

Playboy Interview
Paul Simon

by Tony Schwartz, 1984

A **candid** conversation about old friends, craziness and troubled waters with the intense singer-songwriter whose music **has spanned** two decades

To talk with Simon about the intertwining of his music and his life, PLAYBOY **called on** Contributing Editor Tony Schwartz, who **conducted** last month's "Interview" with Dan Rather. His report:

"**From the start**, I was **struck by** two things **about** Paul Simon. The first was his **remarkable capacity** to speak about such **complex concepts** as art and creativity **in** simple and evocative **terms**. The other was his willingness to speak so openly about such sensitive subjects as his **seesawing** sense of **self-worth** and his **bittersweet** relationship with Art Garfunkel. Both capacities, of course, **help explain** why he has long created music that is **both accessible** and **complex, personal yet universal**.

"We met for the first time **shortly** after midnight in his hotel room in Vancouver, where he **had just finished** one of the final concerts on the Simon and Garfunkel tour. It was an emotionally **turbulent time** for Simon. Just a few days **earlier**, he **had been married** in New York **to** Carrie Fisher, a secret and sudden **climax to** four years of an **on-again, off-again** relationship. **Also**, he was **in the midst of** making the difficult decision that he **wasn't going to include** Garfunkel on his new album **after all**.

"Although Simon is not **by nature** a demonstrative man, it was evident from our first moments together that a certain intensity **would** characterize the conversations. **There was little** of the **cautious bantering** that often **precedes** these interviews, and more than once **along the way**, Simon mentioned that he felt our talks were more **akin to** psychiatric sessions.

"**Over** the next three weeks, we met nearly a **dozen** times, often for three hours **at a stretch**, in his suite at the Beverly Hills Hotel, Carrie's one-room log cabin in Laurel Canyon and, finally, in Simon's **breath-takingly** beautiful duplex apartment **overlooking** Central Park.

"People **meeting** Simon for the first time **invariably remark about** his height - 5'5". I was more struck by **how** easily he **commands whatever room he's in**. **For** a popular artist of his **accomplishment**, that **partly comes with the territory**. But he also gently exudes authority and clarity. He **measures** his words, **edits as** he speaks, and his sentences often sound written.

"Although he usually dresses unprepossessingly in jeans and T-shirts, his taste in nearly everything is highly **cultivated, whether** it's in the art on his walls, the French pastel print fabric on his couches or the quality of the books on his shelves. His close friends are nearly all **involved in the arts - among them**, director Mike Nichols, actor Charles Grodin and producer Lorne Michaels - but few of them are pop musicians.

"The exception, of course, is Art Garfunkel, with whom Simon has his oldest, most **competitive** and most **enduring** relationship. **Having gone their separate ways** for more than a decade, they were **reunited** in Central Park. For a few moments, they seemed to be **living proof** that you can go home again. But, as I quickly discovered, that wasn't **quite so**."

Playboy: To your fans, it seemed recently that Simon and Garfunkel **had achieved** something extraordinary: You reunited after **11-year split** and became a success **all over again**. The climax **was to be** a new album together. That didn't happen. Why?

Simon: This is going to **feel like** that Harold Pinter play *Betrayal*, because **to start**, we are going to have to **unreel** backward to **late 1980**. **That was when** I finished *One-Trick Pony*. The movie **came out to mixed reviews** - and the soundtrack album **didn't do nearly as well as I'd hoped**. It was a period of great depression for me. I was immobilized. And **it was about that time that I came under the influence of** a man named Rod Gorney, who's a teacher and a psychiatrist in Los Angeles. I heard about him from a friend and called him from New York.

Playboy: Was your **rapport instant**?

Simon: Well I flew **right** out to California to see him and went directly to his house from the airport. We sat down and he said, "Why have you come?" I said, "I'm here because, **given** all the facts that I'm young and I'm in good health and I'm famous - that I have talent, I have money - given all these facts, I want to know why I'm so unhappy. **That's why** I'm here." We began to talk, and among the things I said was "I can't write anymore. I have a serious **writer's block**, and this is the first time I can't **overcome** it. I've always written slowly, but I never really had a block." I was really depressed.

Playboy: What **made** you feel so bad?

Simon: It was many things, but **essentially**, it was my work and my relationship with Carrie. **She and I were breaking up**, which we were always doing. **Faced with** a problem that **made us uncomfortable**, we **were inclined to** say, "Hey, I don't need this." We were **spoiled**, because we were both **used to being** the **center of attention**.

Playboy: And you felt you **particularly** needed attention **at that point**?

Simon: **Definitely**. I had a **severe loss of faith over** the **response** to *One-trick Pony*. **Also**, I **had switched labels**, from Columbia to Warner Bros., with great trauma. When I

left CBS, it became company **policy** there to make life as difficult as possible for me. And that began a terrible personal battle between me and Walter Yetnikoff, the president of the company. It ended **only when** I threatened to subpoena people to testify that he had told them he **was going to ruin my career**.

Playboy: Did you tell all that to your psychiatrist? What did he say?

Simon: When I finished, he said, "I **find** what you say very interesting and **I'd like you to come** back and talk **some more**." Then he asked if I'd noticed the guitar in the corner of his living room. I said **I had** and he said, "Would you like to borrow it and take it with you to your hotel?" So I said, "Yes, sure." And he said, "Maybe you'd like to write about **what** you've said today." I thought, That's an interesting **ploy** psychologically; so I said, "All right."

Playboy: And that **did it** for you?

