



Lovett's twelfth studio album, *Reverend Me*, comes out February 26.

Lyle Lovett

WHAT I'VE LEARNED

SINGLE 54 HOUSTON

INTERVIEWED BY CAL FUSSMAN

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PHOTOGRAPH BY PETER YANG

- ▶ **A man doesn't wear a red cowboy hat.**
- ▶ **I don't know what it is** about the shower that generates creative thoughts. Maybe it's the hot water. Maybe it's being unencumbered even by the restriction of clothing.
- ▶ **Sometimes when your parents** come up the hard way, they expect you to come up the hard way, too. But my parents gave me every opportunity. Much to my chagrin, I was the only boy in tap and ballet class when I was four years old.
- ▶ **If you forget the words** to your own song, you can always claim artistic license. Forget the words to the national anthem and you're screwed.
- ▶ **Success** is getting to do what you love to do.
- ▶ **It's the inspiration and excitement** that you get from being amazed when you give a vague direction to a guitar player like Dean Parks—"Make it sound a little more purple"—and then hear him play exactly the right thing.
- ▶ **The better your handmates,** the better you're going to look.
- ▶ **I got into a significant scrape** with a bull of mine. My leg was broken. Really, it's a miracle I can walk. That bull was just doing what he does naturally. I learned to keep my guard up and allow him to be himself. That's my definition of respect.
- ▶ **You have to be really good** to get away with smashing a guitar.
- ▶ **I've always thought** that writing isn't really that hard. It's having a good idea that's hard.
- ▶ **You don't have to have anything** in common with people you've known since you were five. With old friends, you've got your whole life in common.
- ▶ **I joke** that I've never been burdened by having an actual hit. There's something to that. My records have sold enough to make the record company money to help me keep my job. But I've never had anything so firmly ingrained in the mind of the public that I'm expected to repeat it.
- ▶ **Rosemary Clooney once came up to me** in the lobby of the Four Seasons in San Francisco. This was back in the late eighties. She said, "I like your music." Oh, man, that makes you feel good. It makes you want to try so much harder. It makes you want to never let Rosemary Clooney down. Ever. Makes you want to make sure that she's right.
- ▶ **When I was a kid,** I watched *The Mike Douglas Show* after school one day. Buck Owens was the guest. Mike was asking Buck about his songwriting. The familiar questions: What comes first—the music or the words? Do you write it down as soon as it comes to you? Buck said, "No. I never write anything down. I figure if it's good enough, I'll remember it." And that has always stuck with me.
- ▶ **Do I hear music** in wine? Depends on how much I drink.
- ▶ **Jack Valenti** was one of the most amazing speakers I ever heard. He spoke in paragraphs. Every sentence was beautifully tailored. Exactly what you'd like to do with your hats, shirts, and shoes.
- ▶ **If someone gives you a belt buckle,** it's like a piece of jewelry. It has the same sort of emotional significance. It would be something you would intend to keep forever.
- ▶ **On matters of the heart,** one's reason can be affected in ways that just can't happen in any other circumstance. The same sort of thought you might be able to apply in one area of your life you just cannot access from any functioning part of your brain. It's completely unavailable to you. Which is sort of what's wonderful about it.
- ▶ **I'd like** to have kids. I'm still hopeful.
- ▶ **Kids should never** feel unsafe. Maybe demonized by one another, and humiliated, all that great high school stuff that you live through. But they should never have to fear for their safety.
- ▶ **A record company** doesn't keep you for vanity or because they like you. They keep you because you make them money. They might take you to lunch if they like you.
- ▶ **The concept on training a horse** is pressure and release. Make the wrong thing difficult and the right thing easy. Put pressure on an animal until it does the thing that you want it to do, then take the pressure off. Whatever the animal's doing when you take off pressure is what he learns to do.
- ▶ **Here's a question for you:** Is it possible to be religious without being judgmental about other people's religions?
- ▶ **I've never been ready** to do a single thing I've ever done in my life. I haven't been prepared enough, haven't studied enough, haven't known enough. You can never be ready. There's just so much to know.
- ▶ **Everything informs** us about everything else, doesn't it? ■

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