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Phil "Dirt" Linville:Dayton Music History Project

Phil Linville

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WRIGHT STATE UNIVERSITY
Dayton Music History Project
Interview with Phil Linville, June 13, 2018

Interview Information

Interview date: June 13, 2018

Interviewer: Chris Wydman (CW)
Special Collections & Archives

Interviewee: Phil Linville (PL)

Interview Transcript

Chris Wydman: My name is Chris Wydman, University Archivist at Wright State University Special Collections and Archives, and today is June 13, 2018, and as a part of the Dayton Music History Project, we have Phil Linville- also known as “Dirt”- here to spend some time with and to answer a few questions. So, Phil, or Dirt, however you prefer to be- does your mom call you Dirt?

Phil Linville: [*Laughs*] No. But everybody else does.

CW: Everybody else does. So, just to get started, if you could give us a little bit of personal background about where you’re from, where you were born in Dayton, where you grew up, that kind of thing.

PL: Well, I was born in Harlan, Kentucky.

CW: Harlan?

PL: Harlan, Kentucky. Moonshine country. But my family moved to the Dayton area, Miamisburg, when I was like two, two or three. Then we moved to Kettering, and in Kettering is where me and my brother started getting into music. Him first. Denny was quite an artist, drawing artist, and the music, and he had a band going, and I would hear them rehearsing, but sometimes I would have his acoustic guitar and I would start just piddling around with stuff, and I worked out the solo to *Baby It’s You*, by the Beatles. You know, [*hums the tune*]. And on of the guys in the band, Gary Hamilton, he’s walking down the hall to go to the bathroom or something and he sees me playing that, and he says, “You’re our guitar player!” And I’m like, “Uh, that’s the only song I know”, and he said, “Well, if you can learn that one, you can learn more”. I said, “Yeah, probably so”.

CW: How much older was your brother than you?

PL: Two years.

CW: Two years. And about what year was it when you moved?

PL: Late '63 or early '64.

CW: And this was when you were just a couple of years old?

PL: [Laughs] I wish. I was 13.

CW: Oh, okay.

PL: I was born in '50.

CW: Okay, so you moved to Miamisburg, and then you moved to Kettering.

PL: Yeah, my dad built a house in Kettering.

CW: And that's when you were-

PL: Yeah, and then in '63, well, the Beatles and all that came out, and everybody was... I don't know, not everyone was inclined musically, but the ones that were, were certainly sparked by the Beatles.

CW: Yeah, yeah. In some of the interviews people talked about starting bands in the early '60s, and in terms of some of the rock there weren't a lot of songs to play, and then the Beatles came out, and just in the span of a couple of years, all of a sudden the whole landscape changed.

PL: There was stuff like the Ventures, you know, we did several Ventures songs. But that band, we were called the Crusaders, we were together a few years, and our first job, Jim Mattingly- well, his radio name was Matt James, he worked for WING- he got us this gig at Washington Courthouse at Huntington High School, and we went in there and these people they thought we were the Beatles or something, and that just really sparked us. You know, "This is what I want to do".

CW: The hysteria. Yeah. So, you grew up in Kettering, where did you go to school?

PL: Well, let's see. Meadowlawn Elementary, J.E. Prass, I went to Indian Ripple Junior High School-

CW: Yeah? That's my neck of the woods.

PL: Yeah, and then the one year I went to Fairmont East, right next door to Indian Ripple there, and then I finished at Belmont. And that's when I got in that band.

CW: The Crusaders?

PL: The Yeomen Warders.

CW: The Yeomen Waders, okay.

PL: Yeah, after the Crusaders was the Yeomen Warders.

CW: So, the Crusaders, this was when you were an early teenager? 13, 15, something like that?

PL: Yeah, just picking up the guitar, you know? I was just thrown into it, which was good, I learned quicker.

CW: And did you guys, the Crusaders, were you just kind of hanging out and playing in the garage, or did you play for any audiences?

PL: We played- like I said, we did the Huntington High School, and we did a few other gigs, and we did some stuff just for family. But, you know, we were just having fun. Music is always about the fun.

CW: So, where were your parents from, and what did they do for a living?

PL: They were from Kentucky. My dad was a carpenter, and my mom was a housewife. They split up about the time that I was starting to play, but my dad- you know, neither one of them were musically inclined, but I think that he saw that this was something we were having fun with and weren't getting in trouble. At least at that point we weren't getting in trouble. *[Laughs]*

CW: Right. Not yet.

PL: So, he just kind of let us, you know, he didn't help us a lot, but he didn't get in the way. You know, he just kind of, "Go ahead, do what you're doing". If we needed something like transportation or something, he might help us out. But that was about it.

CW: Why did you guys move up from Kentucky to Dayton?

PL: I'm sure it was because of work. They went to work at Frigidaire right away.

CW: Okay. Growing up, what kind of music was playing in the house? Did your folks listen to much music?

PL: We listened to WING on the radio all the time. And when I was probably about 9 or 10, I was listening to the radio- silly minds- and I'm thinking, "How do they get all of those bands into that studio?" *[Laughing]* how do they get them all on the radio?