Simon: No, the first night, I **never even** opened the guitar case. **The** next day, he asked what **had** happened, and I said, "You don't understand. It **takes** me months to write songs." He said, "I **only** expected you **to** begin to write a song." I went back to the hotel and I wrote on a piece of paper, "Allergies, maladies / Allergies to dust and grain / Allergies, remedies / Still these allergies remain." Just that, with a melody. Went back the next day really **excited about** it. But that didn't **make me feel** the problem was solved. So we just **kept** talking about writing. And I said, "My problem is that I really don't **see what difference it makes** if I write or don't write." He said "Do you want to **make a difference**?" And I said **I did**. He asked **if I thought** Uncle Tom's cabin **made** a difference **to** people. I said yes, and he agreed. Then he said, "I think Bridge Over Troubled Water made a difference to people. I'm interested in working with you, because I think that you can write things that people feel make a difference. **That's the reason I want you writing** again."

Playboy: Practical **fellow**. But **what** he said doesn't seem particularly profound.

Simon: He was able to **penetrate** someone whose **defenses** were **seemingly** impenetrable. He was able to

make me feel that I wasn't there to work just for the satisfaction **of having** a hit but that **there was a contribution to be made**. Of course, **the reason I'd been blocked was that I felt what** I did was **of absolutely no importance**. He was able to say, "I'm telling you that **the way to contribute is through** your songs. And it's not **for you to judge** their merits, it's for you to write the songs." For me, that was brilliant - and liberating.

Playboy: What happened?

Simon: Three or four days **later**, I went home. And I began writing. Somewhere in the middle of that summer, I **got a call from** Ron Delsener, the main concert promoter in New York City. He said that the parks commissioner of New York **wanted me to do** a free concert in Central Park, and asked if I'd be interested. I said yes, but then I began to think it wouldn't **work**. I was still feeling a little **shaky about** One-Trick Pony. Then **I thought, Why don't I** ask Artie to join me? Not the usual thing where I sing and he comes out at the end and sings three songs with me. Maybe we'll do 20 minutes, half an hour, a full **set**. I **called up** Artie and he was in Switzerland. He travels all the time, loves to **walk places**. I asked if he wanted to do this concert and he **said yeah**. Then I realized that if we did half the show as Simon and Garfunkel and I did the second half alone, it just wouldn't **work in show-business terms**. Which meant I would have to open the show. Then I said, "I don't want to be an opening act for Simon And Garfunkel!" So I **figured**, Well, let's try to do a whole Simon and Garfunkel show.

Playboy: What were you working on?

Simon: I **was on a real roll** with my writing **by then**, but I **stopped to go** into **rehearsal** for the concert. And at that time, we were all **in very good spirits**. Well, the rehearsals were just **miserable**. Artie and I **fought all the time**. He didn't want to do the show with my band; he just wanted me on acoustic guitar. I said, "I can't do that anymore. I can't just play the guitar for two hours." **First**, my hand had never fully **recovered from when** it was injured a few years ago, when I had calcium deposits. And **second**, a lot of the songs I've written **in recent years** weren't **made to be played** by one guitar. Still Crazy After All These Years, for

example, is an electric-piano song. And Late in the Evening has to have horns. So we got a band.

Playboy: Once you got onstage in Central Park, in front of 500,000 people, did your differences fade away?

Simon: Yeah. We just did what we'd done when we were an act in the Sixties. We tried to blend our voices. I attempted to make the tempos work. I talked a little bit, too, but I found it impossible to hold a dialog with 500,000 people.

Playboy: How did playing for a crowd that size feel?

Simon: In a certain sense, it was numbing. It was so big, and it was happening only once. I didn't have much time for an overview while I was performing.

Playboy: And afterward?

Simon: Afterward, our first reaction was, I think, one of disappointment. Arthur's more than mine. He thought he didn't sing well. I didn't get what had happened - how big it was - until I went home, turned on the television and saw it on all the news, the people being interviewed and later that night on the front pages of all the newspapers. Then I got it.

Playboy: What made you decide to follow the concert with a tour together? To what extent was it just a way to make some easy bucks repackaging old material?

Simon: Well, hey it was old material. But it wasn't cynically done. It wasn't hype. It was done because there was an overwhelming demand. The thing that struck me was that people seemed to like those songs, which I found to be really surprising, because I felt they were dated.

Playboy: How do you feel about the record produced from the concert?

Simon: I don't particularly like it. I don't think that Simon and Garfunkel as a live act compares to Simon and Garfunkel as a studio act.

Playboy: Why not?

Simon: In terms of performing, I've never really been comfortable being a professional entertainer. For me, it's a secondary form of creativity. I'm not a creative performer. I'm a reproducer onstage of what I've already created. I guess everyone who goes on the stage is exhibitionistic, but there are limits to what I'll do to make a crowd respond.

Playboy: What did you expect creatively from a Simon and Garfunkel tour?

Simon: Nothing. I thought I was going to get an emotional experience from it. I felt I wasn't really present for Simon and Garfunkel the first time around.

Playboy: Where were you?

Simon: I wasn't home, the same way that I wasn't present for the concert in the park when it was happening. I mean, a phenomenon occurs and it's recognized as a phenomenon. But because you're in the middle of it, you just think that it's your life - until it's over. And then you look back and say, "What an unusual thing happened to me in the Sixties." So there it was. A chance to go and re-experience, to a certain degree, what I hadn't really experienced the first time. Some of those hits from the Sixties I just had no interest in anymore, musically. But I had an interest in experiencing what it was like being the person who wrote and sang those songs.

Playboy: How was the experience?

