

Under the Rainbow: Oral Histories of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual,
Transgender, Intersex and Queer People in Kansas

Charles McVey
Oral History

Interviewed by
Tami Albin

March 8, 2008

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Charles S. McVey: Narrator

Tami Albin: Interviewer

TAMI ALBIN: All righty. Okay, so today is March 8, 2009 and I'm here with Charles S. McVey. Thank you so much for participating.

CHARLES MCVEY: Thanks for having me.

ALBIN: I appreciate it. So I'll start off this interview the way I start off all of them which is, Tell me where you were born and when.

MCVEY: I was born in Salina, Kansas on May 23, 1977.

ALBIN: Did you grow up in Salina?

MCVEY: I spent eleven years there, my first eleven years. And then after that my family moved to Hays, Kansas when I was eleven in 1988. And then I spent another ten years there.

ALBIN: So what was your childhood like growing up in Salina?

MCVEY: Well, I guess it was pretty average. I went to a local elementary school and I sang in the local choir and stuff, local kid's choir. My grandfather was really active as far as getting me started in my performing career with music and stuff. In fact, I don't really have much of a memory of like my life before I actually started singing because one of my earliest things I can remember is rehearsing and stuff when I was like probably three or four.

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ALBIN: Rehearsing at the age of three? (laugh)

MCVEY: Well my grandpa would set me up with these gigs at like church and—maybe that was a little bit later that that got more involved—but that and like the Smoky Hill River Festival, and I had performance commitments at an early age. (laughter)

ALBIN: Wow, so are you an only child?

MCVEY: No. I have a younger sister, Michael who is ten years younger than me, and she was adopted. And then I would have had another sister who died during childbirth when I was 4-1/2 and her name was Reagan. But due to complications with that my mother was no longer able to carry children so they adopted.

ALBIN: Right. So playing all these gigs at such a young age, what were your relationships like with other kids?

MCVEY: Oh, I don't think it was ever really that much of a big deal. I mean like the kids choir and stuff was kind of a quasi-social event too. But you know, that was kind of something that—I mean like I look back on those things now. Like, that choir it was called Rainbow Singers ironically enough. I look back on that now and I wasn't really as into it, like it wasn't something I initiated, it was something that my grandfather and my mother kind of I felt like made me do or it was expected of me, so I did it for that purpose, but—I was never a very athletic kid. I always was—I always felt kind of awkward in that area and I've always been small. So it took me a really long time to crack five feet and a hundred pounds. So I think I was probably picked on some as a kid, maybe more than others. But something that I think—I even look back on school and stuff, I've always been fairly charismatic and likable and eventually I've been able to warm my way into my surroundings and become part of the community I live in. So I think I even executed that somewhat as a child, though I wasn't—though I'd say I was picked on and stuff, I never really got my ass kicked or beaten up because I had other kids who liked me and so—also, I'm good at talking my way out of that kind of stuff. (laughter)

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ALBIN: So did your family go to church a lot?

MCVEY: I went to church with my mother. My father was a Catholic and my mother was brought up Baptist. So there was always this kind of like ridiculous conflict about that, though I don't believe either of them to be religious people. And I'm not really even sure now what my father's current status as far as what he would say he is religiously affiliated as. But there was always this like weird tension as a child between my mother and my father about this Catholic/Baptist thing that I didn't quite understand. And my father would go to Mass on Sunday mornings. He'd always go to the really early one like at six or whatever, and occasionally I would accompany him to do that as well because I was intrigued by the Catholic thing. Because in the brain of a child we kind of equate things with good and bad. And so I thought they were kind of like the bad boys of Christianity, the Catholics. Plus they had—still had really kind of crazy religious dogma. So there was stuff that was going on I didn't understand and people were kneeling and doing things that we didn't do in Baptist Church. So I was intrigued by that.

ALBIN: Right.

MCVEY: So yes. While we lived in Salina my mother went to church on a regular basis. And then when we moved to Hays that stopped which made me kind of comprehend that for her going to church was actually more about the socialization because that's the community she had grown up in and her whole family goes to that church and so she knew people there. When we moved to a new town it just wasn't the same for her. And so we kind of—that's when my church-going days, as far as being forced to go, ceased.

ALBIN: And so what was your household like growing up when you were in Salina?

MCVEY: I mean, I think I had a pretty fairly average childhood. My parents were probably, at least during my living with them, were probably in the range of middle class to lower middle class. My family's never made a lot of money, but I never went hungry

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either. So—but my parents wouldn't buy me like Guess and Pepe jeans and stuff that cost fifty bucks because that wasn't doable. I don't really ever think I had really—I don't know, my father when I was five got a job as a traveling salesman for scientific equipment. He works for Fisher Scientific. So I spent a lot of time with my mother then, I guess after that because he'd be on the road and stuff. So I've always felt closer to my mother than my father. Also my father was more of like the disciplinarian I view him, I guess. And so, I don't know, he always scared me kind of a little. But we're okay now, I guess. (laugh)

ALBIN: So when you were eleven your family moved to Salina. What was the reason for the move?

MCVEY: Moved from Salina.

ALBIN: I'm sorry, moved from Salina, to Hays.

MCVEY: A job change. Fisher Scientific had downsized and so my dad had gotten laid off and he got a job working for the state, health department, and that was probably about four or five months later, but anyway—maybe longer, maybe six, I don't know. But yeah, then we moved. And that was a really shitty experience (laugh) for me as a kid. Like, I think that it all kind of like came on at once as far as like I was like eleven and so you're in your adolescence and I moved to Hays in sixth grade, was in elementary school at Salina, but was in middle school in Hays.

So I switched like about six weeks into the school year from the town I've always lived in to this new town. And Hays was a very—it was a smaller town so there was a lot tighter clique. It was a Catholic-German community or German-Catholic community. And I felt—I didn't like it for the first six months a lot, like, I really hated it. And I tried for a little while to like come up with a way to move back to Salina, like if I could live with one of my friends or something like that. And yeah that didn't—that wasn't going to happen (laughter) so I didn't like the move to Hays initially.

ALBIN: And so once you got adjusted to life in Hays, what did you get involved in or what did you do?

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MCVEY: Well, I've always been, of course, really interested in music so that's always been kind of like, I don't know, my thing. I'm trying to think—going to school, I guess really what I did is I just kind of like bought records and read. I had friends and stuff, but like once again I wasn't really a very active person. When I was in high school that's probably when I'd say that I probably—you start getting to make more decisions that aren't just so average kid like and stuff. So I was a smart kid with a rebellious streak. So I had kind of two groups of friends. I had like my smart friends and then I had like my stoner buddies that I liked to run with on the weekends. And I didn't—I tried to incorporate the two groups once, it didn't work out.

ALBIN: What happened? (laugh)

MCVEY: Well I took the smart kids to a party out in Munger, Kansas. And Munger, Kansas is about four miles—oh gee what way, maybe south of Hays. And we used to go out there and have keg parties and stuff because there were some people we knew out there. So I took some of my friends and just everybody at the party like looked at them like—because it was a small school so everybody knew everyone and they were like—it was really out of place for them. And I think even then like I was still kind of like an inside-outsider even amongst that group because they could never—like some—my mom was a substitute teacher so sometimes people in high school would like narc on me to my mom about seeing me at a party and stuff like that, and drinking under age and stuff, so—but anyway, yeah, the party was not a big success. We left real soon.

