

CONTACTS:

IN-HOUSE LABEL PROMOTION:

TRISH WAGNER

512-322-0617

TRISH@ANTONESREC.COM

LONE STAR RECORDS TEXAS MUSIC GRUOP

805 WEST AVENUE, SUITE 2

AUSTIN, TX 78701

WWW.LONESTARREC.COM

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PUBLICITY:

MARK PUCCI MEDIA

770-804-9555 (PHONE)

770-804-0027 (FAX)

MPMEDIA@AOL.COM

RADIO PROMOTION:

A3

SEAN COAKLEY

SONGLINES/NEW YORK

914-241-3669

S.COAKLEY@VERIZON.NET

AMERICANA

LESLIE ROUFFE

SONGLINES/NASHVILLE

615-298-2262

LROUFFE@COMCAST.NET

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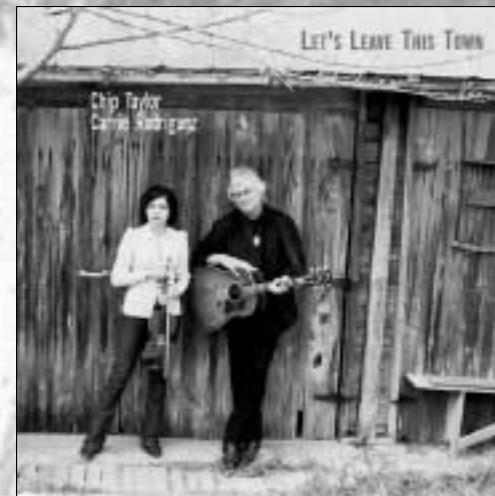
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*"If names like
Willie Nelson,
Guy Clark,
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Chip Taylor.*

*Whether you know it
or not, he's earned
his way into that
exalted
company."*

*- Anthony DeCurtis,
CD NOW*



CHIP TAYLOR CARRIE RODRIGUEZ

LET'S LEAVE THIS TOWN





TO CALL CHIP TAYLOR'S LIFE AN INCREDIBLE STORY IS ALMOST AN UNDERSTATEMENT. As a songwriter, Taylor has hit the charts in five decades now. He wrote "Wild Thing," one of the primary songs of the rock'n'roll canon since it was a #1 hit for **The Troggs** in 1966. His song "Angel of the Morning" has been a hit for **Merilee Rush**, **Juice Newton** and most recently **Shaggy**, whose chart-topping version earned Taylor the status of having the longest span of #1 hits in music history. As *No Depression* magazine noted, "Maybe somebody else has had cuts by **Jimi Hendrix**, **Frank Sinatra** and **Willie Nelson**, but it's got to be a pretty elite club."

Taylor has also been a spectacularly successful professional gambler, as well as a recording artist and producer of such acts as the young **James Taylor** (no relation) and pop superstar **Neil Diamond**. He was an integral part of the bustling New York pop songwriting scene in its 1960s **Brill Building** heyday, one of the pioneers of the progressive country style that was the grandfather of today's alternative country movement, and is today a respected elder statesman of the singer-songwriter scene.

But for Taylor, what's next has always been more important than the past. And with his new release on Lone Star Records, *Let's Leave This Town*, Taylor creates some of the most exciting and impressive music of his life. Not only is the CD one of his strongest and most assured sets of music in an acclaimed career - his 1973 album *Last Chance* was hailed in *Rolling Stone* as one of that year's best - but it also introduces a stunning new talent in fiddler and now singer **Carrie Rodriguez**.

When Taylor first saw Rodriguez play at the South By Southwest Music Festival in Austin, TX in 2001, he was not only wowed by the brilliance he heard in her playing, but also sensed a magical presence. He invited her to join him on some subsequent shows in Texas, and then a tour of Europe. During that tour, he invited Rodriguez, who had never sung lead before, to step up to the microphone and sing. The audiences went wild. Inspired by her way with a song, Taylor teamed up with Rodriguez to create a dynamic duet album. It was cut with folk scene stalwarts **John McGann** (guitar) and **Jim Whitney** (upright bass) as well as noted drummer **Dave Mattacks** (**Fairport Convention**, **Richard & Linda Thompson**), augmented by Taylor's frequent accompanist **John Platania** (known for his work with **Van Morrison**) on guitar as well as string quartets. Mixing superb songcraft with musical and vocal excellence, *Let's Leave*

This Town is a country-folk gem on which the veteran and the newcomer shine together brightly.