Simon: I liked it. And I began to think about the songs. I remember playing a concert somewhere in the middle of Germany. It's strange enough to be in Germany, and when I finished playing, I was thinking, I hate Homeward Bound. And then I thought, Why do I hate it? I said "Oh, I hate the words." So I went over them. And then I remembered where I wrote it. I was in Liverpool, actually in a railway station. I'd just played a little folk job. The job of a folk singer in those days was to be Bob Dylan. You had to be a poet. That's what they wanted. And I thought that was a drag. And I wanted to get home to my girlfriend, Kathy in London. I was 22. And then I thought, Well, that's not a

bad song **at all for a 22-year-old kid**. It's **actually** quite **touching now that** I see it. So I **wonder** what's so **embarrassing to me about** it. Then I said, "I know! **It's that** I don't want to be singing that song as Simon and Garfunkel!"

Playboy: Why not?

Simon: Because Simon and Garfunkel, as Artie said to me just recently, was the songs of Paul Simon, which people liked, and the voices of Paul Simon and Arthur Garfunkel, which **combined to make** a sound that people really liked. And **no question**, without Arthur's voice, **I never would have enjoyed** that success. And so the whole world was big Simon and Garfunkel fans. But I wasn't. **Actually**, I'm a rock-'n'-roll kid. I grew up with rock'n'roll. My main influences in **early** music were Fifties R&B, Fifties doo-wop groups, Elvis Presley and the Everly Brothers. But Simon and Garfunkel was a folkie act. I liked the blend of our voices, but a **significant** part of me just wasn't a folkie. **What** we were doing was too sweet. I was too serious. When I began making my own albums, the songs became funkier. They were more about the streets.

Playboy: How did you and Artie **get along** on the European reunion tour?

Simon: We were **hardly speaking to each other**. I'm not sure why not. It wasn't my choice. I **felt** he wasn't speaking to me.

Playboy: Didn't you ask him why?

Simon: **Yes**. He was traveling alone; he likes to **follow his own course**. When I asked, he'd say, "Oh, look, don't be **hurt** by my behavior. Don't think that I don't like you." Of course; on a certain level, not too far from the surface, he doesn't like me. I don't **even** know if Arthur admits that. **The same goes for me**. And then, of course, **you have to remember** that **there's** something quite powerful between us. This is a friendship that is now 30 years old. And the feeling of understanding and love parallels the feeling of **abuse**. I think Artie's a very powerful and autonomous person until he **comes into contact** with me on a professional level. Then he loses a great degree of power. And it makes him very angry - **at** me. **Also**, we're **in the**

unfortunate position of being compared all the time.

It's one of the things about the tour that were difficult. In the reviews, it's always comparisons: Simon was too **pushy**; Garfunkel **sang out of tune**; they didn't sing as well as they **used to**; they sing better now, but with less passion.... Even when the comparisons are complimentary, it's too many comparisons **for comfort**. **As** we **followed** our solo careers, it was the same thing. **Add to that the fact** that he felt, even more than I did, **the frustration of having people ask**, "Did you write the words or the music?" I used to feel, Oh, Christ. But at least I could say "I wrote both." Arthur had to say, "I wrote **neither**." And that's a **drag** if people **keep asking** you. Because there's **a sense of competition** between us that **dates from** the beginnings of our friendship, **at 12**.

Playboy: Does he **articulate** those feelings?

Simon: Sometimes. Not exactly in those words. But he does. He'll say, "I'm the victim and you're the **victimizer**."

Playboy: What do you say **to** that?

Simon: "It's not **so**. You're not a victim and I'm not a victimizer, and **stop saying** that about me. How have I victimized you? What **penalty** have you paid because of me? What did I **take away from** you? I didn't take anything away from you."

Playboy: And **yet there's** an **underlying** closeness?

Simon: I think Arthur probably knows everything about my life. **Not that** we're real **confidants on any regular basis**, but he's in that group of really close friends of mine. Lorne Michaels is probably the closest. We've done projects together, and he lives in the apartment next to mine. Chuck Grodin. My brother, Eddie. Ian Hoblyn, who works with me. Mike Nichols. Perhaps Artie is **the farthest out of the group**, but we **go back the longest way** together, and that **counts for** a lot.

Playboy: Do you **wish** you could really talk about the **tensions** between you?

Simon: That depends on **what** we hoped to achieve **by doing** it. I would be willing to do almost - that word almost

is important - almost anything to make Art happy. I **care about** our friendship. The only thing I feel I won't do is change the **essence** of my work. That was the **crux** of our problem on this new album.

Playboy: Because, **in the end**, your musical tastes are so different? What did you think about his solo albums?

Simon: I think Artie made **the kind of** records that he wanted to make, and that's a real **achievement**. **The drag of it** was that people didn't buy them **in sufficient numbers for him to feel** that he was successful commercially. But he didn't have a sense of failure artistically.

Playboy: But what did you think of his records?

Simon: I myself didn't like them. I didn't like the songs. I thought they weren't really **as bright as he was**. He is much more complex than they were. He was singing songs that just didn't **reflect** that. He was more interested in making a sound with his voice that was **pleasing**. He didn't **concern himself with** the words too much, because he felt **there wasn't that much of a choice of great words around**. He's a singer, and he **went for** the sound in his voice.

Playboy: What did you think of the quality of his voice?

Simon: I **thought** it was too stylized. I **liked the way** he sang for Simon and Garfunkel **better**. In his albums, the proportion of stylization to conversational singing, which is my favorite, wasn't **to my taste**.

Playboy: **At what point in doing** the new album together did problems develop?

Simon: From the start. **At first** I thought, I really can't do it: These new songs are too much about my life - about Carrie - **to have anybody else sing them**. He said, "**Look**, these aren't the **events** of my life, but I understand the emotions you're **dealing with**. I understand what it is to be in love, to **be in pain**, to **feel joy**. I'm a singer. I'm able to interpret. **That's what I do**." I said, "All right. Let's try. **However**, I have to produce this because it's not like it was in the Sixties. I know what I want to say musically. So if **that's all right with you**, and I can have the **decision on how to**

produce the tracks, then we can try." He said, "Well, you're dampening my enthusiasm because of your ambivalence."