ALBIN: So did you—you were heavily involved in music so did you try and start a band—

MCVEY: Well the first stuff I started doing was—I mean, I like music but I really like making records. And it was around the age of fourteen that I started making home recordings. I mean, I really enjoy the process of not only just writing and recording the music but doing the artwork and putting the whole package together. So that's around the time—my freshman year is when I started making my own recordings and stuff. And I devised a multi-tracking system at home using our stereo and then our VCR. And I found a way that I could do what's essentially called sound-on-sound, which is where I

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could have a track coming in and then lay a new track in over the top of that via the microphone and put on the VCR. So I've got audio coming from the stereo into there and then the microphone. And so I could start adding instruments to stuff or vocals or whatever.

ALBIN: Wow.

MCVEY: Yeah. It was actually fairly (laugh) ingenious. But I didn't have gear. I had like a crappy thirty-dollar Radio Shack mike eventually which was quite a step up for me. But anyway, so that's when I started making my first recordings. And for the first two years being that I didn't really have any—like I wasn't really good at any playing of an instrument and I hadn't really written any good songs and stuff, most of it was like noise compositions and at the time I was listening to a lot of really varied stuff from like Sonic Youth, Skinny Puppy. And I was really intrigued by that kind of like controlled experimental noise thing. So—and also I just don't think I had the ability to record anything better. And like my attempts—my first attempts at songwriting was really awful, I think. I don't know, I have like all the tapes still. Those won't be showing up in any archives, though, not unless I'm dead. (laughter)

But—so it wasn't until around sixteen that I actually feel like I started writing songs and that's when I started playing acoustic guitar. I started playing acoustic guitar around fifteen and then around sixteen I'd probably gotten enough of that down that I started being able to perform in front of my friends and have stuff that was performable. And then I also borrowed a friend of mine's computer. He had an Amiga and there was a program, I want to say it was called Sonic. And I could make four tracks on it and I could make like a drum track and a bass track and a little keyboard track. And then that could be the basis for my song. And then I could lay my little acoustic guitar part over it with my sound-on-sound recording and then repeat the process and do a vocal over it. And so around the age of sixteen is when I started doing what I would consider as quasi-legitimate music.

ALBIN: Wow. And were you taking lessons or you were teaching yourself how to play the guitar?

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MCVEY: I took piano lessons as a child in Salina but that was also something that ceased when we moved to Hays. And I hated it because I didn't like the discipline involved about it. And now I regret that so much, because I'm self-taught as far as guitar goes and I'm really pretty self-taught as far as piano goes. But I know that my technique is awful. Well—I mean I think it's getting better, like over a while I'm just naturally becoming better at it, at being able to play with a little bit more, I don't know. But yeah, so I'm self-taught for the most part. And for years I played guitar and then it wasn't until later that I switched (unintelligible) piano as my main instrument for composition. But yeah, I made those little—I made little tapes and I gave them to my friends and stuff like that. I mean, I was fairly prolific as a young man. Now I feel like it takes me a long time to cop out a record. (laughter) But the quality was jut absolute crap.

And I was really inspired by people I considered to be quasi-confrontational at that time. Like I remember Liz Phair's album, *Exile in Guyville*, having a huge impact on me. And I even have covered like the song "Fuck and Run" before because it was such a—that song is so translatable into like the gay language that it was just—but I really liked her like in-your-face way of talking about things. And same way with like Greg Dulli and Afghan Whigs at that time. And so I attempted to write songs that would be emotionally raw and convey this kind of like earnest sexual charged energy, this kind of like frank honesty that I was really getting off on from these other artists. The problem being that my experience with drugs had been very minimal and sex none, so I didn't really know what I was talking about. (laughter) And so it was—I look back on it now and I just laugh because that's just so silly. (laughter)

ALBIN: And you said that your mom had stopped going to church. Was your dad still going to church?

MCVEY: No. No. His—I mean—I don't know. Very rarely. Like I—my poor dad, he's a great guy but I feel like he gives lip service, or spent a lot of time of his life giving lip service to social norms that really weren't important to him. And now— When I say I don't know what his real religious affiliation is, because as of recent he's started saying things like, Well we agnostics—so I guess maybe he's agnostic. Now that I'm older and

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we get along and stuff I find a lot of times that my dad tries to be—seek my approval by being cool.

ALBIN: Well I was just wondering because you were talking about your first songs and how you hadn't experienced anything but you were trying to write about it. And I guess we'll get to this, but your most recent album deals an awful lot with, it appears, issues of Catholicism (laugh) and religion.

MCVEY: Yeah, well I'm fascinated by—we should talk about that later when we get to that part, because I'll ramble. I have a lot to talk about in regards to that. But yeah so at this time, though was I like developing these things or was that going on? You bet. I started thinking about those kind of episodes around adolescence and stuff, which would be around the same time that I was getting—kind of figuring out my sexuality and stuff. That age period, your early teens are—you're just—looking back on it now I feel like, Wow that was really kind of rough and crazy. But at the time you just don't know that life's any different. I mean, I was growing up in a small town and I was starting to figure out that I was queer. And I didn't want that because that just didn't seem like it was going to be very good for me or very—I had a lot of negative reinforcement from that small town community about what being a fag was about. And that was a term that I was very familiar with because I think that that had been something that kids would call you in school. But yeah, those—I don't know, I look back on all of my teen years and stuff as being very awkward and confused and kind of—I don't think I would have come off as being troubled, but I was definitely looking for something. I was really waiting for something else to like make me not feel like such a freak. (laugh)

ALBIN: Right. So you're in Hays and you—what happened after you finished high school?

MCVEY: Oh okay. Well let's see, I graduated a year early, so I graduated as a junior when I was sixteen and I turned seventeen a few days later actually. But what kind of spurred that off, apart from just hating high school, was that in the summer of '93 a good friend of mine and some other buddies we had gone to Ottawa, Kansas so that we could go celebrate his little sister's birthday. She was around my age. And when we got there I met the first guy that I ever fell for. And it was—I've never had this

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experience again. Well, I have something close, but it was like love at first sight. Like he came out of—I can see it still. Like he came out of the door of their little countryside brown house and I was like, Who is that? Because I didn't know that Eric had a stepbrother that this guy was going to be there at all. And so I had not anticipated any of that. But just right away like I was like, I want to know more about you and I want you to like me. (laugh)

And so I remember I was like just being taken around the house and stuff and going into his bedroom and seeing that he had like Steven King novels and stuff and I had read a lot of Steven King so I was like, Okay. And I just mentally marked that for later that night, and then we developed a friendship after that and then—which expanded into a very, very brief tryst, but that was one of my big letdowns in life. But anyway, so he was going to go to Emporia State and I wanted to go to Emporia State as soon as I possibly could. I had two years of high school left. And so I was like, I have enough credits, because I'd taken extra classes during the summer just to keep myself busy, like graphic design and fun stuff that I had these extra credits and so I graduated early. And then they adjusted—the school board like adjusted the thing, like there's just no possible way anyone else can do it again, like right (laugh) after me. I was the only person who did it. But by the time that I graduated that relationship had fizzled out and so yeah, I was no longer—after about January of '94 that wasn't going to be what was happening.

So I went to Fort Hays for a year as an art major. And I was going with the idea that I wanted to be a graphic design major—not really because that's my passion, but because I enjoy tinkering on it and I thought maybe I could get a job and I was looking for something that would make money that wasn't going to be a suit job. How little did I know that like graphic designers are the suits of the art world. (laugh) But yeah, so that's what I did. I went to Fort Hays for a year and then I didn't really—I wasn't really so into that. I wanted to just get out of that town, so I moved to California with a friend of mine that summer, like in August I think. And that—we were staying with a couple of girls that she knew there that were single moms living on the dole in their apartment complex. And so I was there for a few weeks and then I kind of like—I realized that my presence there was absolutely unimportant. I couldn't get a job because I was like eighteen and I didn't really have a residence. You know what I mean? I didn't realize how hard it would be to get a job in California. I was very naïve.