CW: “That must be an exciting place to work”. Right.

PL: But yeah, there was a lot of... they didn’t play a whole lot of music, but we played Ricky Nelson, and the Ventures was a big thing, because of the guitars, you know.

CW: So, what was the Crusaders song list?

PL: It was some Rolling Stones, but there was some Beatles, the Ventures... gosh, I’m thinking. We did an original, but the band we didn’t really play a lot, and we disbanded after probably a year and a half.

CW: You were still in high school at that point?

PL: Yeah. I was a greaser type. I had my hair slicked back, you know, and then I moved to Belmont and I meet these guys from the Yeomen Warders, and I go over to the garage, Jerry’s garage, and they’ve got their hair. They could reach behind them and grab their hair, and you know, I’m just greased back, and I thought, “Well, I don’t think they’re going to start being greasers”. So, I went home, and I combed my hair down, and in front my hair came down to here [*pointing at his chest*].

CW: Well, you had the length [*laughs*]

PL: Yeah, I had the length. So, I just cut it up, and that was that.

CW: So, you transformed.

PL: Yeah. I transformed real quick.

CW: Yeah, I heard it was all about the hair.

PL: Yeah, especially at Belmont. Belmont was the “hair” school. It seemed like it.

CW: The “hair” school. [*Laughs*]

PL: Although they didn’t like it, the school didn’t like it very much.

CW: So, what was your favorite music, growing up, when you were young?

PL: The Beatles. Ricky Nelson. Ricky Nelson, he was a big influence. He was... he’s still an influence, on a lot of people. His music, it was- and the musicians, they were shared a lot with the other people, you know, at the time. It was always good. And the Ventures, and there was another group, another musical group.

CW: Do you remember who they were?

PL: No, I can't think. I remember the song, "Telstar".

CW: Do you remember like the first record that you went out and bought?

PL: Once again, probably Ricky Nelson.

CW: Ricky Nelson?

PL: Mm hmm. It was a 45. Until the Beatles came out, of course.

CW: Yeah. Do you remember- what was your first concert?

PL: The Beatles!

CW: The Beatles?

PL: The Beatles. It was my first concert. In the band the Yeomen Warders, Jim DeBord's dad comes to rehearsal, or we rehearsed at his house at this point, and he comes in and says, "Hey, I've got these tickets to see this band, I thought you might want to go", and we said, "Well, who is it?", and he said, "The Beatles!" And, of course, we were just bowing down to him, you know, and he took us down, it was a Friday evening-

CW: Was this in Cincinnati?

PL: Yeah, at Crosley Field, and it was a threat of rain, and they didn't have them come out, and they looked at their schedule and they had Saturday open, so they moved it to the Saturday, and his dad took us back down there again on Saturday.

CW: Well, that was lucky. Because I know sometimes they'd play two shows in a day.

PL: Yeah, that was something. The Remains, which opened, and one of the guys, Norm Smart, was from this area. And then the band, The Circle, which one of the guys from this area was eventually part of the Circle, and they were good, both those bands were good. And then the Beatles. Of course, when they came out the noise level got a little louder. Yeah, the screaming, you couldn't hear. But that was them, that was the Beatles. But they had a hard time hearing, because they didn't have the monitors like they do nowadays, so when they sang individually it was great, but when they were harmonizing they couldn't hear each other, so it wasn't much of a blend. But it didn't matter. It was the Beatles.

CW: So, what was it that got you into music? What was it that made you want to play? I'm guessing maybe your brother, or-

PL: My brother, and then right away after we did that first gig, it was of course the girls. That's always a big part of it.

CW: The girls. That's always a big one.

PL: Yeah. But it was the music. There's nothing like it. There's nothing that comes close to playing music, as far as a hobby. Some people who are train enthusiasts or something may disagree. But to play music, because you've got other people that's involved, and you're working off of them, and it becomes a group effort and then it becomes one.

CW: Right. You make a single sound, and then you get together with a bunch of others, and together it's just- yeah. And then getting up in front of people, and you were sold.

PL: There's nothing like it. And hopefully getting a good response.

CW: So, when you were plunking around on that guitar, was that just a guitar that your brother had sitting around?

PL: Yeah, he had a Harmony, which I wish I still had that. He had a Harmony acoustic. Yeah, I wasn't really thinking much about it. It was just something to do. I said, "Well, I'll just pick it up", and there were a couple of things that I picked up, it wasn't even like guitar solos, but picking out the melody of the song. That particular song, "*Baby, It's You*", the melody of the song was the solo.

CW: So, you hadn't even really learned chords or anything like that, you were just imitating.

PL: No, I didn't even know any chords. [*Laughs*]

CW: Did you ever take any lessons or anything like that?

PL: No, no. I was pretty much self-taught.

CW: Dan MaLoon was saying that he saved up money and bought his first guitar at Sears, for like \$63 or something. And then he was at Guitar Center recently and saw the same model. But now it's vintage, and it just costs all this money.