Playboy: Sounds like a Paul Simon song: "You're dampening my enthusiasm because of your ambivalence."

Simon: No, that wouldn't be a Paul Simon song. I wouldn't say that. That's too **on the money**.

Playboy: You'd be **oblique**?

Simon: Yeah. **Anyway, that's how** we began, with my sense of ambivalence about the project and his **frustration at** the rules of the game **being** stated. It wasn't **that** different from the Sixties, but I became even more rigid, even more the guardian of my music than I **had been**. I'd finish the tracks and my vocals, and I'd say, "OK, Artie, let's go in and **do** your vocals." And he'd say, "I'm not ready. I'd like to write my parts. I want to take my Walkman. I'm going to walk through Switzerland and write my harmony. **The fact is** that the songs were harmonically very different. **You** couldn't write the straight-ahead harmonies that you could in the early Simon and Garfunkel records. Artie finally said, "Look, **the way** I want to do this record is you sing the song, make the track and then **leave me alone** and I'll go into the studio and overlay my voice."

Playboy: And you **objected**?

Simon: Yes. I wanted to be there when it happened, because I knew that if **what** he did wasn't **all right with me**, I wasn't going to let it go. And that was the difference **from** the Sixties. **What** we didn't realize at first was how big a difference it was. It was **huge**. As wide as his solo records are from mine. **Meanwhile**, we had a time limit. We were trying to **get the record out**, following the **conventional wisdom**, to precede the tour that was going to begin in the spring of 1983. We had the time, but it didn't **get done**. Artie wasn't **happy with** his **performances**. Or he wanted to think more about the part. A year sailed by. So now, **not only** was the work process **painful, in that** the **personality clash** was **constant**, but the artistic differences were becoming more articulated. I **was getting to feel** that I didn't want him to paint on my painting. Finally, I said, "This is not a good idea. I think **what** we have here is the partnership that wasn't."

Playboy: Did you **feel sad about** it?

Simon: It's **too bad**, because everybody wanted to have two guys who had their differences and **split up** and then came back together and **resolved** them and **lived happily ever after**. **It was really a bitch to say**, "Well, we didn't really get back together." **The truth is**, we were always able to sing and blend well together; that's our gift. And that was always a **turn-on** for both of us. But **aside from** that, we're really two different guys. **As much** as we wanted to be a partnership, we're not.

Playboy: **Much of this comes down to** your protectiveness about **what** you've written. How have you managed to find the popsong form- which seems **on the face of it fairly limited - continuously challenging?**

Simon: It's not at all limited. It's the universe. I see a **correlation** between short stories and songs, because of their length and for **what they're meant to evoke**. **What** the song form has **that** the short-story form doesn't is melody. Melodies are **inexplicable**; they're magic. Combine certain words with melodies and it all becomes very **moving**. **Separate** the words and the melodies and it's not so moving.

Playboy: Can the lyrics **stand alone?**

Simon: Maybe on this new album, where the lyrics are my best. **It's hard to say**. I have very little comparative basis for **judging**, because although I was able to study music with teachers, I never studied lyric writing. I read poetry, and I read other lyricists. But they were never writing in the style or the form that I was interested in. They were very clever rhymers, but I **don't find that to be most intriguing**. **To me**, the person who wrote the most moving lyrics was Bob Dylan, **in the early days**. Boots of Spanish Leather, Girl from the North Country. Don't Think Twice, It's All Right. Blowin' in the Wind. It's funny to **hear myself saying** that. **It may be** the first **generous** thing I've ever said about Bob Dylan. In the early days, I was always too **angry about being compared with him**. And then, **he's hard to be generous to**, because he's so ungenerous himself. I never **felt comfortable with** him. He didn't **come at you straight**. It's

a big error **to think** that because you like somebody's work, you're going to like him.

Playboy: Are there any other lyricists you feel generous toward?

Simon: John Lennon could do that, too. He evoked something very powerful with very few words. Strawberry Fields Forever. I Am the Walrus. In My Life. Norwegian Woods. Little stories that are **enigmatic** but very powerful.

Playboy: Is that a description of **what** you try to do when you write?

Simon: Yes. That, **plus** I try to **open up my heart as much as I can** and **keep a real keen eye out that** I don't **get sentimental**. I think we're all afraid to **reveal** our hearts. It's not at all **in fashion, which I think is one of the reasons** I don't like fashion. It's very **heartless**. So I feel I should try to reveal. And when you hit it right, you produce an emotional response in the listener that can be cathartic. And when you're wrong, you're **soppy**, sentimental. Or you can **go the other way** and try to be more enigmatic. When it works, that's good. It **mystifies**, like a good puzzle or a magic trick. When you **miss**, it's **pretentious**. I **find it very painful** to miss **on either side**.

Playboy: That doesn't **leave you much room** in the middle.

Simon: It doesn't matter. It's **gamble** that **you're supposed to take**. I'd **rather** miss and be sentimental **than cover up** my heart. I mean, anybody can do bad work, but not everybody does good work.

Playboy: **What's wrong with** sentimentality? For example, wasn't a song such as Billy Joel's Just the Way Your Are sentimental and **affecting** too - at least before it became a **cliché**?

Simon: Maybe I **picked** the wrong word there, sentimentality. It's more like false innocence. I think Just the Way You Are contains a very true and kind of human statement. And it seems to be sincere.

Playboy: But Joel has not always **won wide critical acclaim**.