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And so I spent a few days just hanging out in San Francisco and like dropping acid and hanging out with hippies and stuff. And then I came back to Kansas to try to—well I didn't have any other choice. But I realized that I was only going to be like a mechanism for paying a third of the rent and, yeah. Maybe I would have tried harder if we were living in San Francisco but we were living in Sacramento and Sacramento is kind of like the Topeka of California. (laughter)

ALBIN: So during this time—obviously in San Francisco you probably met GLBT folks.

MCVEY: No.

ALBIN: No you didn't?

MCVEY: God it was the—I did not know how to do that. And I was still very—it was still very like—like I started coming out around sixteen, when I met the first guy, to some of my friends and stuff. But you know, I played the whole bisexual card for a long time. Everybody did in the nineties, at least—I don't know, tons of people do that. And—because you're just not real sure yet either, I think. But—so I knew that was around but it wasn't a high priority for me. I really—I didn't know like where the Castro was. Little did I know how close I was because I was hanging out in the Haight-Ashbury District. You know what I mean? And I mean like I was intrigued but I was only eighteen so I couldn't go to gay clubs. And I was really just hanging out with street kids, like doing drugs. I mean, yeah, no. I mean, I'm sure that trip could have become a lot more rewarding for me but—and I remember there was this queercore band called Extra Fancy.

And this was around the same time as Pansy Division and stuff in their heyday. So we're—I'm in California in '95, so this is like the beginning of that kind of taking hold in that area. And I remember seeing a poster for Extra Fancy. And I had read about them in *Details* magazine. And I remember thinking about trying to go to that show. But—like once again I like realized that I was just not—my money was dwindling and so I just—I came home and decided to go home because—yeah. I mean, it was like—the people—I just—there was this dude who I was hanging out with and I had my bus ticket back to

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Sacramento and he was trying to talk me into selling it and us just going down to Santa Cruz to hang out. And I was like, I don't want to live on the street. (laugh) And then I was like, I just need to go home.

ALBIN: Right. Well when you were at Fort Hays for the year did you meet any GLBT people in Hays?

MCVEY: I—in Hays I was not—whatever existed of a queer community in Hays just never could get me. They never liked me. What I could find within that time period I was there when I finally started looking for them like in my late teens and early twenties, there was a recognizable lesbian community that I could find okay. And—but most of the gay men that were in that area that were out were very stereotypical and in like not as much as being like feminine, like that did not bug me as much as like just like clothes are important and dancing and stuff. And I played in a rock band. When I came back from California that's when I started performing and stuff and playing in coffee shops and then I started a rock band. And we played like angry boy rock. And so I ran with a different crowd, like a heterosexual-people-who-listened-to-loud-music crowd, and I was just kind of like the token accepted queer. And my band was like fairly popular. But there was only like three good bands in the whole town. And so that was—that was the way—I know—it's so funny even just thinking about this.

My ability to play music at that time was my way of getting accepted in the mainstream culture. Like that gave me a legitimacy to be different. Like they are like, He's a good musician, so we'll overlook him being a fag kind of thing. Maybe that's not really the way the world works but it seemed to in that time. I think that even now that's what I aspire for, though people, I think, identify me as being like a queer artist and that's very true, I don't find that music's specifically queer. I'm always—I've always felt like my objective is that it shouldn't be viewed as being different. That's why it's important for me to speak about men the way I have heard other songwriters speak about the opposite sex, is to convey the emotional honesty and the reality of what I know. Because if I wrote songs about girls it would be completely contrived. (laughter)

ALBIN: And had you come out to your parents at all during this time?

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MCVEY: No, not at all, deathly afraid of that. Around the time that I was kind of getting to see the young man from Ottawa who came and visited me a couple times, somebody had called my parents' house and asked them if I was gay, some anonymous fuckin' outer. (laugh) I'm still bitter. And that spurred a conversation which I adamantly denied that when I was sixteen. So no, that was not something I was going to do. I was really upset. God, I was real upset. It's weird because I look back on it now and it's like—

ALBIN: And were your parents upset?

MCVEY: I don't know. It was my mother who talked. My father got the phone call, but my mother's the one who had the conversation with me. Yeah kind of. Like I didn't get the idea that it was going to be a good time to come out. I didn't think (laugh) it was going to be like, Oh great. Now we know. It all makes sense. No. I don't think so.

ALBIN: So you're in your rock band, your boy rock band, playing in Hays. So what happened after that?

MCVEY: So the band broke up. We played together for about two, two-and-a-half years. But only like Kansas and we just—I liked doing it but what it takes to like take it to the next level, I mean you can't even fucking do it in Hays. There's just not even a point. You know what I mean? Like you're so far from any kind of convenient gig that unless you're really going to tour then you need to move. Anyway, so the band eventually broke up and I spent about another year in Hays. And then I—there was nothing really to do in that town but drink. That's all people ever do. And eventually I lost my job because I had been irresponsible. I worked in a bar as a cook. And on Fridays we had dollar draws. And every Friday I drank beer while I worked. And I think I probably had like four or six regrettably on one Friday. Only I worked a split. So I went home and just completely overslept and like they fired my ass. But I had been kind of sloppy drunk at that time anyway. I was unhappy in that town. So I moved after I lost that job.

But my parents were like, You can come—my parents had moved back to Salina. They moved back to Salina in '97. And in '99 I moved back to live with them for about six months. And in that time I had met a man in Topeka. Well he was twenty so I was still

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his senior, I was twenty-one. And we started dating. And this was the first—this was my first like relationship that I felt was really reciprocal as far as like he would be—I mean, I had sex with guys who were in the closet while I was in Hays. That seemed to be the kind of guys that I would hook up with most of the time. But that was like awkward and irregular and I always wanted a boyfriend. And then finally I met a guy. But that was because Topeka had a queer community. So some friends of mine that I had met online we had gone out to what was called—it was called the Paradox at that time, downtown Topeka.

And I met Nathan and like it was just like immediate. We started just nonstop talking. And he was interested in like a lot of the same music and stuff and he played guitar and blah, blah, blah and piano. So we dated for about six months with him traveling to see me a lot. And we got a place in Topeka in October of '99. And that was also when I released my first solo recording that I had been tinkering with, *Wild Lemming*, which was the name of the band I was (unintelligible). We had had (unintelligible) four-track and stuff so I had started tinkering with stuff on my own that wasn't in the same like angry vein. And then I guess that's when I—yeah. So '99 October I put out a record and moved to Topeka.

ALBIN: And so when Nathan was coming to visit you in Salina and you're living with your parents right?

MCVEY: Sorry.

ALBIN: No, I'm just curious. (laugh)

MCVEY: It's a pretty important part of this interview huh? So I came out to my mother while I was drunk and in an argument right before I moved in. Like I had—

ALBIN: Into your parents' house?

MCVEY: Into my parents' house. Like, I had come there and we had decided I was going to be moving in and they needed to take me back and get my stuff. Anyway—so I came out to her in this like very textbook wrong way to do it. And she said the very

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textbook right thing which was, Well, I still love you. And then boy that was a relief. (laugh) I didn't know what was going to happen. But she didn't tell my dad. And so a few weeks later—I mean, I met Nathan within a little over a month of me living there.