PL: It's not \$63 anymore.

CW: Nope.

PL: My first guitar I borrowed. It was a Kent. Looked like a Stratocaster. I borrowed it from a guy named Kurt Stegal [*sp?*], and it was just like it was mine. He didn't do much with it, and sometimes if he knew we were rehearsing he would bring it to me. And then eventually I got a Supro guitar, which was kind of a shorter guitar, and once again, I wish I had that. That's probably worth a good penny now.

CW: Sure, sure.

PL: And then my dad bought me a Fender Mustang, and boy, that was just something.

CW: Fender really kind of took the world by storm, didn't they? And then the amps.

PL: Oh, yeah. The Fender amps. He bought me that Fender Mustang, and a Fender Vibrolux Reverb amp. And I'd love to have that thing, that goes for about three grand now. I was just talking with one of the guys that I'm in the band with now, and he said his wife's brother had just passed, and he had a '65 Vibrolux, Reverb amp, and he wanted to know if anyone might want to buy it. [*Raises hand*] I'll be talking to him about that, but it might be out of my price range right now.

CW: It seems like back then the spark for local music was, #1, the Beatles, and #2 was the Fender amps.

PL: Yeah. Well, there was a bunch of them.

CW: So, we already talked about this a little bit. The impact of the Beatles. And you guys, what, you were playing in your dad's garage, something like that?

PL: Actually, it was the master bedroom.

CW: Really? That was nice of him.

PL: Yeah. We emptied it out.

CW: And where was he?

PL: Well, we moved him into the other room. [*Laughs*] He worked all day, he didn't need it.

CW: [*Laughs*] With cotton balls in his ears. So, the impact of the Beatles. That kind of changed everything.

PL: Yeah. It kind of brought everything UP. And there was so much material, and all of it was good. There really weren't too many bad Beatles songs, you know? And every song on their albums was very doable. So yeah, it was great, and all the harmony.

CW: So, what other bands were coming out that were kind of in that genre that-

PL: Well, of course, the Stones, the Searchers, we did a lot of Searchers over the years. What else back then? Geez. The Animals.

CW: Yeah, that must have been amazing. All of a sudden, this music just flooding, and all of this new material, and people spending each summer learning a whole new catalog of music.

PL: Yeah. And everybody's allowance went to buying records. [*Laughing*]

CW: Yeah. It would have been a good time to own a record store, right?

PL: "Dad, I need a bigger allowance".

CW: Where did you go? What was the store, the music store?

PL: Oh, it was probably Rike's. Rike's Kettering.

CW: So, your first band, the Crusaders, and you said you played for a couple of years, and then you guys- what, you just petered out? Did you keep playing with your brother?

PL: Well, like I said, my folks got a divorce, and we got split up, and he went to Belmont first, and he was the one who told me about the Yeomen Warders. But, you know, we just kind of fell apart. But we both still played music, and we thought we'd eventually do something again, but then later, Vietnam had a different idea there. So, that was sad, and bad.

CW: How old was he when he went over there?

PL: He was 18.

CW: And he didn't come back?

PL: No. No, it was '68.

CW: '68. So, he kind of hooked you up with the Yeomen Warders. Did he ever play with the Yeomen Warders before he left?

PL: No. That was just a band I was in. He was in a band, it was the 2nd generation of the Vondells, and then he was in a band called The Loved Ones, and they were really good. They opened for like The Hollies. Yeah, they were kind of a step above the other bands. They played The Marquee, and The Diamond Club, all those early clubs.

CW: Yeah, right. So, you played electric guitar.

PL: Yeah.

CW: Did you sing at all?

PL: Yeah, I sing. I don't sing a whole lot. I've gradually sung more over the years. I used to sing not at all, then I started singing a little harmony, and actually, for as long as I've been playing, singing leads has been fairly recent. It's been a while now, but I've been playing 55 years. [*Laughs*]

CW: And you're finally singing lead. *[Laughs]* It just took 50 years.

PL: But I've pretty much done it, you know, there were some breaks there, I moved to Colorado in '76 and I didn't play for a couple of years. But I got into it out there, and then we moved back here and I was back into it right away. So, I've been pretty much playing the whole time.

CW: Yeah. Did you start playing with the same guys that you played with, before you found some other people in bands?

PL: No, never any repeats. One band that I started in 1984- helped start- with a guy named Alan Schuler, and Clarence McGirt [*sp?*], through some changes over the years and three name changes, I kept that band going from '84 to 2010.

CW: Really? That's a long run.

PL: Yeah, and non-stop, '84 to 2010, that I didn't have any area in there that I wasn't playing.

CW: What were they called?

PL: Well, the first band it was called Night Shade, which I didn't particularly like that name, and then the drummer left, and I got another drummer and changed it to Loco- because I was in a band briefly called Loco before- but then from Loco we kind of split up for a little bit, got back together, and it was called Night Rain, and Night Rain is still going.

CW: Still going?

PL: It's still going now.