Simon: Yeah, **he's had some really bad stuff said about him**. And it's funny, because he's a really **likable** guy. **I mean, all the stuff about his being angry** - he's not, really. He's a sweetheart. And he's a street kid, so he flashes back. And he's supersensitive to criticism. But he's actually very **big-hearted**. He gave Carrie and me a jukebox for our wedding, which was nice. But **what** was really nice was that he personally filled it with a great collection of rock records. You know, the main reason that Billy has been criticized is that he's been very successful.

Playboy: Why?

Simon: Well, **I don't want this to sound** like a knock on him, because I usually like his records, but he's not my favorite songwriter. He's lyrically naive.

Playboy: What do you mean?

Simon: He thinks about larger **issues**, but he doesn't think about them **hard enough**. **Meanwhile**, he makes very good, solid rock tracks and sings with a powerful, clear, cutting rock-'n'-roll voice. I think he's **insufficiently credited for how** good his voice is. **In fact**, part of his weakness is that his voice is so good, he's able to imitate - and I always felt that Billy should be **stretching** more to **find out** who Billy Joel is.

Playboy: That's an interesting thesis.

Simon: **Being** an artist **doesn't mean** that you're a good artist. It's just a certain type of person. And he is that type of person by temperament, a creator. That was the **bargain** I first made with myself: I'd say, I'm an artist, but I'm not really very good. And it took me many years - till **the late Seventies**, maybe - to say, "I think I am good, and I want to be even better." But Billy didn't like the artist idea. **He thought** it was elitist.

Playboy: What is this artistic temperament to which you refer?

Simon: I haven't really thought about it. **I suppose** an artist is **someone who** takes the elements of his life and **rearranges** them and then **has them perceived by others as though** they were the elements of their lives. That's just

something that some people do. An artistic **bent** is **innate**. Then **there are those who** work on their **technique**, because good art has a lot to do with technique. And that **can be learned**.

Playboy: But isn't **being tough and streetwise** part of the rock-'n'-roll **ethics**?

Simon: Yeah. It's a profession where it's almost **required** to have that pose. **Unsophisticated**, working class, nonintellectual. **Aside from** Lennon and Dylan, who **made a point of** their working-class **backgrounds** - which **turned out not to be true, anyway** - the idea that rock could be an art form that **people with brain might work at** was always **treated with derision**. And that still exists. **It turns out** that there are a lot of **smart guys** in this profession, but they don't express that side. Kris Kristofferson was a Rhodes scholar, but he always plays shit kicker. Randy Newman is **bright**, of course, but he has never had that **tremendous** popular success. Mick Jagger, I think, went to the London **School of economics**.

Playboy: What do you think of Jagger?

Simon: He's not very interesting to me as an artist. I **give him his due**: I know how difficult it is to **keep up your energy** and to **keep growing**, and he **has**. I guess I don't like **what he stands for**. I mean, you can see his influence on almost every lead singer - a certain androgyny, or bisexuality, **flaunted**. And he did it **in a way that** was original, with **a sense of irony**. But what he really contributed was something **of little value** - the pose of anger and rebellion. He was **sophisticated** enough to **use that to earn huge sums of money**. But **others took it to mean** they should be rebellious, cruel, **disdainful** and misogynous. I have the same feeling **about** Elvis Presley, only worse. For, **as much** as I idolized him, the lesson of his life - what happens to people with **tremendous gifts** in their youth - was terrible. His lesson was that you go to Las Vegas and stop thinking and live in an **insulated** world where you can get as many drugs as you want. That's very destructive.

Playboy: Who are your artistic heroes?

Simon: My first thought was that I didn't really have any. Then I thought, **Whom** do I admire? And my brain said

Woody Allen. I admire his tenaciousness, his talent, his **integrity**. I guess what bothers me about saying that is that he's **so many people's** hero. If I **went a step further**, I would say John Cheever. His work really touched me. And **he seemed to have** a very good heart, **to have overcome enormous obstacles** and **achieved success quite late in life**. He also wrote about **a world that he made me feel I belonged to, even though it had nothing to do with me**. That's a great achievement for an artist. I'd say the same about John Updike and Saul Bellow.

Playboy: Who in the pop-music world is **pursuing** his own artistic vision?

Simon: Well I'd say Bruce Springsteen. When I first heard Bruce, I thought, Well, he's like Dylan and Van Morrison. but **somehow**, he's grown. Somehow, he's made those south Jersey highways, the cars, into an archetypal, almost mythic American form of expression. He's found a **vocabulary** to talk about **what's on his mind and in his heart**. He's found his people. I don't think that Springsteen himself **rides along on highways** with a girl **wondering where to go**. But a part of him does, and always will, and so he's able to **express himself** very clearly in that vocabulary.

Playboy: Are there any **others** you'd put in Springsteen's category?

Simon: Yeah, Bob Seeger is able to express something about **the Midwest**, to put it into his music and make someone who doesn't come from there understand and be attractive to foreigners. To speak on a mythic level. Not terribly different from **what** Sam Shepard does in his play.

Playboy: **What about** a **current** singer/songwriter **such as** Sting, of The Police?

Simon: Well, I'm just beginning to **be aware of** him. **Until now**, their albums have seemed too **smoothed down**. There's a little too much fashion in it for me. Too much about haircuts. It's **distracting** to me. Not for what makes number one, **mind you**, because haircuts are **fairly** important for number one. **Actually**, I think it was very unusual **about** Simon and Garfunkel - their haircuts. We were never **fashionable**. We were incredibly popular, but we were always out of fashion in our hair and **physical**

appearance. I don't know anyone else with whom that happened to the degree **it did** with us.

Playboy: What's the difference between writing something that is fashionable - or **for what matter, merely factual** - and writing something you'd consider artistic.