Excellence in all endeavors has been a hallmark of Taylor's pursuits since his youth. Born James Wesley Voight, he grew up in Yonkers, NY, the third son of a professional golfer father and schoolteacher mother who encouraged their offspring to follow their dreams. To wit, one brother is acclaimed actor **Jon Voight**, while his other sibling is a noted geologist who devised the formula to predict the elusive occurrences of volcanic eruptions.

During his youth, Taylor became absorbed with music, especially the country songs he heard on the radio from the clear channel AM station WWVA in Wheeling, WV. As a teen he was a top-ranked competitive golfer and led a local country band, eventually deciding to pursue music full time when a band he was in landed a deal with King Records, becoming the only white act on the influential black music label. But once he started having success landing his songs with publishers, Taylor followed his muse to score hits with songs for **The Hollies**, **Barbara Lewis**, **The Pozo-Seco Singers**, **The American Breed**, **Billy Vera & Judy Clay** and **The Clique**, along with writing the standards "Wild Thing" and "Angel of the Morning." Jimi Hendrix later adopted "Wild Thing" as one of the showpiece num-

bers of his live show, and **Janis Joplin** made Taylor's song "Try (Just A Little Bit Harder)" one of her signature songs.

In the 1970s, Taylor recorded a series of albums for Buddha, Warner Bros., Columbia and Capitol Records that marked him as a progressive country innovator. Though he earned critical acclaim and enjoyed pockets of airplay, the New York-based Taylor found himself continually out of sync with the insular Nashville country music system. Nonetheless, his songs found favor in Music City with artists like **Waylon Jennings**, **Anne Murray**, **Emmylou Harris** and **Bobby Bare**. Since his teen years, Taylor had also shown a knack for the mathematical intricacies of gambling. Throughout the 1960s and '70s, he pursued gambling as avidly and successfully as he did his songwriting. In the early 1980s, Taylor put aside his musical endeavors to pursue gambling full time. His prowess at blackjack eventually led to him being banned from all the major casinos in Atlantic City and several others in Las Vegas and Europe. Concentrating full time on horse racing, Taylor and his partner **Ernie Dahlman** were such accomplished thoroughbred handicappers that the Long Island Off Track Betting parlor they frequented gave the team their own room with a private teller and televised race replay system.

Then, in 1995, Taylor's mother became seriously ill. "Instead

of going to the racetrack one week, I just spent the time with Mom and played her songs," explains Taylor. "She was always my biggest fan. It was such a wonderful audience for me. She just was so into my songs and my spirit." The experience so rekindled Taylor's passion for music that he decided to give up gambling and return to recording and performing. With the albums *Hit Man* (1996), *The Living Room Tapes* (1997), *Seven Days in May* (1999), *The London Sessions Bootleg+* (2000) and *Black And Blue America* (2001), Taylor was once again reaping critical praise. He also found a burgeoning audience in Europe, where his 1970s albums had made him something of a cult hero. And noted singers and writers like **John Prine**, **Guy Clark** and **Lucinda Williams** gave Taylor's return to music their blessing by singing with him on his albums.

As writer **Holly George-Warren** said in *Rolling Stone*, "Las Vegas' loss is our gain." That's because Taylor is one of America's finest songwriters as well as a masterful singer and performer. "If names like **Willie Nelson**, **Guy Clark**, **Kris Kristofferson** and **Townes Van Zandt** mean anything to you, you should make a point of discovering Chip Taylor," urges critic **Anthony DeCurtis** in *CD Now*. "Whether you know it or not, he's earned his way into that exalted company."