CW: Are you still playing in Night Rain?

PL: No. No, I left. I had a health issue and I left, and when I came back they were doing good, they had two guys- it was a trio of bass, drums, guitar, and when I was ready to play again, they had two guitar players, and I always kid and say, "Well, it took two guitar players to replace me". *[Laughs]* But, you know, when I got back to playing again, I found some guys, and back at it again. So, now I'm in two bands.

CW: That's great. That's great.

PL: Retro, and Cuest, with a C.

CW: Cuest. I just saw some... yeah, Dan plays in Cuest, right? Ans what's her name, in Cuest?

PL: Tina.

CW: Tina.

PL: Tina Cuesta. We just dropped the A.

CW: Played at the old Dog's Breath. The Phone Booth.

PL: Yeah, the Phone Booth.

CW: I haven't been there since they moved.

PL: It's nice.

CW: That's what I've heard. So, who were some of the first local bands that you remember?

PL: Oh, geez. London Fog and the Continentals-

CW: London Fog and the Continentals. The names are just fantastic.

PL: Mm hmm. The Exiles. Yeah, London Fog and the Continentals, they were good. Kind of a dance band and show type stuff. Gary Hill, he had his band, Captain Crunch and the Crew.

CW: I've been trying to get Gary in here.

PL: Another cool name. The Slugs.

CW: The Slugs?

PL: Yeah, they were freaks. [*Laughs*] I mean, they had the long hair, and they were... they were ahead of their time, actually.

CW: Yeah. It took a while for the sort of the freak... for that to kind of catch on.

PL: Well, with the Warders, we were playing at that club called WING Island. It was on Gettysburg, I think now it's a tire store or something. It was a long building, and it had two levels, and it had a stage on both ends, and one band would be setting up while this band is playing, and then this band would be setting up, and they always had battle of the bands.

CW: Yeah, wasn't that like a record store owner bought that, and started that?

PL: I don't know if Max Rodgers bought that or not.

CW: Yeah, I think that was the name that somebody said. But yeah, that sounds cool, with both the stage on each end.

PL: Yeah, all the bands that were under Max Rogers.

CW: Yeah, the Psychedelic Grape.

PL: Cool times. December's Children, that was Ira Stanley, he was at your round group, or your roundtable. With Carrasas, Steve Carrasas was in December's Children.

CW: Steve Carrasas?

PL: Yeah. He was in the roundtable. With the hair.

CW: Oh. Yeah. Yeah. I've probably been mispronouncing his name, ever since I've known him. [*Laughs*] He still brags about the hair he had.

PL: He's still got some hair.

CW: Yes, he does. He does. It doesn't sound like he plays too much anymore.

PL: Yeah, that's a shame, too. Because he's a real good drummer.

CW: Yeah. He did a little bit of everything.

PL: Yeah. He sang, but his drumming it surprised me these years later, because when I knew him back then, he was the singer of the band. But yeah, I jammed with him a couple years ago, over a period of a couple of years. Some of the guys from that band came into town and we jammed, and he is just really good. He's real loud, he really bangs the crap out of them, which I like. I like a loud and solid drummer, and he's loud and solid. He keeps it in the pocket.

CW: "Keeps it in the pocket", what does that mean?

PL: He keeps that solid beat going. He's not doing this all the time [*makes drum roll motion*].

CW: Not messing around.

PL: I've played with drummers where there will be a break in the action, as far as there's nothing going on after a verse or at the end of a solo, and all of a sudden it time's to start singing, and I'll start singing and there's still a drum roll going on, and I'm like, "Hey, calm down".

CW: They're still doing a mini-solo, right.

PL: Just keep it in the pocket. Keep the beat going.

CW: So, what was the Dayton music scene like? It sounded like a pretty cool time to be growing up and getting into music.

PL: It was. I mean most of us- and the group you've been talking to- were born in '50, '52, '48, '46 maybe, and it was just a great time to grow up, period. Just think about all the great stuff that's been created since the '50s, you know, since 1950. I mean, to 2018, the world it's... a completely different world. And music, the music scene in Dayton, it was intense. There was a lot of people that were just into it, and it was something that's one of those hard to explain things, that once you're in it, it becomes your passion, and Dayton was a good area for it. There were a lot of musicians, there was a lot of places to play- you had WING Island, you had the GBU Hall, you had Piqua 36, a lot of places. Tijuana Lounge. The LT Club.

CW: And that was one of the kind of ideas that this project came from, that Dayton has always been kind of a hotbed for music of all different genres. There's always been lots of great musicians around, and still. What is it about Dayton that it's always been that way?

PL: I don't know. You know, I haven't been in enough other cities to- you know, I moved to Denver and played music out there for a while, but that was in the late '70s and real early '80s, so I didn't know what it was like in the infancy of it out there. Yeah, I don't know, it's just always been like that.

CW: It was such a... in the middle of the century, Dayton was growing so fast, and had a lot of factory jobs-

PL: People were moving in from other states.