So a few weeks later like we had been staying with one of my—I had met this older gay man who had a kid and stuff with an extra room so when his kid visited he could stay there so we could sleep at his place together, but I wasn't going to take him home. So when Nate would come up we would go over there. So we had gone back to my parents' house for breakfast because they were off at work. And I made breakfast and then he was getting ready to leave and so we were like kissing outside and then I hear this horn and here's my parents' car man. And they like pulled up in the driveway. My dad didn't say anything about it. Okay. We did something like really butch like change the oil after that, I shit you not.

And then like a day or two later I heard them talking about it downstairs through the vent because I was trying to take a nap. And I was like, All right, well obviously they know. We just need to get this over with now. So I went down and we talked about it and told me I couldn't live in their house like that. So I like of course was just like, Well, I'm not going to continue to suffer for this. If you don't want me to live in your house then that's—I'll fucking go somewhere else. I mean, I'm twenty-one. I could figure it out. And so I stormed out the door. I was going to walk all the way downtown to go to work because I had to go to work in an hour-and-a-half and I figured I could make it by then. Of course my mom like chased me down in the car and—so that was how—and it was rocky.

For three years that was a rocky deal actually. So yeah, it didn't go well. And—but they never—like they never said stupid shit to me like I was a sinner or dumb things like that. You know, my parents, as awful as this sounds, had a very selfish concern which was that people would think that they had somehow done something wrong or that their name wasn't going to be carried on or their bloodline wasn't going to be carried on or they weren't getting grandchildren. And you know what, all of those were very selfish concerns. And this was something that I had had to really struggle with and so that irritated me a lot and I think though that they eventually—eventually they came around because my family (laugh) started inquiring about why I wasn't at holidays anymore.

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And that reason was because they wouldn't let Nathan come with me, but Nathan's family would let me go to their holidays so that's where we went.

So my uncle was going to get married and I guess finally my dad—they asked, is Chuck going to come? What's going on? So he finally told—(laugh) my poor dad. He finally told one of his other brothers—not the one who was getting married but a different one. And they were like, This is what's going on? This is why he's not at Christmas? They're like, You are wrong. (laugh) They're like, You need to fix this with your son. So that's how it happened. One of my other family members, my Uncle Jack, thank you, stuck up for me and then I got welcomed back in the flock. And then of course when we showed up at the wedding and everyone got to meet Nathan and stuff then they were like, We want you to come to Christmas. This is—then my dad, though, of course, took it upon himself that he felt like he needed to out me to everybody ahead of time. (laugh) Like it was the weirdest thing, like I'd grown a third eye or something. Don't stare.

And what is a really great thing about that wedding was that I got to see my cousin Jessica who I hadn't seen in ten years. And we are about six weeks apart in age. And she lived—grew up in Kentucky and still lives in Louisville. And when her family would come to visit for like either pheasant hunting or for the summer for a week or so, we were always like that. Like we're really, really close. So I see her for the first time in ten years, and she's a lesbian. And I was like, holy fucking shit. That is just nuts. Like we were both just like, I can't believe that. But she wasn't out to the family and I guess she kind of is now. I mean she kind of—I mean, her mom and stuff, like the immediately family like but she wasn't out to the extended family. Like I had just shown up with a guy so that was over with. But yeah, so I think she is now though because her and her wife they got married in Canada three or four years ago, just got a baby a year ago that they adopted. So I'm very excited. I was totally down with that and I support her a 100 percent in going in that direction.

ALBIN: That's great. So how did you find out that she was a lesbian? Did she run up to you at the wedding and say anything?

MCVEY: Well, we were—she actually did tell me at the wedding but that was like a day later. Like, we had been hanging out for a whole day. She had just—there was just

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some—like she was trying to hint around about it, but I figured that if that's what the case was—like, I remember we were starting to get kind of suspicious. But I was like, Why wouldn't she just tell me? You know. Like, you don't have to play the game with me. I brought the guy. So then she did. I was like, (*inhale*) okay. Well I kind of—I was like—that all made sense then.

ALBIN: Right, right. And had you dated women at all in high school?

MCVEY: Not really. I was nerdy and awkward still. I took a couple girls out. The ones that I did ever express any interest in was—they were always like pretty, but that wasn't my objective. Like I realized that they were attractive. I can only think of two girls I ever took out on dates. But I was just intellectually stimulated by them. One of them was this like very intelligent Mormon girl and she was also really foxy. But I really just liked talking to her. And that's what I looked—because I didn't know what to do. It wasn't the same. I wasn't interested and I didn't want to touch her boobs. (laughter) My agenda was completely different.

ALBIN: (laugh) So you moved in with Nathan in October?

MCVEY: Um-hm.

ALBIN: And how long did you stay in Topeka with him?

MCVEY: We lived in Topeka until April of 2003 and that's when we moved to Phoenix, or more specifically Tempe, so I could go to school at the Conservatory of Recording Arts and Sciences. And we lived together then. And that was for eight months and then we moved to Kansas City and lived there for another eight months and then that was when we broke up and that was also when I moved from Kansas City back to—we both moved back to Topeka but in different situations.

ALBIN: Right. And what was it like putting out your first album when you had moved to Topeka?

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MCVEY: You know like—well, I didn't have any idea of how to market or promote or anything. There was no MySpace kind of web. There was—what was I on? MP3.com I really enjoyed that. And you could find a lot of other weird artists. But what I was—I mean, it wasn't that great. You know what I mean? Like I was still learning. I don't—I don't really think that—I think that first album wasn't all that. I mean, it was okay but it was very amateur and badly recorded and stuff. So before we moved I put out my second full length but these are all indie like homemade type deals. That was called *Swallow*.

ALBIN: Which is this one, correct?

MCVEY: Correct. And that was right before I went to school. And then while I was at school we recorded an EP of my work called the *Transition EP* which was done on two-inch analog tape. And that was pretty exciting. We had to mix it in Pro Tools because they ran out of time to mix it analog.

ALBIN: And what else did you do when you were in Topeka? Were you working as well?

MCVEY: I worked at the Olive Garden for a horrible amount of time, like five years. But I also worked at the local gay bars. In 2001 I started working at a bar called Lives. And Topeka usually has this system of three bars going on. One of them that's going to be on the way out, one that's the popular dance club, and one that's the older guy club. So I went and got a job at the older guy club because I was twenty-three—twenty—yeah, I think I was twenty-three at the time and I knew that's where the money was. I mean, I had a boyfriend so that wasn't my objective, was not to meet people or anything like that, it was to make money. And kids at dance clubs don't have money, or at least they're not giving it to you and—but older men do and I was young and cute so—that's why I did it.

And I worked there for a couple years and I was a really popular bartender and I made a lot of money but I also liked to party really hard. So I lived the bartender thing for a while and stuff and that kind of was not—it was a fun experience for me but I wish I knew now what I knew then, or I guess I wish I knew then what I know now, that's what I

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mean, about that situation because I could have worked it to my advantage more and not bought cocaine. (laugh) I don't know. Nate and I started experimenting with the bounds of our relationships in that time and that was not my thing. I mean it—it didn't work out.

ALBIN: Right. I'm just going to switch the tape really quickly.

MCVEY: Can I grab a cigarette?

ALBIN: Yeah, definitely. Yeah, just let me stop this and you can (*unintelligible*).

(pause)

ALBIN: We'll get that going. Okay so you were—we left off you were living in Topeka and making good tips. And then you said that you had moved to Arizona.