— A FEW OF THE —
ARTISTS
WHO HAVE COVERED
CHIP TAYLOR
— SONGS —

- The American Breed
- Jeff Beck
- The Box Tops
- Bush Tetras
- Terry Cashman
- Popa Chubby
- The Cult
- The Divinyls
- Esteban
- Percy Faith
- Fania All-Stars
- José Feliciano
- Rosie Flores
- Lita Ford
- 4 Bitchin' Babes
- Franke & The Knockouts
- Ace Frehley
- Green Bay Packers
- Las Guitarras del Renacimiento
- Hammersmith Gorillas
- Nona Hendryx & Billy Vera
- Al Hirt
- The Kingsmen
- Dean Martin
- Melanie
- Garnet Mimms
- Monty & The Pythons
- Kermit & Friends
- Olivia Newton-John
- Genya Ravan
- Duke Reid
- Cliff Richard
- The Runaways
- Esteban/Andres Segovia
- Sister Carol
- Sloan
- Smith
- Darden Smith
- Ronnie Spector
- The Standells
- B.J. Thomas
- Bonnie Tyler
- Midge Ure
- The Ventures
- Hank Williams, Jr.
- Wolfsbane

THE EMERGENCE OF VIOLINIST CARRIE LUZ RODRIGUEZ AS A WONDERFUL SINGER AND STUNNING INSTRUMENTALIST CAPS AN ALREADY LONG MUSICAL JOURNEY FOR A STILL YOUNG WOMAN. Her impressive debut as an artist in her own right with Chip Taylor on *Let's Leave This Town* follows years of serious musical study of the classics as well jazz, country, folk and more as a violinist and fiddler. As an instrumentalist, Rodriguez has already recorded with **Patty Griffin** and appeared live with **Lyle Lovett** and on her own at a Dutch festival and other European shows. And now - much to her surprise, in fact - she also steps forward as an assured and charming vocalist.

Rodriguez was raised in a musical family in Austin, Texas, the daughter of noted Texas singer-songwriter David Rodriguez and a mother who was a classical and opera buff. She took up the violin at age five, studying with Austin teacher **Bill Dick** until she graduated high school, and playing in orchestras and chamber groups. She earned all region and all state honors as a violinist and concertmaster, eventually winning a scholarship to the prestigious Oberlin Conservatory of Music. During her high school she also "got a taste" of traditional

music fiddling appearing with her father and sitting in with such people as **Don Walsler** at Austin clubs.

Finding Oberlin's strict concentration on the classics too narrow for her adventurous musical vision, Rodriguez transferred to Berklee College of Music in Boston. She studied there with one of her violin heroes, **Matt Glaser**, head of Berklee's strings department, while also play-

ing clubs with **The Darlings** and appearing as a special guest with Lovett at the Orpheum Theater. After graduating Magna Cum Laude from Berklee, Rodriguez recorded a track on Griffin's *1000 Kisses* album and played

work with him. On a tour of Europe, he also persuaded Rodriguez to sing, even though she hadn't thought of herself as a singer. "I don't know how he got me to do it," she recalls with a laugh. "I was a little reluctant." The

enthusiastic crowd response to her singing convinced Taylor to collaborate with Rodriguez and record *Let's Leave This Town*.

"It opens a whole new dimension for me," says Rodriguez of her newfound talent as a singer. And with *Let's Leave This Town*, listeners are now introduced to an instrumental and vocal artist whose debut only whets the appetite for more.



When Taylor first saw Rodriguez play at the South By Southwest Music Festival in Austin, TX in 2001, he was not only wowed by the brilliance he heard in her playing, but also sensed a magical presence. He invited her to join him on some subsequent shows in Texas, and then a tour of Europe.

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PRAISE FOR CHIP TAYLOR'S BLACK AND BLUE AMERICA

"Poised between the cynical and the disingenuous, the bedonistic and the thoughtful, Black And Blue America is as close to a modern classic as contemporary country is likely to come this year."
– **The Independent (London)**

"Nothing less than a masterpiece!"
– **Hakan Olsson, The Real Deal (Sweden)**

"A bruised and battered nostalgia... bloodied but unbowed.... Quite remarkable!"
– **Mike Davies, NetRhythms**

"Black And Blue America is a heavyweight Americana album... thought provoking lyrics about the American way."
– **Tim Perry, The Information (London)**

"Whimsical stories of past loves... interlaced with some lively politically edged numbers.... Black And Blue America should cement Taylor's reputation as one of the country's more inventive forces."
– **Allistaire Frazer, The Daily Telegraph (London)**