CW: From a lot of different places. I think it was kind of the mix of people coming from so many different areas, and bringing those traditions with them. But that it just continues to have so many talented people around. It's kind of become ingrained in the culture. But the average person wouldn't have any idea about that, and that's what we're kind of trying to document.

PL: It's still going, you know? I had a little break, and I was going out to hear some bands- because when you're playing, as much as I've been playing over the years, a lot of times you don't get a chance to go out and hear other people. So, when there was a break in the action I was going to these places and checking out bands.

CW: Yeah. Otherwise, every Friday and Saturday night you're out there playing.

PL: Yeah. If you're playing, people will say, 'did you hear so and so', and I'd say, "Well, no, I was playing". [*Laughs*]

CW: Yeah. "I was busy".

PL: So, I've been out- and even though I'm in two bands now, there's still a lot of weekends that I have free, and I'm out there watching. I went out and saw a new group... [long pause], the new group. I'll never forget their name [laughs] It's from a song.

CW: Maybe it will come back to you. So, you're playing in two bands right now? What are your bands?

PL: Retro, and Cuest. Retro I've been in for about five years. More, probably. We do straight, classic rock and roll. It's a really good, tight band. Jim Brown- he was playing back in those days- great drummer. He still has his drums from back then.

CW: Really?

PL: Yeah. Double kick drums. And we do a lot of those songs from then, like a song from Question Mark and the Mysterians.

CW: You do all kinds of classic rock, though? From the '60s, '70s, and '80s?

PL: Yeah. We ventured into the '80s [laughs]. We do a couple of Rush songs, you know, *Tom Sawyer*.

CW: That was- yeah, Rush was my thing.

PL: *Spirit of the Radio*, we do that. But then we'll turn around and do *Mony Mony*, or something like that. We're going to pick up some of those for our gig coming up, they want some more older stuff.

CW: Those kind of standards.

PL: We're starting to get a little heavier, we do the Rush, and we do some Zeppelin and stuff, and this club owner- the people loved it, but the club owner, he didn't like it as much. I told him, "Man, the people love it", and he goes, "Well, you've got to please me".

CW: Right.

PL: "Okay".

CW: What kind of clubs are you playing nowadays.

PL: Well, I don't want to say that club now because I just talked bad about it. [Laughs] But we play Ziggy's, we play at the Manhattan- no, not Manhattan- at Mulligan's, in Piqua, at Katz, the Phone Booth, the Miamisburg Moose, in Xenia we play at a place called Willies. We just play anywhere that will have us.

CW: Do you play down at Oregon at all?

PL: No. I used to, years ago. I used to about every week.

CW: It's changed a lot down there. I used to love- back in the '80s and early '90s I'd go down to the Nite Owl, and you could go there at like 2am and the place would just be going crazy. No cover, you know.

PL: Now isn't it like 5 bucks, but you can then get into any place?

CW: Nowadays?

PL: I think.

CW: Yeah, that was always- because I never had any money. Well, I had money to buy beer [*laughs*]

PL: But if you have to pay a cover, that means less beer.

CW: Exactly! But yeah, I always remember the Nite Owl, because you'd go real late and in the middle of the week, and 5th Street would just be dead, and then you'd open the door to the Nite Owl, and it seemed like everyone in Dayton was in there.

PL: Yeah, they had good bands down there. And the Oregon Express, and the Trolley Stop. I always liked the Oregon Express, they always had good pizza. That's my downfall.

CW: Yeah? That's your weakness? I have a similar affliction.

PL: If they could ban pizza, I'd lose weight. I'd be 140 pounds.

CW: So, you talked about some of the clubs. Did you ever check out any of the other- I mean, because there was so much good music over the years, from folk, to bluegrass, to funk. Did you ever check out any of that?

PL: Oh, I played the gambit. There was some blues, and the dance stuff, and whatever.

CW: So, you weren't always just rock?

PL: No, it was pretty much rock, but, you know, I even played some country for a while. But it was- especially when I was in Colorado- but it was like a rock band doing country songs.

CW: Right.

PL: But I would much rather hear a rock band doing country than a country band trying to do rock. [*Laughs*] It just doesn't seem to work quite as well. Yeah, I played a bunch of different stuff, you know, some of the songs that people just refuse to do now. [*Starts humming a riff*] *Play That Funky Music, White Boy*, you know, I don't mind playing it. As long as the people are up dancing and enjoying it, I'm okay. I play music. I rock it up anyway.

CW: So, like when you were in your twenties and stuff, was music always just kind of a side gig? Did it sustain you? I mean, was that ever your "job"?

PL: For a while, but never for any length of time. When I was in Colorado, that's pretty much all I did. You know, I traveled a lot doing it, and I'd send money home. But no, it was never a way of sustaining yourself for very long. The band out there- well, the bass player was a booking agent, so-

CW: That's helpful.

PL: Yeah, so he had us booked all the time. Nice gigs, some ski resorts and stuff.

CW: So, in your bands do you ever do- you talked about the one song, when you were really young- did you ever do any original music?

