know, other nights when I wasn't working. Uh, so, you know, that's, that's the story of me playing with Townes.

Norie Guthrie: Um, and what's the, what's the story behind, um, working with Lightnin' Hopkins?

Lew Andre Mathews: Well, that is a story. Well, I never really did. I did some shows with him –

Norie Guthrie: Okay.

Lew Andre Mathews: – where I played with the Hemmer Ridge Mountain Boys.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lew Andre Mathews: Eh, but, uh, Rex was the only one in the group that actually played with Lightnin', and, um, well, Mike may have too, the drummer, 'cause at that, yeah, I think Mike played a couple of shows with him as his drummer, 'cause Lightnin' would just come and show

up and have his guitar, so you, you know, we'd have the band. There would be drums and the bass kit and, and he would just plug into the amp and do his thing, and Rex said watch his foot 'cause he'll move it back when he's gonna change the cord, so, uh, but Lightnin' was, uh, I got to hang out with him, you know, and sat more, more than once, several times, um, and he was an interesting man, um, he liked the Imperial Beer, which was code for Pearl. Um, but Lightnin', yeah, yeah. I went over to Miss Irene's when I first moved here back in '72 and, uh, I'd heard about a place called Miss Irene's and, um, there were some blues cats there and so, um, Rocky Hill was playin' and I don't know, know who he was playing with because it was, um, I didn't know or recognize him. I can't remember. It could've been his brother, Dusty. I don't know, but he was playin' there that night, so that intro-, introduced me to the blues scene for electric guitars, and later on Rocky Hill played with me 'cause I had, I was doin' my solo thing, but I was also usin' drummers and other cats and Tony and Terry and Rocky would come and, and play my gigs with me 'cause when they were in town and not on the road, that would be fun. Uh, I got into blues after I'd sort of faded out of the folk.

Norie Guthrie: Okay.

Lew Andre Mathews: I never really completely faded out. I mean, I still do folky stuff, but, uh, if you give me an electric guitar, I know what to do with it, with, doesn't matter where or when or why.

Norie Guthrie: Um, was, uh, I've heard stories about Rocky. Was he, was he pleasant when you were workin' with him?

Lew Andre Mathews: He was wild. He was a great guitarist. Um, he just wanted to play. He wanted to take this, he wanted to steal the show. Yeah, and, and if you let him, he would. Yeah, he was, he was quite a character, and, uh, he was already a Houston legend when I moved here, so, um, yeah, he had a, had some monkeys on his back, so he went through the, that up and down with the drug scene, and that's, that was a shame 'cause he was really, really a talented man.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm. Um, so, so the Hemmer Ridge Mountain Boys would have gone into almost like the mid 80's?

Lew Andre Mathews: Early '80's.

Norie Guthrie: Early '80's?

Lew Andre Mathews: Yeah.

Norie Guthrie: So then –

Lew Andre Mathews: Yeah, probably –

Norie Guthrie: – what came –

Lew Andre Mathews: – like up to about '85.

Norie Guthrie: '85? Okay. And then what came next after that?

Lew Andre Mathews: Well, –

Norie Guthrie: Or if you were also –

Lew Andre Mathews: – somewhere in there I got –

Norie Guthrie: – doing other work?

Lew Andre Mathews: – separated from my wife. Rex separated from his wife, and we're now together, um, and so we left, uh, Sharon and I moved out of Houston and moved to Austin and, um, we were goin' to a big party out in the country and, um, this is the full circle of music and friends. It was like, uh, there's a big cookout and there's, like 200 people, and there's gonna be a band there, and Sean Walters, who I forgot to mention, there were, The Louvres were in there –

Norie Guthrie: We can –

Lew Andre Mathews: – in those '80's.

Norie Guthrie: – we can go back to that, yeah.

Lew Andre Mathews: Uh, but, uh, anyway, Sean had talked about playin' out at Bright Star's, uh, big wingding they were throwin' out in the country, and there were a lot of people there, uh, and then, and so I was comin' up the driveway carryin' a sack of groceries or somethin' we were gonna, potato salad we were bringin' as our, our, our potluck thing, and, uh, looked across the driveway and there was a circle of guys over there and there's a guy and I, I recognize him. Man, I put the stuff down in the middle of the driveway and I run, I walked over and Charlie, and he didn't recognize me at first. Andre. This was the guy I started playin' surf music with back in Kansas in 1965 or 4, and, uh, here it was 1986, so it's been like 20 years later and, uh, his band was playin' there. I didn't know he was in a group called Second Time Around and my band didn't show up, but I had my guitar with me and, and so they, they asked me to sit in, so I sat in with 'em and, and, uh, they liked it, and they hired me. So that's how I got moved to Austin, got in my first band in Austin, but it was amazing. Charlie was, uh, a, was a meticulous guitarist. He would note-for-note like the record, never any different. I mean, I'm more of a freestyle learner and I like to bend things and move 'em and, and, um, but that, that was amazing. To back up, Rex and me and Sean Walters, Jimmy Jones – gosh, we're, uh, McNally, Johnny McNally, drummer, um, we started The Louvres somewhere in the mid '70's or late '70's and, uh, we were a popular little rock and roll band, original music, and we played all over the Montrose area continually for many, many, many, many, many moons and, uh, and that was, that was, uh, a blast. I loved it. So we had two electric guitar players, bass drums and Sean singing and, uh, Sean's just an amazing singer. I love his material to this day.