MCVEY: Yeah, we moved to Tempe so I could go to school at the Conservatory of Recording Arts and Sciences. And I worked at the Olive Garden at that time too still, which was kind of the reason I had kept the Olive Garden job was because I knew I was going to be going to school and so that just transferred and I had the job and blah, blah, blah. So yeah, I went to school and then initially I had wanted to move out to LA. Well actually when we first moved to Phoenix I thought maybe I would stay there, but the school really discourages that because there's only so many audio engineering gigs in that area and a lot of people try to do that and then they don't have any work. So I wanted to go to LA but it was just really expensive and my father has a friend who does (*unintelligible*) out there and he had said that this was a really bad time for this industry and that people who've worked for years are out of work and studios are closing so this is not a good idea.

So I moved to Kansas City in hopes to go work at a studio called the Berry Music Group initially because I wanted to work with two-inch analog tape. At school we worked a lot on tape and I really liked it, but nobody really uses tape very much anymore. And so I had found this place. And the thing about my school and their internship program which was a complete joke, was that they won't contact any of the studios in the city that

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you're expected to go to until you're in the city that you go to, okay. So I had to move my ass there to find out whether or not the studio is even interested in me, which unfortunately they are in cahoots with a different recording school and so I was not going to have an internship there. So I waited around for like a couple weeks and they were not very proactive at throwing me leads so I started just calling studios and asking to go tour them and then kind of popping it on them.

Plus my cousin was friends with the guys who ran Black Lodge Recording. And so I went ahead and I had sent them an e-mail about the internship thing and they were like, Oh, we've already got two interns, blah, blah, blah. And so I e-mailed them back and I was like, Well that's cool. By the way this is who my cousin is. And then they called me like the next day and like, Hey why don't you come down? We had a band cancel. Come down and check out the studio, blah, blah, blah. And then I had like—I showed up with like my resume and a CD. I was totally ready to be grilled. And I had already had the internship because of my cousin. And that was the first time I ever had successfully used name dropping and started realizing a little bit more about this industry which is it does not matter what you know, (laugh) it matters who you know. But—so I interned out there and was living in Kansas City.

And Black Lodge is in Eudora, Kansas which is about six miles east of Lawrence. And so I wrapped up my internship and they gave me the option of being a freelance engineer out there so I started doing that. And then Nate I's relationship ended quasi-abruptly. I mean, I was really unhappy at the time and had never really developed very good coping skills. And so I spent a lot of time drinking which also is—I don't know. But anyway, so we split up and I went back to Topeka to kind of clean up and stay with a friend of mine and then I ended up living in Topeka for another couple of years.

That was when I met my current partner whose name is Dominick. And he lived in Burlingame, which is thirty miles southwest of Topeka and he had grown up in a small town as well too. He's five years younger than me. I was twenty-seven so I thought that dating a 22-year-old is kind of kinky. I don't know. (laugh) I liked it. I thought that was neat. I was like, Oh my hot young boyfriend. (laughter) I've always had like a mental image of myself as being older than I really am. But—so he moved in after we dated for about six months and then he ended up leaving me to go move to Portland to

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try to do something there. Plus I had started drinking again which seems to run people off. So anyway, he had left and I found myself in a similar position (laugh) that I had been in just a year-and-a-half before. And so I once again started with the quitting drinking thing and eventually he came back from Portland and stuff and then that's when we moved to Lawrence. And I had switched studios in the meantime.

In 2005 I started working for a studio called Alibi 6 Recording which was in Lawrence. And in 2006 the guy who owned that studio attempted to launch a record label and signed a couple different bands from the area, one called Roanoke and another one called the Walton Heist. And I produced both of those records. So I worked there for—and in the meantime I was also just doing regular engineering for anybody who'd come to the studio.

And in 2006 when I was in the middle of doing the Walton Heist—or not the Walton Heist, the Roanoke Record, I recorded three of my own songs for Dominick as a Valentine's present. And this was while we're split up and he's in Portland. And one of them was "My Space" which was about that specifically, and then another couple of love songs—one called "D" and one called "Shelter Me". And those, I think, probably prompted him to come back. Which was fun because I had tried to woo guys with my music like for years and nobody ever was buying, and (laugh) he did. So I was like, Well it works on him. (laugh) So—but anyway—and then that studio closed so now I'm back at the Black Lodge with that.

Anyway so I moved to Lawrence with him and actually lived in the studio for a little while because our apartment wasn't going to be available until August, but I had acquired a roommate in his absence and that wasn't working out anymore with the three of us there and I just needed to get out of that place, so we lived in the studio for a little while, couple months. And I got a job at Wheatfields Bakery which I still work at. And in 2007 I started kind of getting—did you want to redirect this at all or is this fine?

ALBIN: No, no—

MCVEY: You want like chronological layout? In 2007 I started getting the feeling that the studio was going to close because we had spent a year really working on this label

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thing only that was not panning out because of a lot of reasons, but it had to do with mainly the people—the guy who was in charge of it all, in my opinion. Anyway, so I was like, I've got some stuff that I've been working on. I need to finish this up. So I went ahead and brought in Eric Kessinger, who had played drums on the three songs that I had done for Dominick's little gift, and we finished up doing drums on, I want to say ten songs. And then Max Paley, who is a Lawrence local, played bass on these other songs. And I ended up whittling it down to six that were good and then that's what turned out to be *Modern Living*.

But in the meantime I had been playing live hardly at all. I mean, it was very sporadic, maybe a couple times a year and usually upon request. It wasn't something I was pursuing. I was really working on my engineering at the time. And so we had—I had done an open mike at the Bottleneck because a friend of mine was moving and she had never seen me play. So I did that and they were like, Hey you should try to book a show here. And so they gave me the information and I contacted Pipeline Productions, Julia at Pipeline. And they were like, Yeah that's cool. So I got a gig. And so then I was like, Hey why don't you guys, Eric and Max, play this one show with me, because it's—you played on the recordings and stuff and I was like, It's May 22nd which was the day before my birthday and—before my thirtieth birthday. And then so I was like, Just do this one gig. So we did and we actually—another guy played keyboards too. And we really enjoyed it. So I was like, Well do you guys mind if I book another show? Will you play another show with me? (laugh) And then that's kind of how it all—then I just started booking gigs and stuff. And then in August I released *Modern Living* and started doing the promotion for that and mailing it out to publications. And we had, I guess, a tour, a real official tour in 2008 to try to support that record and yeah.

ALBIN: So when you were touring where did you go?

MCVEY: Mainly around the Midwest. I've been able to expand my circle more over the past two years. Like initially I was doing like Wichita, Lawrence, and Kansas City. And then 2008 we started going up north into Nebraska and further out west and out to Chicago and Missouri. I went on tour with Kristie Stremel. We did a little solo tour. And so we did some places I hadn't been before like Iowa and some places in Missouri and stuff like that. So she kind of helped me break out my circle a little bit more. And then

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yeah, so mainly in the Midwest, but I am going to be going to California in June of 2009 so that's exciting.

ALBIN: That's very exciting.

MCVEY: Yeah, I guess so, we'll see. I mean, California's hard to tour in. Like there's so much already going on there. And if you don't have a name—I'm not looking at it as being—if I break even I'll be happy. Otherwise, I'm calling it a vacation with shows. (laughter) I'm in California. I'll be there for Gay Pride in LA so that should be interesting.