"Shrewd, often stunning... listeners will immediately recognize why Taylor is both a legend and a vital, contemporary voice."
– **Roy Kasten, Amazon.com**

"Reflections of life, past loves and occasionally religion... wry humour and emotional honesty triumphs."
– **Q Magazine**

"A low-slung, high-brow cut across shorty classic. Sharp, insightful and genuinely affecting, Chip Taylor is back on track, on a winning streak. Hugely enjoyable."
– **Time Out (London)**

"Black And Blue America is sixteen tales of hard livin' and contemporary American mores... oozes quality."
– **Nigel Williamson, The Times**

"Black And Blue America is wistful and elegiac, a kind of self-conscious American epic about the current state of the U.S.A. and all the changes that have occurred since the 1960s."
– **Phil Johnson, The Independent (London)**

"After the first listen, I thought it was wonderful, but after my second listen I realized that Black And Blue America is a masterpiece made for the theater."
– **Susanna Clark, songwriter**

THESE CHIP TAYLOR SONGS HAVE BEEN COVERED BY:

Wild Thing	<i>The Troggs, Jimi Hendrix, X, Sam Kinison and many more</i>
Angel of the Morning	<i>Merrilee Rush, Evie Sands, PP Arnold, Juice Newton, Nina Simone, The Pretenders, Shaggy and many more</i>
I Can't Let Go	<i>Walter Jackson, The Hollies, Evie Sands, Linda Ronstadt,</i>
Any Way That You Want Me	<i>H.P. Lovecraft, The Troggs, Walter Jackson</i>
Pretty Colors	<i>Frank Sinatra</i>
Just A Little Bit Later Down the Line	<i>Bobby Bare</i>
He Sits At My Table	<i>Willie Nelson</i>
Springtime	<i>Brown Family</i>
I Can Make It With You	<i>Jackie DeShannon, Pozo-Seco Singers</i>
The Real Thing	<i>George Strait, Rodney Hayden, Stoney Edwards</i>
Son of a Rotten Gambler	<i>Anne Murray, Emmylou Harris, The Hollies</i>
Can't Wait Until I See My Baby's Face	<i>Baby Washington, Dusty Springfield</i>
Storybook Children	<i>Billy Vera & Judy Clay, Nancy Sinatra & Lee Hazelwood</i>
Clean Your Own Tables	<i>Johnny Cash</i>
Sweet Dream Woman	<i>Waylon Jennings</i>
Country Girl, City Man	<i>Ike & Tina Turner, Billy Vera & Judy Cloy</i>
Welcome Home	<i>Walter Jackson, Dusty Springfield, PP Arnold</i>
Make Me Belong to You	<i>Barbara Lewis, Fats Domino</i>
I'll Hold Out My Hand	<i>The Clique, Evie Sands</i>
Try (Just A Little Harder)	<i>Lorraine Ellison, Janis Joplin</i>
Thinkin	<i>Garnett Mimms</i>
Julie	<i>Bobby Fuller, Marshall Crenshaw</i>
Bible Salesman	<i>Billy Vera</i>
Blackbird	<i>Stoney Edwards</i>
Poppa Come Quick	<i>Bonnie Raitt</i>

CHIP TAYLOR SONGS CAN ALSO BE HEARD ON THE SOUNDTRACKS TO:

**D2: Mighty Ducks • D3: Mighty Ducks • Encino Man • Girl; Interrupted
Major League • Major League 2 • Something Wild**

KUDOS

COVERS

As a Man Grows Older

Chip Taylor gets back on track with his music

by Grant Alden

In the keen clarity of night, just before descending into dream's slace — a craving that can no longer be admitted into the busy hours of daylight — there is always time enough to suspect that one has not fulfilled the promises of youth. That moment when the faltering shifts and much is more important than the rest, and the slipper of time is more troubling than the chattering chat.

Truth, which eventually cloaks itself in the same shades of gray that color our days, the same one as the other. Perhaps that's why, in the hunger of adolescence, the best work is done by young physicians, painters, and poets, and the most elegant compromises are fashioned by the aged, who have grown accustomed to that enterprise.