Simon: I have a song on this new album called Train in the Distance. It's very factual about my life. **What** I discovered in writing recently is that facts, stated without color, are just potential energy. You don't know where they're going to go until you give them a direction. The song starts, "She was beautiful as Southern skies / The night he met her. She was married to someone." That's about Peggy, my first wife. And it's all true. Then it goes, "He was **doggedly determined** that he would get her/ He was old, he was young." That's me. I was, you know, pretending I was **sophisticated**. I wasn't. "From time to time, he'd tip his heart / But each time she **withdrew**." True, all true. All those are just facts. Then I add **what is, I think, the artist's job** : "Everybody loves the sound of a train in the distance / Everybody thinks it's true." That's not fact anymore. That's **comment**. I told a story, and then I used the metaphor. And then I **thought**, I **don't think** people are going to understand what I mean when I say, "Everybody loves the sound of a train in the distance / Everybody thinks it's true. " And I don't want to be enigmatic. So I added : "What is **the point** of this story? What information pertains? / The thought that life could be better is woven indelibly into our hearts and our brains." And what was my writer's **point of view**. That's we've **survived by believing** our life is going to get better. And I **happened to** use the train metaphor because I was sitting in a friend's house near a railway station, and I heard a train. And I said, "Oooh, that's nice." **There's something about** the sound of a train that's very romantic and nostalgic and hopeful. **Anyway, I guess my point is** that **facts can be turned into art** if one is artful enough.

Playboy: **Do you have to** be an artist to have an emotional **impact** on people? What about Barry Manilow?

Simon: No. You **might** be a liar. An innocent. A sentimentalist. But I **question** what emotion Manilow touches. **People are entertained by** him. But are they emotionally moved? By Mandy? By I write the Songs? I

don't think so. I don't believe anything that Barry Manilow sings.

Playboy: But **there are people who do.**

Simon: **Not everyone** has the opportunity to be sufficiently sensitized to what is **genuine**. If you were raised with a lack of **exposure to** quality, I think it would be more difficult to recognize it. If you just eat Big Macs all your life and someone serves you the **finest** French food, I **don't think** you will **necessarily** appreciate it.

Playboy: How do you **actually** write?

Simon: I wrote my new album Hearts and Bones, in two summers - the summers of 1981 and 1982 - out in Amagansett. The first song I wrote for his new album was Song About the Moon. I was playing that melody, and I didn't have any word.

Playboy: How did you **come to be playing** that melody?

Simon: I was playing the chords to it. **What** I was really doing was playing an old Sam Cooke song, Bring It On Home to Me. And I was singing it and **altering** the chords, making substitutions. **Instead of making** them simpler, I was making them more complex, **just for the fun of it**. This is one way that people write.

Playboy: Where do you think the creative impulse comes from?

Simon: I write from instinct, from an inexplicable **sparkle**. I don't know why I'm writing what I'm writing. Usually, I sit and I let my hands wander on my guitar. And I sing anything. I play anything. And I wait till I **come across** a pleasing **accidentally**. Then I start to develop it. **Once** you take a **piece of musical information**, there are certain **implications** that it automatically contains - the implication of that phrase elongated, contracted, inverted or in other time signature. So you start with an impulse and go to **what** your ear likes.

Playboy: Is there a great pleasure when you find something your ear likes?

Simon: Two things **come to mind** that are euphoric for me. One is the universal euphoric: sex, that period of time when you are at an absolute **peak** of sexual feeling. The other is when I create something that moves me. When I am the **audience to** my own creation and I'm **moved**. **If it were** a drug and I could buy it, I'd spend all my money **on** it.

Playboy: Do you use drugs to write?

Simon: Sometimes. I know a lot of writers who use various drugs. I wouldn't be surprised if the **overwhelming majority** of them used **some sort of** drug. I'll put alcohol in there. F. Scott Fitzgerald **did it to write**. Couldn't **get loose** enough. Guys in rock smoke a **joint**. To get the **stuff** out of you - **especially if what you're dealing with is yourself** - **requires you to** open up and touch tender spots. And to touch those tender spots, **you have to be** anesthetized a little bit. Of course, there's a penalty: you **get the bill eventually**. The currency you pay with is your health. You lose your health; possibly, you lose the length of your creative life. **That's what they mean** when they say someone's **burned out**.

Playboy: What happens after euphoria?

Simon: Well, the moment of euphoria is **when** you have the **breakthrough** and you say it, and then I can begin to **shape** and **deal with what** I've created. Once you name the unnamable, you **get numb**.

Not every song I write is ecstasy. And it can happen only one time. **After that**, when you sing the same melody and words, it's pleasure, but you don't get **wiped out**. I've **burst into tears** uncontrollably I was saying something that **I had been keeping hidden** for a long time.

Playboy: What's an example?

Simon: **In a way**, I'm **embarrassed to** say **the one** that **comes to mind**, because **now I've** disowned the song, it's such a cliché. But when I wrote and **first sang** the line "Like a bridge over troubled water, I will lay me down," it happened. Then line came **all at once**. I didn't know it was

coming. What I was saying was, "I'm going to do this act of generosity for you."

Playboy: For whom?

Simon: Well, I **suspect** I was thinking of Peggy. That I would lie down and be a bridge for her. It was an overwhelming feeling **coupled with** that melody. Now **it's been sung** so many times by so many people that I have no feeling **whatsoever** for it. But at the moment of creation, it was huge.

Playboy: Do you always start with the melody when you compose?

Simon: Usually it's something musical - chords or a phrase. But sometimes I use a lyric. **Like** the song René and Georgette Magritte with Their Dog After the War. That was a **caption** of a photograph in a book I was reading, and I **thought**, That's an interesting title for a song.