ALBIN: Yeah, that'll be a wild time probably. (laugh)

MCVEY: You know, and that's the thing is I'm really not that wild. Like, I think that my persona and the things I write about might give people an impression that I'm a little bit adventurous than I actually am in person. I think as a songwriter people a lot of times just kind of assume that there's autobiographical content in everything you write which is really naïve because if that were true then Stephen King must be a horrible person.

ALBIN: Right. And so does this mean that you never went to the seminary in like the one—

MCVEY: I didn't, no. No, I sure didn't. But anyway, I guess 2008—in amongst all this touring we went into Black Lodge and recorded the basic tracks for my new record which is called *Animal*. And then I had this idea that I was going to be able to tinker with it in the middle of the summer and that I'd get it done in three months or something like that. So anyway, that wasn't exactly—I was traveling so much and then of course trying to work my regular job that pays my bills, because all the money I make from music goes right back into it. I mean like, I have to reinvest it and stuff, which is cool. Like, I mean, I paid for the recording of the new record pretty much all with funds I've made off of traveling and the *Modern Living* sales and—yeah, it's good. I mean, like I think I've thrown in some money eventually.

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Like wrapping it up, like it's become more expensive than I had anticipated and stuff. But I just—it just seemed like I couldn't—like I had to go all the way. Like there's no reason to hold back. I mean, we spent—I started writing the record in October of 2007 because we needed more material because we only had like seven songs. And so I had to write some stuff so we could play longer sets. Like, we had had this headlining gig in Wichita and it's like I had to fill in with like just solo stuff. And so I was like, Oh I need to write more stuff. And so I started writing just songs. And then at the beginning of the year I started realizing that there was a reoccurring theme in them and that that was something about religion. I mean, I think that the weird thing about this project is that it's been—it's different than any other one I've worked on partially because as far as like the songs themselves go, they were written all in a body of time, like—a lot of times like a record I'll have will have—is a hodgepodge over a period of years of composition.

Like *Modern Living* probably has three years of song stuff that I chose from, where these were all specifically written in the same amount of time and they were the only songs written at that time. And it was like—and when I was done, I was done. Like, I knew that was it. And— But over time like the actual what's really behind it or what I think has motivated me to do this record started becoming more apparent to me the more I had to work on it. And after I was done with all the *Modern Living* stuff in November that's when I kind of buckled down to finish up the record and I wasn't booking any dates for like four months. So that's what I did.

And it just became like a real—like I'd work four days a week at my day job and then I'd work on the album for the other three days of the week. And it became a very consuming process for me, because I think partially because the subject matter is kind of dark or it's not about good feelings or—so when you're kind of surrounded by that you kind of take it on. And I get real obsessed and nuts. And I know I do and I warn people about it. It gets worse the older I get. But when I'm working like I become kind of an isolationist. And especially because like we did a bunch of the tracks at the studio and then a bunch of it I did at home, like all the keyboard stuff and blah, blah, blah because I can do that at home and I have the gear. And that's the kind of thing that I do when I'm like sitting around in my underwear. I can just wake up and work on something. I don't have to like drive twenty minutes to go somewhere. But that also allows me the opportunity to become very weird because there's nobody else to like keep you

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grounded. And when you spend eight hours in your own little zone and stuff you can get kind of strange. And then it's hard for me to like snap out of it but anyway, yeah I started realizing there was a theme occurring. So then I started cultivating it. And the last song was probably written in—it probably took me about three or four months to write it. And then we played the songs for a while and then recorded it. So the whole process, actually, I think, started in October of 2007 and the recording was just mailed so like I guess that's like almost eighteen months.

ALBIN: Right. So when you said that the last song took three to four months, is that coming up with the lyrics for the song—

MCVEY: No. I mean, the whole project took a span of three or four months. Actually to tell you the truth the first song was the last song that I completed. Like the first idea that I started working on was the first song on the record, but lyrically, it was the last one I finished, and probably one of the last songs I finished on the record. It was just a really hard song to write. And I probably rewrote it like five times and I've never done that. I mean, like the arrangement has been the same since November of 2007. But lyrically I just—because that song in particular, "The End of Us" serves as kind of like a preface, I think, for the record. Like, it's kind of giving you the idea of what it's about or where I'm getting at. And then the actual record's kind of—starts as far as like—I feel like if you listen to it there's kind of a downward slide on it. There's a progression of thought and emotion in it. And so that's where it kind of like—it's like this preface, the setup and then here is this—the hill.

ALBIN: Right. (laugh) So with your other songs that you did you had mentioned that they're kind of a hodgepodge of songs. Did you go through the same process when you were writing those songs as well, like when you were working on them?

MCVEY: You mean where I get weird?

ALBIN: Well or—or is it a similar process where—

MCVEY: Well they were worked on more as individuals as opposed to like—that's the thing is like I had the whole record in my head, you know what I mean? And that's why

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it was so different was that it came out as just a whole piece. And like for instance with *Swallow*, I started working on some of those songs in December of '99 and we finally—was finished in February of 2003. So it gives me a span of like three years, all right. So there's ten songs on that record. Now that's probably about—I probably started working on forty songs over that period of time, all right. So then it was kind of just like chiseling down what was the best work. *Modern Living* was similar.

ALBIN: That the one that (*unintelligible*)?

MCVEY: Yeah. And—yeah. I mean, like the thing is I wanted to do a full record when I did *Modern Living*. But then I just listened to the tracks and I was like, I would rather put out six really strong tracks than ten songs that over—if you listen to the whole thing then you just feel mediocre. Like one of the things that I noticed about modern living that I had a couple different reviewers mention is that they just felt like it was too short. They were just like—

ALBIN: They wanted more?

MCVEY: Yeah. Well good.

ALBIN: (laugh) And now they have more.

MCVEY: That's the idea, yeah. It's—I've gotten—I've really—as a young man I was prolific songwriter, but it wasn't very quality songs and now that's all kind of like changed. You know what I mean? And I'd just rather put out good songs and fewer of them than mediocre songs. If I write something and I feel like it's contrived or something I'm not going to force it down people's throats. And I think that was the problem with "The End of Us" is that when I finally started feeling, Oh I need to write lyrics for this and stuff, then I was forcing myself to do it and then I was just filling in the blanks and I didn't need to do that. Like what I needed to do was sit and think about it. And like the difference between, I think, my record and maybe other people's records that deal with religion is that when I looked back on it I realize now that *Animal* and working on *Animal* was actually kind of a mourning process for me as far as like I

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started—my actual initial like beginning of my loss of faith would have been around the age of thirteen I would say.

But through—going through like rehab and like having to go to AA and stuff I started searching out God again. And I wouldn't say I was necessarily a quest into Christianity, though I think that I looked into that too. But I came to the conclusion that as much as I wanted to try to believe in God, as much as I really wanted to believe in God that I didn't and there was nothing I was going to be able to do about that. And when I—I don't think that I'm necessarily able to critique all religions so that's why Christianity would have been the focus because that's the one I grew up around and so that's the one that kind of instilled these ideas. And then the reason that there's a lot of Catholic imagery is because Catholicism in an image is a lot easier to recognize.

So if I was going to try to do—you know like, what would I have done to try to symbolize the Baptist Church? People not dancing? People not drinking? Plus the Catholic Church just has so many homoerotic overtones in it anyway, and that seems to be kind of something I like to touch on as far as like—like I like to discuss things that maybe make people uncomfortable but I think it's because they need to be discussed. And with that record I wasn't coming from—initially I thought I was coming from a sense of like anger or frustration and I was really more like it's a breakup record. It's kind of like, This is why I don't believe in you.