Not always. Not quite always, for we have the careers of Stephen Hawking, Pablo Picasso, Neil Young... others, not so many, but enough. Enough so that it is still possible to go willing and armed deep into the night, to remember that it's the going and the enduring that matters, and to accept whatever truths that may reveal.

One morning last year Chip Taylor woke up and picked up his guitar, instead of the Daily Racing Form. And he began writing songs again, a habit he'd mostly dropped back in 1979. That was when Capitol, like Columbia and Warner Bros. before them, dropped Taylor. This would be a matter of small consequence, except that Mr. Taylor is one of those scattered few whose work has continued to endure the vagaries of radio programmers everywhere.

To wit: He wrote "Wild Thing". And "Angel Of The Morning". And Anne Murray's "Son Of A Gun" gambler, co-wrote the Janis Joplin epic "Try (Just A Little Bit Harder)", co-wrote the Hollies' "I Can't Let Go"... stuff like that. Maybe somebody else has had cuts by Jimi Hendrix, Frank Sinatra and Willie Nelson, but it's got to be a pretty nice club.

It is possible that he has just released his best song (and with it *The Living Room Tapes*, his finest album since 1975's *Last Chance*), though it's hard to imagine that "Grandma's White LaBaron" will become a radio staple. Not that anybody could sing it. It's about his mother, her living and her dying. And "Grand-

ma's White LaBaron" has about it the unmistakable stam of truth, hard-won words sung gently into the good night.

Conventionally told, Chip Taylor's story should be a morality play of redemption: Talented writer succumbs to the temptations of gambling, abandons his muse for years, returns to his true calling only at his mother's deathbed, finds success, happiness, and the girl in the coda at the end. Oddly enough, it's the succumbing and temptation parts of that sentence that are inaccurate, though the god was still up in the air at last report. See, Chip Taylor was an good a gambler as he was a songwriter, and there is an excess of discipline in his story, not dimipation.

Indeed, Taylor has walked away from a very successful career to play music to small audiences wherever he's welcome. That's the remarkable and almost inexplicable part of his story, but we rush ahead of ourselves.

"Ever since I was 18 or 19 years old," he says in a quiet, rich voice, sitting a few steps from his guitar in a Nashville songwriter's suite, "my drive was music and gambling. When I had my first hit, I allocated a certain amount of time to both. I never really slept much, so it was a lot of work and I loved both things."

Taylor is the middle son of Elmer and Barbara Voight, a remarkable upstate New York couple — Elmer was a teaching golf pro; his short stint on the PGA tour ended with a back injury at the Bahama Open — whose three sons became a volcano scientist, an actor, and a songwriter. (The actor is Jon Voight, known for his roles in *Deliverance*, *Midnight Cowboy* and more than a dozen other films. Chip Taylor, born James Wesley Voight, changed his name because he didn't think the original fit.)

Chip drifted through a couple colleges in the early '60s, worked for a short time as a golf pro and became a staff writer for April-Blackwood Music. In which capacity he dashed off a song for a group called Jordan Christopher & The Wild Ones. Their version of "Wild Thing" disappeared without a ripple, and only a quirk in April-Blackwood's English publishing deal placed the single in the Troggs' hands. He also produced a bit, notably the Flying Machine, in which James Taylor (no relation) was first found.

Like most songwriters, Chip hoped to sing his own work. In the late

'60s he formed a duo with Al Georgoni (with whom he wrote "I Can't Let Go"); they recorded one LP for Buddah as Just Us, then added Trade Martin and cut two more LPs as Georgoni, Martin and Taylor. Chip went solo, first for Buddah, then three LPs for Warner Bros., one for CBS, and one for Capitol.

All along the problem seems to have been that Chip Taylor's music didn't quite fit anywhere. His are deceptively simple structures, the words given plenty of room and space, attractive places for singers to let their voices, imagination and emotion take flight. Rather like Willie Nelson's songs. Like Nelson, Taylor half-sings, half-talks his way across melodies that do not require operatic range. In Chip's case, he's simply too self-effacing to attack the microphone.