PL: Not really. We were never that serious about it, I guess, you know, it was more for fun. A lot of times, the people that you're playing to want to hear what they know. They want to hear what they hear on the radio. Sometimes you play something, and they go, "What is that?"

CW: Yeah. To build that following.

PL: It might be depressing to some people, I don't know. I've collaborated with a lot of people. I did a duo with this guy, his name was Rich, and we called it "Dirt Rich". [*Laughs*] That was the name of it, and he had a lot of original songs, and he'd bring it to me and say, "Well, play it", and I'd start adding to it and sometimes it became a whole different thing, and he was okay with it, you know, he'd say, "Well, that's even better". And sometimes not, but-

CW: Yeah. But when you can collaborate like that-

PL: Yeah, it was more fun to me, I just never was a writer per se.

CW: In any of these collaborative opportunities did you ever get any studio time or do any studio recording?

PL: Not much. I did go with Rich, Rich and I went to Nashville, he submitted some of his songs to the Bluebird Café, which was a club that a lot of producers and record people went to seek talent. You go in there and there's pictures of all these artists that have

played there. All the big ones have played there, you know, Dwight Yoakam, and on and on. So, we went down there, and you get in there by invitation, and then we were invited back again, so that was cool, and then he got back a third time, and I couldn't do it because I was playing. But I think one of his songs got picked up by somebody. He's off in Virginia now.

CW: What was his name? Rich? Do you remember his last name?

PL: Yeah [*laughs*]. His name is Richard Stanley Beardsworth Jr.

CW: Beardsworth. That's a good one. Did he have a beard?

PL: Oh yeah, he had a nice one.

CW: You've got to.

PL: He had a nice beard. He's got one now, too. I just went and saw him, after about 10 or 15 years. I took off, I knew his girlfriend and I went to see him. We set it up so that he was playing, and then I walked in nonchalantly, and then all of a sudden, he goes, "Dirt Linville in the house!" And I'm like, "dammit".

CW: Didn't even phase him.

PL: Then I got up there, and I had my equipment in the back of the stage, and he goes, "I was wondering whose stuff that was".

CW: So, where does "Dirt" come from?

PL: Oh, boy.

CW: Is this PG? Is it okay?

PL: Actually, when I was in the band Night Shade that we put together, Clarence McGirt [*sp*], he called me and he had this other guy who played keyboard, and he was a little strange. It just wasn't working, and I said, "Clarence, I know a guy, and we could call him up and do a gig tomorrow", and this other guy, he never would have been ready. He said, "Well, okay, call him up", and we did, and we had a couple of rehearsals, and then we were on the road. And we developed our sound like we were doing six-nighters; usually six nights for two weeks in a row, somewhere, like, Jonesboro, Arkansas was one of them. So, we developed our sound, we got tight on the road there, and pretty quick.

CW: And which band was this?

PL: This was a band called Night Shade. This was the band that I helped start in '84 and kept it together until 2010. But, yeah, we got out, and we were just out there, gone, you know? We were just doing it.

CW: So, who was the first to call you “Dirt”?

PL: Oh, yeah. Dirt. I went astray there. I’m trying to avoid the subject.

CW: [*Laughs*] That’s alright.

PL: Well, we were coming back, we’d played two weeks at Joneboro, and usually we would tear down on Sunday and then either come home or go to the next gig. But Clarence, he had the van, and he wanted to come home that night after playing the two weeks. So, after playing Saturday night, we packed up our stuff and headed home. You know, and it’s like 4 in the morning, 4:30, and we’re driving on 75 heading north, and we were getting slap-happy, punch-drunk. So, we decided to give each other nicknames. Well, he was “Thumper”, the drummer, Clarence, was Thumper-

CW: That makes sense.

PL: Alan- he drank a lot, he had a Jack Daniels issue, so I named him Al-Anon [*laughs*]. Some people might not see the humor in that. So, they were coming up with names, I didn’t like some of the names they were saying, and we kept seeing those signs that said, “Fill dirt wanted”.

CW: That said what?

PL: “Fill dirt wanted”

CW: Oh, yeah.

PL: For people that wanted dirt, to fill in. So, they came up with “Dirt”, and I pretended like I didn’t like it so that they wouldn’t go on to something worse. You know, I can deal with “Dirt”, and that’s what it was, and it just stuck-

CW: -because your name is Phil, yeah.

PL: And a lot of people, you know, I meet people and they’re like, “Are you in that band Phil Dirt and the Dozers?” Because there’s a band called that, and I say, “No, I’m just Dirt. I’m not Phil Dirt, just Dirt”.

CW: “My name’s Phil, but I’m not Phil Dirt”.

PL: So, that’s how that name came about. You know, a lot of people think it’s because of my mind. [*Laughs*]

CW: I was thinking maybe you just played some dirty leads or-

PL: Well, you know, my style it kind of fit that.

CW: So- I'm sorry, what was that band called, when you were touring?

PL: Night Shade.

CW: Night Shade. So, was that pretty much your highest level of commercial success, I guess you might say?