ALBIN: But even on like—I was noticing on the cover of *Swallow* there are these kind of empty alcohol bottles, these pictures of half naked guys. And all of these candles, these Catholic candles and—

MCVEY: Well it's been a reoccurring theme as far as like my battle with like religion. It's been touched on a lot. I think it's—it really starts poking its nose out a little bit more though in like the metaphors I use in *Modern Living*. Like, a lot of times—I mean, I refer to things, concepts like sin and hell and lonely life. I'm like looking for God to relieve my pain. I mention things like angels and stuff like that. And that's all imagery, religious imagery that I've used if not just blatantly out saying. So yeah, like that's the thing that's great about my new record is that though I feel like it pushes me into a different little like—I think people might look at what I do a little differently now. And they'll be like, Oh

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this queer retort to Christianity type thing is kind of controversial and there's a porn star and just graphic art and blah, blah, blah. And I—people could assume that maybe I'm just trying to push the envelope to get attention, but I've always been trying to push the envelope. I've just gotten better at it and less afraid. Like, when I wrote "Sir", like the first time I performed that I was so nervous. I was so nervous—

ALBIN: That's such a great song—

MCVEY: —that people are going to freak out on me. And yeah. And they didn't. And I play it in front of straight people all the time. And once I realized I could get away with it, I started thinking about other stuff. And it's the same way with like the art work. Like we had done the record. The record was mixed by the time we had done the art and then when I contacted Scott and he said he would do it, I was over with my drummer, Eric, who also does our graphic design and we started brainstorming. Because we were like, Well hmm, now that we've got a porn star to do this, what things might a porn star do that we wouldn't—couldn't ask of other people? Oh, I'll put him in cheesecloth. (laugh) So I got to do that, and that's the great thing about being indie is that I don't think I would have— There was nobody to stop me (laugh) from doing what I wanted to do. And I think that if I'd been on a label I would have run into a bunch of problems.

ALBIN: I think so. So—and you had mentioned that you had done "Sir" in front of a lot of straight crowds. Have you ever run into any issues like playing in front of crowds, being this out, gay performer?

MCVEY: Nothing—I don't know. Not really. I mean, I don't think—the only thing that comes to mind of having like a bad crowd reaction apart from playing—we played a show that the headliner was actually this like frat rock guy and then the opener was this other local like frat group. And we were like, That's really weird. And then the promoter who had booked us was like, Yeah there'll be a lot of frat people there. (whispering) She's like, Scare them. I was like, Okay. I mean like, She knew what she was doing. I don't know why she did that. (laugh) But we played really, really well at that show in particular because we had just gotten back from the tour. So we were like just really on. And I think it's hard to argue with it if it's done well. Like they didn't—I sold some records so—and if there were people—I had someone tell me that there were people

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like making faggy pantomimes or something, but nobody did it in front of me. So if that was the case—the only thing I can think of where I had like a bad response was at Hays, Kansas. And I don't know this to be necessarily true—this is what was reported to me. But I played "Judas", which is on the new record and some people walked out during that song. But that was because I offended them religiously, not with my queerness. But I don't think the set had gotten real dirty yet. I don't even know if my set's really dirty. I mean, in contrast to some other people, I don't think it's necessary. It's just that I'm open and frank about being queer, I think, that makes people think that there's something different about that. I don't know. I don't do anything dirtier than Madonna did.

ALBIN: No.

MCVEY: No way. Prince's stuff in the eighties, far fucking racier. So it's just that I'm queer and that's kind of like—we've just grown up with so many gay artists that are fence riders, that just won't. I mean, I appreciate that they are out and stuff, but— And I don't know this to be necessarily true because I'm not a huge Melissa fan, but at least initially it was still very unisexual, okay. Anybody can relate to my music. It's all you and blah, blah, blah, like the genderless pronouns. And same way with like Elton John. And George Michael, he was forced out of the closet because he got arrested. We all knew George.

I mean it's like bands like Pansy Division who were—I mean granted they were way too over-the-top gay to ever be mainstreamed, but that was really interesting to me when I was younger. Or like I always felt this real kinship with like Maynard from Tool, though those lyrics were really vague at times and stuff. They had such hardcore homosexual overtones and imagery. And plus it wasn't like the same as like—a lot of times we associate gay musicians with doing like dance music or just—and that's not what I do.

I'm like—I'm interested in rock and roll. The first concert I went to was Motley Crue. I don't—I'm not. I like Rufus Wainwright, but he's just a really amazing songwriter and performer. I'd say he's probably one of the only like (unintelligible) I listen to what would be considered stereotypical. But I don't think Rufus is necessarily an inherently horribly queer artist. I mean, like he's open about it too. But he wasn't on his first record, I

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would like to add. Like we bought the first record and I was looking at it and I said, (whispering) This is pretty big.

But then there's also even artists now that are pushing the whole gay shtick. I'm queer, but then their music is still like the same problem that I've always had with its just genderless pronouns and stuff. And I'm like, You're marketing yourself almost exclusively as this queer artist and yet you're not giving us anything. If I wanted to listen to ambiguous music—I don't know, some people aren't as comfortable. I mean, I just don't get it. I'm thinking of some people specifically, but I'm not going to mention any names.

ALBIN: Okay. (laugh) So during your time as a songwriter, have you been politically active in anything?

MCVEY: I tried to be a little. I see that more as something that I'll be working on more in the future. And I think that the new record—I mean not *Animal* but the one that's brewing in my brain right now, is going to involve a lot about analysis of class systems. So yeah, maybe. But once again like I feel like my thoughts on politics are going to be another insider-outsider event, I think. Like, I did a benefit or something for HRC [Human Rights Campaign] last summer. And I thought it seemed like a really good organization that I wanted to get involved with. And I'm on their e-mail list and so they send me these e-mails. So they sent me this e-mail a few weeks ago about a Wisconsin television station that was going to be airing this anti-gay propaganda that was paid for, I believe, by Focus on the Family. I believe that's who it was. Are you familiar with who I'm talking about?

ALBIN: That sounds familiar.

MCVEY: Okay. So HRC prompts its constituents about this. And enough people call or contact the station within an hour that they decide not to run the program. So in this e-mail where they're like Victory, Victory, is a link to this video that's an hour long program and it's a paid-for program, so—and it feels like a paid-for program, like one of those advertisements. But I watched the whole thing. And it's a complete huge piece of just propaganda bullshit. It portrays homosexuals as being a group that is trying to

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manipulate our society via the media and politics, and then it promotes the idea that Christians are the ones who are actually being oppressed. Okay. Now that's not the way I see it however, that's how somebody else sees it. And anybody who had half of a brain who watched this could see the flaw, I mean, I would assume. I mean, granted, there's a lot of—look, if you're a homophobe, you're going to be a homophobe regardless of whether this program tells you or not. And you're not—that program's probably not changing anyone's mind. But my point being is that they shut it down. And my thought on Christianity and things like this is that they need to be exposed and they need to be seen. Because what they did by shutting that down, which had a great spot, it was going to be on at 3:00 p.m. on Saturday, is that they've now hidden this Christian agenda against the queer community from other people and reinforced the idea that somehow—that the Christians are the ones who are actually being oppressed.

And they should have—I sent them an e-mail to this effect saying, This was a really bad move politically and I don't understand why you would do this because I think that the only way we will ever be able to get to see through this is to expose it for its flaws, which means we actually have to discuss it not hide it. Gay people need to be aware that there are people sitting in offices thinking up ways to do this. This is—Christianity, by design, needs an enemy. And so does—and that's what keeps society cohesive as well is having a common foe. And the homosexual community—the gay and lesbian, transgender, bisexual community has been a target and is a really big target right now.