"So I had this record out that I really believed in," he says, glancing out at the rain. "I don't think the album was really that good. I'd say my most inspired work was the *Last Chance* album that



WILD HORSES: Chip Taylor returns to his first love.

came out in '73. I loved that album. And after that I was trying to find a way to fit in to different places. But the single was called "One Night Out With The Boys", and I loved this single. It just felt good to me, I thought it sounded like a hit.

"I wouldn't let the record company release it until we had an understanding with the country division that they would promote it, because I didn't want to go through what I had gone through before with Columbia. Their country division just refused to promote my record. So the Capitol people promised me they would, the record came out, and sure enough within a couple of weeks the thing was the most requested record wherever it was played. A couple of easy listening stations and three country stations. I talked in distributors, [and they] said it's the honest little jukebox single they had, and in a couple of weeks I was just really excited."

And then Taylor called one of the stations that was playing his single, only to be told by the program director that they'd been asked to stop playing it. By Capitol's country division. "In retrospect, I look back and I can understand this," he says, utterly without rancor. "Let's say if I was down in Nashville signing six or seven artists. I would say, 'Well, these are my artists. Who's this guy coming in from New York with a record that I now have to include?'"

In the end, and to keep the corporate peace, his record was dropped. "I had some wonderful sentiment from the Capitol people," he says, "but it really killed me. I said, 'What am I gonna do now?' I had another album ready to make, and I had the budget for it, and I had even started working on the next project. I just stopped making records. Neil Diamond's manager took over Polygram Records and asked me if I would help him make some decisions, because they were in the hole \$20 million."

He spent a few months helping with Polygram's reorganization before turning to his other love. "It wasn't like I totally said I wouldn't write a song again, or anything like that," Taylor says, but his schedule was full. "In the middle '80s I got to be partners with probably the best handicapper in the world, the guy who's made more money as it, and a wonderful guy. His name's Ernest Bahlsman.

"So it wasn't like it wasn't lucrative; it was. But it certainly was an obsessive thing, because pretty much I'm obsessive no matter what the hell I do. Gambling was the thing I'd wake up at 8:30, work like crap for like three hours, talk to my partner Ernie for about an hour and a half, go over every race, and every little possible thing you could think about. We each had hired people at the race track to look at the horses as they came out, to look at the shoes and tell like that, and get back to us on cellular phones about any change.

"I'd usually drive out to Long Island and spend my afternoons with him, betting, at an off-track betting satellite where he bet a much money that they gave him an office. And maybe at six o'clock I'd drive back to my apartment and shower and change my clothes and go down to the Soho Kitchen and by my race track work out for the next day and start to work on that. And maybe at eleven o'clock I'd break for ten hours and socialize and go out and have a few drinks.

"And my life was like that. I'd do the same thing the next day. Every once in a while I'd write a song. I had no calluses on my fingers. That went on until, I guess, '95, when my moon was real ill. I started to go down to her house and sing for her. And I would sing for her and remember the look in her eyes. Playing for her, seeing her response, I remembered when I used to do it. Not so much when I did it as a business in the '70s, when I was trying to break, trying to make these hits and whatever I was doing. But the way I did the *Last Chance* album, that spirit in a way, [the way] I did it when I was younger, when I was in high school. So I got that whole spirit back.

"[Gambling] was a very unsocial thing. I mean, yes, I had my social stuff with Ernie, because when you're working with a man and he's patting you on the back and saying great job and high five" all day long and you're winning all this money, it's great. It's pick-sixes for hundreds of thousands of dollars. I remember one day hitting a pick-six for \$32,000, and it was like nothing. In retrospect I look back and say, 'What, are you kidding? I could use that to pay for my shortfall for my touring this year.'

In 1995, Taylor put his racing records to the side and began to make records of his own. Three all at once, more or less, beginning with a friend's suggestion that he record his most famous songs by way of reintroduction. "So I was doing the *Hit Man* album at the same time I was doing *The Living Room Tapes*. Actually, I was doing another album, too, like a folk-rock album." There was, of course, the matter of finding a label willing to release Taylor's music once again.

"I had lots of problems," he admits. "And then this one label was interested in Vermont. Peter Galway, one of the artists on the label, had seen me do a show and suggested I call this guy. I did and sent him my records, this Mitch Carter at Gaffly Records. And Mitch liked my stuff very much, he said, 'Well, I'll put your stuff out.' He did it with such a nice spirit that I didn't even want to look anyone."