PL: Well, there wasn't really commercial success. That was just a band playing in a different city. We didn't have a product, we weren't pushing a product, we didn't have an album. You know, we were just playing in a different city.

CW: So, when you would do these tours, it would just be going to-

PL: Yeah, it was just like a motel-type circuit.

CW: Just going to another town and playing a bunch of gigs there. How would you line these gigs up?

PL: Clarence knew an agent, he went through an agency. Then the one in Colorado was called Last Rain. I didn't really like that name, either. Something about it, I don't know what it was. Then, the band the Night Shade eventually became the Night Rain, I didn't like that, either. I always liked Loco. Easy to remember, kind of made a statement.

CW: It's a good band name.

PL: I've still got the old banner.

CW: So, early on, how'd you book gigs early on?

PL: Well, like the original band, the Crusaders, we had Matt James- Jim Mattingly from WING.

CW: Oh, who played- I was trying to do the math, because you were a teenager, but this guy worked on-air at WING? Was he really young, too?

PL: He was probably in his twenties.

CW: So, he was a little older.

PL: Yeah.

CW: That's pretty old for a local band back then, wasn't it? An elder statement.

PL: "Wow, he's old!"

CW: [*Laughs*] He's old, right. So, yeah, WING is certainly a big part of it.

PL: Oh, yeah. They were huge in this town.

CW: Were there other local people, promoters, club managers that were kind of the folks to know?

PL: Well, there was Ray Fortener.

CW: Ray Fortener?

PL: From Fortener Realty. He was involved in it. His son, Tom Fortener, he played. In fact, he's still playing. Yeah, Ray Fortener. Max Rogers.

CW: Yeah, he was kind of a-

PL: Most all of the bands were signed with him.

CW: And he would do some bookings and stuff, and business cards and that kind of thing.

PL: He had kind of a rotation there. We played at that WING Island a lot. You know, and they had- they could handle a lot of bands in an evening, switching back and forth. They had Battle of the Bands. We won one of the Battle of the Bands, at least one. I remember London Fog and the Continentals, they would bring a busload of people.

CW: Really? They would bring in their own-

PL: Yeah, they would bring in their own people.

CW: Well, that's a good way to win Battle of the Bands.

PL: I'm sure they won a bunch. But we won, you know, it was petty even. December's Children, I'm sure they won it. It was fun. It's still fun to me, after all these years. It's still the best thing I've ever done.

CW: Yeah. When I was talking to Dan, he said he's probably having more fun now than he ever has. He said it keeps him going, you know?

PL: Back in the early... you know, you have this behind in the back of your mind, "I'm gonna make it". And now, you know, I don't have that pressure, I don't have no desire, really, to "make it". I'm sure if Paul McCartney called me right now, I'd say, "Sure!" [*Laughs*] But that's not going to happen. It's just fun, you know?

CW: Now it's just for the music.

PL: The music, and the fun, and as always, the women. [*Laughs*]

CW: Well, that probably never changes. [*Laughs*]

PL: But I've got a good woman.

CW: Well, that's great. That's great. Did you or any of your bands ever play out here, at Wright State?

PL: Yeah. Yeah, I've played out here at some event. Let's see, this was in the '90s.

CW: In the '90s.

PL: We did some event, there were some of the students that were big fans of ours, of Loco.

CW: Really?

PL: They had us doing a couple of things that they did, I can't even remember what they were. One was in a building, and then another one was outside.

CW: Yeah, they used to do a lot, they don't do it as much anymore, but they had a Fall Fest, and a May Daze festival-

PL: May Daze I think might have been one.

CW: Yeah, it was big. It's kind of morphed into something a little different now. It used to be a blast. They used to bring the Budweiser trucks out to campus.

PL: Well, we played, so-

CW: Of course! I remember because I was a student at that time, and I was strictly a commuter, in and off for my classes, and pulling in on a Friday, and it's like, "Why are there so many people on campus?" And having to walk past a live band and a Budweiser truck to go to history class or whatever. That was difficult.

PL: You weren't into that?

CW: Well, at the time I couldn't really- I was working downtown, and just had time to come to class and then I'd have to get out.

PL: Didn't have time for that crap.

CW: No [*laughs*]. So, you're still going strong? How many times a week or month are you playing now?

PL: Well, at least twice a month we'll have a gig. If we play at Ziggy's that's a two-nighter, Friday and Saturday, and that's nice. Because it's, you know, we're older now and it's not quite as easy as it used to be, physically.

CW: Well, I would think just lugging the equipment around-

PL: So, when you do a gig, like on a Saturday night, a lot of times we're going in at like 1 in the afternoon. With one band, we'd usually go in at 1 in the afternoon and then set up, and then we'd go home and try to relax and shower and come refreshed. But doing a Friday and a Saturday, you come in and we do the 1 o'clock thing, and then we play that night, and then just put our guitars away and go home. Then we tear down Saturday night. But to do that, set up, play, and then tear down, you know, that's work, and it's harder than it used to be.