Playboy: **Lucky** you saw it first. **Such an obvious title, after all.**

Simon: [Smiling] **That's right. Leaped on it** before it could be **spotted by my contemporaries**. After I got the phrase, I began to sing a melody that **fit it**. I didn't have an instrument. I just sang it. My voice is my improvisational instrument, the melody instrument. The guitar is harmonic structure. I'm not **a good enough guitarist to** improvise on it.

Playboy: **There seems to be a constant tension** in your songs between the esoteric and the obvious.

Simon: **Isn't that when** we're most moved? We don't really understand, but we half understand. **Still**, I don't want to lose people, and I think that often, people don't understand what I'm talking about in songs. In Cars Are Cars, I **began by talking** about the similarities between cars. Then I **took the ironic approach** to explaining the contrast I was **setting up**. I wrote, "But people are strangers / They change with the curve / From time zone to time zone / As we can observe / They shut down their borders / And think they're immune / They stand on their differences and shoot at the moon / But cars are cars / All over the world." **Even**

then, I felt the song was too impersonal, it wasn't growing. The repetition of the thought **was boring to me**: the idea that we're really all the same people - "engines in the front and jacks in the back." So I wrote, "I once had a car / That was more like a home / I lived in it, loved in it / Polished its chrome." **Actually**, I was thinking of my first car, a 1958 red Impala. Triple carburetor. A fast car.

Playboy: So you returned, **as usual**, to the personal.

Simon: Yeah. The car **burned down** eventually. It **caught fire** at the corner of Artie's block in Queens, **as a matter of fact**. And then I ended the song with "It some of my homes had been more like my car / I probably wouldn't have traveled this far." **I find, basically**, that's it's hard to **stay away from domestic themes**.

Playboy: **For** all the personal themes in your songs, you've **rarely** written about your son, Harper. Why not?

Simon: I tried to, but I was just too **overwhelmed with love** to write. I couldn't think of anything to write other than "You totally **amaze** and **mesmerize** me, I'm so in love with you I can't **contain myself**." And that just didn't seem like a healthy song to write, you know?

Playboy: What about writing songs about **broader issues**?

Simon: Well, I **don't find it very comfortable to address those issues head on**. One of **the only times** I did it was in He Was My Brother, which was about Andrew Goodman, a **college classmate** who **was killed** in Mississippi during the **civil rights movement**. But usually, I address those issues obliquely.

Playboy: You've never written songs in the Blowin in the Wind tradition, have you?

Simon: Well, I have. **There's a song** I wrote for this album and then threw out called Citizen of the Planet. It was a direct statement about **nuclear disarmament**. Too direct for me. It **goes** : "I am a citizen of the planet. I was born here. I'm going to die here. I am **entitled** by my birth to the treasures of the earth. No one should **be denied these**. No one should be denied." I'd like to give it to some

disarmament groups **for others to sing**, because it's quite a good song, but it's just not my voice.

Playboy: Since your reputation grows out of the intensely personal themes of your songs, let's talk about **where** the vision came from. you grew up in Forest Hills.

Simon: Yeah, I lived in an **attached** house. My father **used to drive into the wrong driveway all the time**. He'd say, "**Damn it**, how do you **tell one of these houses from another?**"

Playboy: He was a musician, wasn't he?

Simon: For most of his adult life, he was a bass player. He played on a couple of rock-'n'-roll records; he used to play on The Garry Moore Show and The Arthur Godfrey Show. **Every once in a while**, they'd show the band. We'd **stay up** and see Dad. I was very proud **of** him. I liked him, and I liked him **as** a musician. **Ultimately**, I think he **got bored with it**. In his 40's, he went back to school. He got his doctorate in education, and he **ended up teaching** at City College. I liked that, too. The **academic side**. His career **couldn't have fit my life** more perfectly.

Playboy: So you had the rarest of **commodities** - a happy childhood?

Simon: Yeah, it was. My mother was a teacher, but she **quit** to raise me and my younger brother. **The thing about me mother was that** she was **extremely supportive**. **Not that** my father wasn't, but my mother was the first nourishing person in my life. She **made me feel as if** I could take my needs very seriously, because she **did**. **By the time** I was 12 or 13, I felt that I was **special**, because I could play the guitar and write songs. That meant I could **get girls** I normally couldn't since I was shorter than **everybody else**. **The main thing about** playing the guitar, **though**, was that I was able to sit **by myself** and play and dream. And I was always happy **doing** that. I used to go off in the bathroom, because the bathroom had tiles, so it was a slight echo chamber. **I'd turn on** the faucet so that water would run - I like that sound, it's very **soothing to me** - and I'd play. In the dark. "Hello darkness, my old friend / I've come to talk with you again".

Playboy: Is that where The Sounds Of Silence came from?

Simon: Well, that's the first line. Then it **drifts off into** some other things. I've always believed that you need a **truthful** first line **to kick you off** into a song. You have to say something emotionally true before you can let your **imagination wander**.

Playboy: When did you meet Garfunkel?

Simon: We knew **each other** in grade school. **By** the sixth grade, we were pretty **friendly**. We were in Alice in Wonderland together. Artie was the Cheshire Cat. I was the White Rabbit. **Which** is interesting, because Harper was recently in Alice in Wonderland at his school. He was the Mad Hatter. I sometimes think, Isn't it strange, life repeating and repeating itself? **I mean**, here's Carrie. Her parents [Eddie Fisher and Debbie Reynolds] get married and it's on the **front pages** of papers **all over the world**. She's a movie star, he's a Jewish pop singer. Carrie and I get married and it's the same thing all over again. **Anyway, that's how** I met Artie. **By then**, he was already **by far** the most famous singer in the **neighborhood**. My first **recollection of** him was in the fourth grade, when he sang in the assembly and all the girls were talking about him. After that, I decided to **try singing**, too. I said, "Hey, I want to **cut in on some of this myself**." **That's the way most people start**.