Taylor scoured some of the East Coast behind *Hit Man*, selling copies of *The Living Room Tapes* from the stage; it was finally released more formally in late March, complete with a party at Douglas Corner in Nashville. Guy Clark sang along for a few songs (including a reluctant "Wild Thing"); Lucinda Williams dropped by to say hello and ended up singing on Taylor's new record.

Something changed within Chip Taylor during all those years at the track, and if he knows how it happened — or even what it was — he isn't saying. But somehow, at fifty-something, he has at last come to believe in the worth of his work.

"I don't know. It just started with my mom," he says. "The spirit just spiraled. I don't know why the hell Jon [his brother] is working so hard now, but maybe it was the same kind of spirit that

I've had since mom passed away. I think he did six movies in the last 12 years, and now all the sudden he's done seven in the last year, or something like that.

"I'm just loving what I'm doing, and I'm not afraid of it anymore," he adds, and there is the innocence of a child gazing at the blue ocean in his voice. "I'm not afraid like I used to be, years ago, when somebody from the Rolling Stones camp called my then-publisher and said, I think we can hook something up with Chip and Mick." He shakes his head and laughs softly.

"Right away it was like, 'No way I can do that.' I didn't even think about it. I was embarrassed. I didn't want to go over there and have them see how limited I was. Because I only played three or four chords, and I could lock myself in the studio and get out of me something that I wanted, but I thought I was doing it with mirrors."

Funny thing is, as hard as Taylor tried for stardom in the '70s, he never really toured. Sure, he played around New York (usually when he was hunting a new deal), and spent a month in Holland, where he had a No. 2 record one season. "I've done more touring since October than I did in my entire life. And I'm a singer-songwriter," he laughs, and stumbles on something as if for the first time. "I mean, how do you expect to be successful if you don't play for people? It's pretty simple, isn't it? You'd think I would know that."

Italo Svevo, an Italian industrialist, was 46 years old in 1907 when he showed his second book to a young James Joyce, who was his English teacher. Joyce was quite taken with the novel and suggested its English title *As A Man Goes Older*. It is the story of an aging man's fascination with a young woman. It may also be a metaphor for the difficulty of pursuing one's art past the fire of youth, but I found the novel in my early twenties and never finished it.

Chip Taylor's new songs are compelling because, like Svevo, the circumstances of his life do not compel him to fashion art out of economic desperation. Instead, his work is the product of rigorous self-examination, discipline, and an almost zen stripping away of ego. As simple as they are, they hide nothing. *The Living Room Tapes* includes songs to the four important women in Taylor's life: His mother, his ex-wife who is also the mother of his two children (later, he asks that I turn the tape back on so he can tell me how wonderful his grown kids are), the woman he nearly married during the gambling years, and the woman he met recently, to whom he has written his next CD.

He's still learning. One day he turned to Cody Melville, the singer-songwriter he has pressed into service as a manager. "I said, 'Boy I love Chrissie Hynde's version of 'Angel of the Morning'.' She sings with such passion, it's one of the best versions I've heard of that song. He says, 'What the hell are you telling me for? Tell her.'"

"He sent a letter to Chrissie, and within a couple of weeks got a response back from her manager of how excited Chrissie was to get my note, and then a couple weeks after that, another message, would I write a song for Chrissie? Which I did. I don't know if it'll ever be recorded, but she's holding it, and I think it's a real cool song, she just inspired me to do it. Garth Brooks is holding the same song."

Taylor also has spent time writing with Randy Travis, who is now in search of a new record label. "I liked his earlier things more, probably, but I love him as an artist, and I was so shocked that he's such a good songwriter. And we wrote great together."

Mostly, though, Taylor is enjoying himself, and the possibilities his life has offered up. "Wherever it goes, as long as it keeps going, will be fine with me," he says. "As long as I can continue to write my songs, make my records, record them with the spirit that I want to record them, and get them out for the public and still play for people...if I can break out even and make a little bit of money, then that'll be fine."

No Depression co-editor Grant Alden saw the Taggs play "Wild Thing" five times in one night during the early '30s.