CW: Yeah. On Sundays, there's probably not a lot on your schedule on Sunday, so you can rest.

PL: Yeah, but between the two bands, I stay as busy as I probably want. I could probably do a little more.

CW: So, if you guys wanted to play a little more, you probably could.

PL: Yeah.

CW: Do you still make some money doing it?

PL: Yeah. You know, it's not great, but it's... people say that we don't do it for the money, but we'll take the money. [*Laughs*] I don't want to tell them that I'll do it for free. I'll be getting all kinds of calls.

CW: Do you have any... if somebody were to ask you, what would you say your highlight would be of all the time you've been playing music and playing in a band? Do you have some favorite memories?

PL: Oh, gosh. Well, the ski resorts in Colorado was nice.

CW: That would be fun, yeah.

PL: We played this one town- speaking of Dan and Bearcreek, I think this town might have been called Bearcreek,

CW: Is it over by Vail? There's a Beaver Creek, I know there's Beaver Creek. But there very well may be a Bearcreek as well.

PL: Well, I know you went out 70, and it was to the south. But that was a fun place. There's some outdoors stuff that I've done that was fun. But, you know, I never did any

major concerts or anything like that. Just playing, in general. And some of the traveling was fun. After a while, it was more of a chore.

CW: You didn't move to Colorado because of the music, did you? It was for work stuff, or-

PL: It was just personal, preference.

CW: Well, what's your other... how else do you pay the bills?

PL: Now I'm retired. Which is nice. I can do the music whenever I want. And grow my hair. Or whatever.

CW: What would you say was the worst experience you ever had? Did you ever have any just horribly terrible gigs?

PL: Well, I'm sure there probably was. But nothing's really jumping out at me.

CW: You never got run out of town or anything?

PL: No. No chicken wire. I've been pretty lucky. Most of the bands I've been in, you know, I've always found good people to play with. And if any band just was really bad, they ended up breaking up.

CW: It's funny because- who was it, I think it was Fran, she posted a couple of links on Facebook of Cuest playing, and now that I think about it I recognize you from that. I didn't recognize you when you first came in, but now it's like, "Oh, yeah, that was Dirt". So, any other stories or anecdotes or anything else you might have thought about before coming in here?

PL: Not really, just that one band that I started in '84 that ran up to 2010, you know, I don't know of too many people that have done that, to be able to keep it going that long. And near the end, in 2010, the drummer and the bass player were brothers, Rick and Jim Maxwell, and I played with them from '89 to 2010.

CW: Yeah, that's a long time.

PL: And we were tight.

CW: So you had a core group together for much of that time.

PL: A lot of the time, probably half or more- yeah, more than half- it was just bass, drums, and guitar. Being a trio, it made you good. You know, because you're playing a rhythm, right into a solo, and then right back out of that, and you've got to keep playing. Then we had this guy, Jeff Tutt [*sp?*], which I'm playing with now in Cuest, he joined Loco in probably '90 or '91, and he was with us for probably 13 years or so. Fun, fun.

CW: So, in thinking about the project that we're doing, we're always looking for suggestions of other folks we should talk to.

PL: Well, one guy would be Gary Hamilton.

CW: And was he a musician, or-

PL: Yeah, he was in my first band- actually, it was his- The Crusader's, with my brother. It was my brother and I, and Gary, and a guy named Dave Sheffley.

CW: Is he still around?

PL: Yeah, but he hasn't played. I don't think he's played much since then.

CW: That's alright. He doesn't need to play for me. *[Laughs]*

PL: I don't even know how to get a hold of him. But Gary, he lives in Conway, South Carolina, which is just 30 minutes from Myrtle Beach. But he's... the guy remembers things that I just totally- when he tells me about them, I don't remember them.

CW: Right. *[Laughs]* And he just remembers it in vivid detail, and you're like, "Are you sure that was me?"

PL: I could probably get his number. He said he was going to be coming to town here before too long. He says, "I guess I'll have to come back sometime". *[Laughs]* He hasn't had much desire to come to Dayton.

CW: Yeah, give him a reason.

PL: But he would certainly talk to you.

CW: That would be great. Well, again, I'd like to thank you for coming in and talking to us.

PL: No problem.

CW: And if you have ideas of people we can talk to, or if you find some old memorabilia and stuff like that, please just get a hold of me, we'd love to follow up with you.

PL: Yeah. There's a few guys still in town, probably.

CW: Yeah. There's a lot of people to talk to, and I know we're just kind of scratching the surface so far. But we're still trying to, you know, this project is just kind of-

PL: Well, I think it's really a nice thing that you're doing.

CW: People seem to really appreciate it.

PL: Because it was such a great time, you know, growing up in that era. Vietnam was a sore spot. But it was a great time to grow up. Technology exploding around you-

CW: Yeah. Everything changing.

PL: And just being part of all that change, you know?

CW: Sure. Alright, Phil. Dirt. Mr. Dirt.

PL: Thanks, Chris.

CW: Yeah. Thanks, again.