Like, it's not as bad as it was in the—or it's worse than it was in the nineties. Like now it's become a really big deal with like the gay marriage thing and stuff. I listen to Christian radio all the time and I developed this habit because of—when I worked as an engineer all the time after spending ten hours a day listening to music I didn't want to listen to music on my commute home but I wanted to listen to something. And so I would listen to talk radio. A lot of times at two in the morning the only talk radio I could find was like Christian radio. So I—but for years I've been listening to it now and I'm still listening to it. And homosexuality and the gay agenda is discussed, if not as much, it's second in line to abortion. That's what they want to talk about, abortion and queers and the terrorists and supporting whoever's Republican. I mean, it's so crazy. Like, if you want to hear propaganda—(laugh)

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But I just—that's kind of like why I feel *Animal* was important too. So this is my stance at being political. This is the way I do it. I don't know—the organization that I was interested in supporting doesn't make sense to me because they seem really scared. And I e-mailed three different addresses off of that and no one will respond to my e-mail. And I write pretty good e-mails, but I criticized them. I'm not going to send an e-mail to the Christian community about what a bunch of assholes they are, but when our people act like assholes then I feel like I need to be like, Hey come on, we could have done this better.

ALBIN: Right. And have you noticed at all with the way that politics are going right now any significant changes in Kansas, like since you've been out?

MCVEY: For the community?

ALBIN: Yeah.

MCVEY: Well Lawrence got the domestic partnership registration, and I'm not registered because it wouldn't benefit me at all. There's—I have my own health insurance and that's really the only thing I could see where that would work. And I don't think that my employer would pay for that—for his health insurance. Have I seen any significant legal changes? No. In Topeka in 2004 they were trying to add sexual orientation to the city's anti-discrimination policy and at—we went to at least the rally or whatever outside. And it was kind of funny actually.

It's funny, this is a good story for this. So we go to this thing right, and we made these T-shirts for me and my little friends that said, Less than Equal. And Dominick and I were photographed at this, arms around each other. And the next day we're like front page of the paper, okay. And it was great because here we are the like cute, young, acceptable-looking gay couple, right. And then all the like pictures of the people who are like the anti-gay protestors and stuff, all have horrible expressions on their faces or they're being like dragged out of the room by cops. It was really great, I loved that. But anyway (laugh) that photograph outed Dominick to his father.

ALBIN: Who is still living in the small community?

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MCVEY: In Burlingame.

ALBIN: (laugh)

MCVEY: Yeah.

ALBIN: So how did that go?

MCVEY: No well, but okay I guess. They get through it. (laugh)

ALBIN: Oh wow.

MCVEY: He was really upset about it, Dominick was. He was worried—he doesn't like to rock the boat with his family. I'm not the same way. I'm pretty independent when it comes to that. But yeah, so no I haven't really seen any significant change in the last ten years politically. However, I have seen significant change in our culture over the last ten years, far more significant change in the culture than actually in any legislations at all. It's—there's a lot of kids now. I mean, like kids are coming out at much earlier ages which I guess is a good thing. I mean, I don't know. Like I didn't even really feel—it never even occurred to me that I was queer until I was twelve or eleven or so. Really around the time that masturbation set in, that's when I started figuring something's different.

ALBIN: Right.

MCVEY: You know, some people are like, I've been gay all my life. I've felt gay since I was two. Well, okay. I always felt kind of like an outsider. But see that's also, I think, on the same lines where I identify with the term queer as opposed to gay. Because it's—where gay seems to be more specifically a homosexual orientation, I think queer is a more definitive term of what I am because I still feel like not only am I gay but other things about me make me more of an outsider, or like I approach it from a different perspective. I think—I think Rufus Wainwright is gay, I think John Waters is queer, if that makes sense.

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ALBIN: All right. So I don't think I have any other questions that I want to ask at this moment.

MCVEY: I like to talk about myself so if you have to do another one—

ALBIN: Yeah, yeah, and that's probably what will happen is—you know, people leave and I'm like, Oh but I should have asked. But is there anything that I haven't asked you that you want to talk about?

MCVEY: Hmm. I'm trying to think. Let me think if there's anything that we've missed that's significant. I have a cat who I love. His name's Lucifer. You know, one of the interesting things about coming out to my family, when—after the epic kiss, which was funny because it actually was bigger than I let on. My father—that brought me out to my father. However, at the same time that this kiss went down that my dad saw, the neighbor across the street saw it, the old nosy man. And he outed me to everybody in the neighborhood and even this little like 8-year-old boy who was like friends with my sister. So this is how my sister gets to find out is that this little kid tells her. And so my parents were real upset and weird about it and blah, blah, blah.

And my mom tells me, Hey stupid little kid told your sister now. I was like, Well, I'm going to go have a little talk with her then. So I took her out for ice cream so we could talk about this. Because my sister was like eleven and—no, she would have been ten. She would have been ten. Anyway, out of all of these people, my sister had the most mature and understanding reaction out of anybody, and she was totally, just did not care. And ever since that she's grown up—she spent the last—I guess maybe she was—God, how old was she? Oh she would have been eleven, yeah.

Anyway, whatever. She's spent all of her teenage years and stuff like not being a homophobe and like sticking up for those kind of things when she hears them in her high school and things like that. Like, she has always been really supportive of me, and she was the one who had the biggest grasp on it. My relationship with my family now is just perfect. Like, my parents, once they came around and stuff, everything seemed to be fine and they really like Dominick. They like Dominick more than me which I think is

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true, I really, truly do. But as far as—I've been out with my employers since—at least since I was twenty-one, always. In fact, now that I'm almost thirty-two I can say pretty confident—like I've always been really happy being a guy. Like I've always been like, Yeah I like being a guy, I don't—I would never want to be a girl. But I'm finally at a point where I can actually say I'm happy being a queer male.

Like, I can't imagine my life any differently. And I don't really want it to be any different. Because when you're forced to analyze things that way, when you have to like maybe think that you might be something that society says you shouldn't be, you have to start looking at stuff more objectively and not with the same prejudices that you grow up with, and I think you start applying that to every aspect of your life. So it's been a good thing for me, I guess, in the long run.

ALBIN: So do you think you'll stick around in Lawrence for a while?

MCVEY: Maybe. Let's see where this record takes me.

ALBIN: Right. Do you think you would ever move to another location, like a coast or to a different state?

MCVEY: The only thing that's going to drag me out to the coast is going to be work. So if something like—if for some reason my music career takes off and it becomes a necessity that I move to a more urban area than I would. However, I really like Lawrence. Lawrence is—it's like the culture of a city, like the liberal culture of a city within a small town. So we don't have the same kind of crime and I like that. And as far as like Lawrence, like, that's the thing that's funny. Though I see that a lot of people, like from outside this area when they contact me or when we discuss stuff, they have this like weird idea that all I do is play in gay bars or something. Where I feel actually like just a pretty mainstream performer in Lawrence. Like, nothing I do really gets these people in a tizzy. And *The Pitch*, when they reviewed *Modern Living*, wrote this horrible review about like it's dirty and like I'm insincere and I don't know. But Lawrence has always just accepted me. And like the longer I've been here the more I've felt that so I'm just—that's just me. That's—like I said, I always feel like eventually just kind of—I'm like mold. I will grow on you. (laughter)

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ALBIN: So is there anything else you want to add?

MCVEY: I think I'll end with that. I'm like mold. (laughter)

ALBIN: That's beautiful, thank you.

[end]