Norie Guthrie: So –

Lew Andre Mathews: And, uh, so yeah. Uh-

Norie Guthrie: – was that hard to balance being in two different bands at the same time?

Lew Andre Mathews: No. No 'cause I think one had sorta gone defunct by the time one really takes over. They just sort of, they blend and then the stronger one takes, takes over. The weaker one goes away or changes later. I mean, you always go back and you, playing with musicians is like goin' around through a spider web. You, you always seem to come back in contact with, with some way or another, whether it's music or just, uh, as friends showin' up at a reunion and jammin' together one more time.

Norie Guthrie: Hmm.

Lew Andre Mathews: That's always a blast.

Norie Guthrie: Um, so then you got into a new band when you were in Austin, and you weren't in Austin very long though, right?

Lew Andre Mathews: Couple o' years and then, uh, you know, we had my eldest son Ray, and then, then we had twins and, uh, I really, you know, I was havin' to travel on the, during the week, working out of town from Austin, and then getting back on Friday night, go and play a gig Friday night, go play get, play a gig Saturday night. Sunday with the family, and then I'd have to leave, like Sunday night around midnight to drive back across Texas to check into the hotel and then go to work that day, and so I'd work four tens out of town and come back. That was tough, so I got offered a great job at UCLA and I took that, and then we moved out there for almost 20 years and raised a family and had a, had a band out there too, a couple of different groups.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lew Andre Mathews: But there was mostly kind of a combo of folk and rock and, and, uh, uh, it was interesting. I did a lot of, a lot more writing out there and recording. I started investing in my own studio equipment and digital recording was becoming available, where you could actually track stuff digitally and then I took, took that on, and it was fun, and I'm still doin' that today, uh, at home, and I've done it for several people, but right now I'm just sort of doin' it for myself, but to backtrack again, we moved back to Austin after those 20 years and, um, built a home outside of Austin in Elgin, and, uh, and it's got a huge live music room that's our living room and my studio and, uh, uh, that's where I recorded, uh, Richard Dobson's, uh, *Gulf Coast Tales*. Um, he would fly in from Switzerland and, uh, well, I forgot to tell you about the '70's, I did the Richard Dobson. We had the Dick and the Dirt Band for about 3 months.

Norie Guthrie: What? What, what is that? I haven't heard of that.

Lew Andre Mathews: I, I don't know. Well, Richard had a new, new record he came out with, you know, he'd worked up with Buttermilk Rec-, Records, and um, and, uh, and he was wantin' to promote it and this was sort of while he was, right before he moved to Nashville, so it was only together for a couple of months and we were, it was mostly the Hemmer Ridge Mountain

Boys kinda subbing with Richard. So we would do those, those, Richard would get a little gig and we'd back him up, but and he named us the Dick and the Dirt Band. Cosmic Cowboys, okay. But, uh, anyway, 10 years ago I moved back to Texas and I'm lovin' it, so.

Norie Guthrie: Um, can you talk about your relationship with Richard Dobson?

Lew Andre Mathews: Richard and I knew each other, uh, from, I met him when he was startin' to record his first record and, uh, we had been playin' some gigs. I met him through Rex or Mickey, uh, we all sort of ran in the same circle, but, um, we became friends and, uh, he would always ask me to play some guitar parts and stuff for him on different things and I would always do that, and, and, uh, you know, I pretty much had, uh, just sort of started – well, let me back up. Well, I started recording him at my place and then over about 3 years, you know, we, we were just kinda doin' it fun; he would wanna make a demo and I'd just record him and then, then Franci and Steven would come over and maybe add some bass and accordion, and I would add guitar and that, we just kinda did that as a off-to-the-side little project with Richard. But, uh, yeah, Richard, Richard and I always got along from the first time we met, and there was this warmth and friendship. Richard was a special kind o' guy. Roughneck with a heart like a baby.

Norie Guthrie: Um, looking back-, uh, and you're currently in a band now, right?

Lew Andre Mathews: I am in the Patrons.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm?

Lew Andre Mathews: And, um, I love it. It's magic. Uh, you know, this only happens once in your life or it doesn't happen to a lot of musicians, but Kelly Wilkerson and I got thrown together in a, in a previous band before the Patrons, um, and called the Lunar Rollers with, uh, Jim Wyly was leading that group and, um, we decided to try somethin' different as a trio, a drummer, keyboard player and myself, and it was like left hand knew what the right hand was doin' all the time. It was like we just clicked and clicked and clicked and, and we still click whenever we play, it's just, if any one of us makes a mistake, the other one picks it up and runs with it. It's like, it's, uh, 'cause you don't really ever hear the mistakes. They're, it's just not a mistake; it's we played something different.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lew Andre Mathews: And, uh, it's not often that you run into another musician like that in, in, in your lifetime, but you really, really can say, you know, like Keith Richards or Mick Jagger, or John Lennon and Paul McCartney; it's kinda that thing, that style or concept. I don't know; it's not a style or a concept, but it's just the fact that we, our, our music tastes merge and we complement each other so well when we play together.

Norie Guthrie: Would you say that kind of – not to disparage any of the bands you've been in, but would that, it's kind of your favorite band right now?

Lew Andre Mathews: I would say yes.

Norie Guthrie: Yeah.

Lew Andre Mathews: 'cause doesn't matter if it's in the studio or live; it always just comes across. It's just there. It's a unique sound and, uh, it's not often you have a band without a bass player, but Kelly's left hand is workin' all the time and, uh, he's, he's a marvelous singer. He's got a voice kinda reminds me of Ronnie Milsap, very powerful and, um, but he does, we're doin' mostly blues and rock so it's, it's a little way from the folk scene, but we do some folk music that I write, and he has some beautiful ballads he's written on piano that, uh, that are amazing, so.

Norie Guthrie: Um, so are you mainly using your studio just for personal recordings, or have you been working with anybody, like outside bands?

Lew Andre Mathews: Well, like I, I had not been working. I, I worked with Two Way Radio, which is a group out of Austin and I worked with Bill Collette, Donny Green; we did a complete album, um, did a complete album for the Lunar Rollers, and other people would wanna come in and I started to havin' to turn it down a couple years ago and, uh, I just, you know, 'cause, uh, I didn't have time really to – it takes lots of hours to record and mix and get all this stuff right and recordin' it with people; it takes hundreds of hours and people don't know that. Just seems like oh, it's only a 45-minute record, but it's hundreds of hours of work. Anyway, so I, I, I did open it up for a while when I first started it for a few years, and then I slowed that down and, and I just use it for personal use or my bands that I'm currently working with and, uh, so that's that.

Norie Guthrie: So what are your upcoming plans?

Lew Andre Mathews: Right now, um, continue with the, with The Patrons. We've got two CDs out. We're almost done with our third. Um, a friend, uh, Richard Solzar is gonna work with us on a video. So that's up and coming and we're gonna start that next month.

Norie Guthrie: I heard that that's gonna coincide with your birthday?

Lew Andre Mathews: Yes. Sharon wants that to coincide with my birthday to get this singalong chorus thing, kinda like they did with "Save the World" where everybody's there singin' a chorus, and we'll see how that works out.

Norie Guthrie: Have you ever made a video before?

Lew Andre Mathews: Um, yes. Um, The Patrons have a lot of videos out on our YouTube station –

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lew Andre Mathews: –and, uh, I did a live show with, uh, with The Louvres. We had a reunion gig a couple of years back, maybe 4 years ago, um, at my house and we videoed that and, uh, I used my recording equipment to record the whole thing, so the sound on it is great; the video's – just one camera kinda stuck up on a, on a thing takin' pictures of it, but the people are havin' a

blast. It was a big party and, uh, so it's a fun, fun show to watch and the music is great. Love The Louvres.

Norie Guthrie: So do you guys plan on doing anything else together?

Lew Andre Mathews: Haven't been talkin' about one. We get together once in a while. I had to drop out of the last round because the, started to inter, it was gonna interfere with my Patrons –

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lew Andre Mathews: – show, so, but I haven't heard of anything, another reunion yet, but you never know. We'll probably try it one more time.

Norie Guthrie: All right. And then, um, do you also participate in the Hemmer Ridge Mountain Boys, um, –

Lew Andre Mathews: Not much anymore.

Norie Guthrie: – reunions?

Lew Andre Mathews: I did when we first got back from California for, for a couple o' years.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lew Andre Mathews: Uh, but, uh, I mean, Mike has passed on, the drummer, and, um, it's just Rex and Mickey, so Hemmer Ridge Mountain Boys started out as two, grew, and now they're back to two, and I don't know if Rex is really gonna be doin' many more shows. I know Mickey's talked about maybe takin' on a second career. I think he's retiring from school teaching this year.

Norie Guthrie: He did, yeah.

Lew Andre Mathews: So he will – and he's a great acoustic guitar player and folk singer. So I'll be lookin' forward to seein' him get out more and hit the scene a little bit.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm. Is there anything else that you wanna cover that we have not or any?

Lew Andre Mathews: Probably, but I forgot about it, so, uh, you know, –

Norie Guthrie: It's alright.

Lew Andre Mathews: – it's gone, yeah.

Norie Guthrie: Well, it's, you know, it's for the, the car ride home, it'll, it'll pop into your head.

Lew Andre Mathews: It'll pop, –

Norie Guthrie: That's what everyone says.

Lew Andre Mathews: – yes, absolutely.

Norie Guthrie: Well, I wanna thank you so much for coming out and doing an oral history.

Lew Andre Mathews: Well, thank you; it was my pleasure.