Playboy: When did you and Garfunkel **go public** as a duo?

Simon: It didn't **take long**. **By** 14, we were going around to record companies in New York, **looking up** the numbers of small companies in the phone book - many of them in 1619 Broadway, where I have my office now. A year **later**, we were making a demo in a studio and **a** man outside heard us. He said, "I'd like to **sign you**." We made a record with him. It was called Hey! Schoolgirl. Artie and I wrote it together. And it became a hit. Sid Prosen, the guy who discovered us, spent money on it. **Those** were the payola days, and he bought time on Alan Freed, who had the most popular radio show. I think it was \$200 a week. Then we got on American Bandstand, where kids **would** dance to a record and then **rate** it. We called ourselves Tom and Jerry. I was Jerry.

Playboy: How did you get on American Bandstand?

Simon: Well, Sid probably **paid off for** that too. We were pretty **big** in the neighborhood after American Bandstand. The record was **top ten** in New York City. So, yeah, we were **quite a big deal**. We **made** about \$2000 **each**. That was nice. I **was able to** buy a car, **put money away**. **By the time I was 15**, I was **essentially independent**. But nobody thought anything **was going to come of it**, and nothing **did**. We **put out** three or four records, and they were all **flops**. Then I started working for music publishers, making demos. **I'd be paid** \$25 for singing a song for an hour in the studio. And I'd get three or four demos a week. **That's really how** I learned to be a recording artist: how to stand in front of a microphone, sing background parts, learn about control room, mike technique, how musicians **treated one another**. My father always **had a great respect for** musicians, and he **passed that on to me**. I've always been **at home** with musicians. I have this **attitude of semireverence**. They're all my father. Artie's father was a **traveling salesman**, and he has very pleasant memories of trips he took. And now he likes to travel.

Playboy: After Tom and Jerry flops, did you and Garfunkel stop singing?

Simon: Well, **there is a significant thing here that I purposely refrained from mentioning, which is that** during this time we were singing together, I made a solo record. And it **made** Artie very unhappy. He **looked upon it as something of a betrayal**. That sense of betrayal has **remained with** him. That solo record that I made at the age of 15 **permanently colored** our relationship. We were talking about it recently and I said, "Artie, **for Christ's sake**, I was 15 years old! How can you carry that betrayal for 25 years? **Even if** I was wrong, I was just a 15-year-old kid who wanted to be Elvis Presley for one moment **instead of being** the Everly Brothers with you. Even if you were **hurt, let's drop it**." But he **won't**.

Playboy: Why not?

Simon: He said, "You're still the same guy." And I think he thinks I am.

Playboy: After college, you moved to Europe. Was that a happy time?

Simon: There was a little valley of peace between the assassination of John Kennedy and the escalation of the war in Vietnam. I loved that time. I hitchhiked around Europe, sang in the streets, collected money. I lived a week under a bridge once, the Pont Neuf. Lived a week in a convent that took me in.

Playboy: Why did you return to the U.S.?

Simon: I still couldn't make the statement clearly that I wanted to be a songwriter and a singer. So I decided to go to law school, but essentially, I flunked out. I had no interest in it. Then, one day, I met Artie walking over a bridge in Queens. I hadn't seen him for years. We renewed our friendship - the one that had split up over making the solo record at 15. I'd been writing, and we started to sing those songs, became fast friends, smoked our joints together.

Playboy: And you did your first album for CBS, Wednesday Morning, 3 A.M. But it didn't take off until CBS released an overdubbed electric version of The Sounds of Silence. Were you back in England then?

Simon: That's right. I remember getting a letter from Artie saying that they were very excited about the new release. And then I was doing some dates in Denmark a few weeks later, and I got a copy of Cash Box, and the song was number 59 with a bullet. I said to myself, "My life is irrevocably changed."

Playboy: Three weeks later, the song was number one. What was that like?

Simon: I was very happy, but it was weird. I had come back to New York, and I was staying in my old room at my parents' house. Artie was living at his parent's house, too. I remember Artie and I were sitting there in my car, parked on a street in Queens, and the announcer said, "Number one, Simon and Garfunkel." And Artie said to me, "That Simon and Garfunkel, they must be having a great time." Because there we were in a street corner in Queens, smoking a joint. We didn't know what to do with ourselves.

Playboy: How were you and Art **getting along**?

Simon: Great. From 1966 to 1969, we **had our best time ever**. The hits **just kept rolling in**. **There was one point where** we seemed to **dominate** the charts; the soundtrack from The Graduate, Bookends, Parsley, Sage, Rosemary and Thyme and The Sounds of Silence.

Playboy: Do you still like any of the songs on those early albums?

Simon: **Not really**, but I **have an affection for** them as part of my youth. The Sounds of Silence can be quite **effective**. It caught the mood of the time, alienation. I like Scarborough Fair.

Playboy: How did success **affect** you?

Simon: I think **the way I treated all of it** was with some **bewilderment**. **This** was the Sixties. It was different **from** the Eighties. In the Eighties, people are **shrewd** when they have success and they **cash in with** \$15,000,000 **deals**. In the Sixties, **you didn't do that**. You didn't separate yourself from the people. You didn't covet money. If it came to you, **fine**. It was an idealistic time.

Playboy: When did you start writing the songs that **endure** for you?

Simon: Well, Bookends was our first serious **piece of work**, I'd say. I still like the song America. Mrs Robinson is a little **dated** now, but "Where have you gone, Joe DiMaggio?" is an interesting line **for** a song that has nothing to do with Joe DiMaggio.

Playboy: **How about** the line "Old friends ... / Silently sharing the same fears"? Did that **refer to anyone in particular**?

Simon: No. It **came to be** a good song for a Simon and Garfunkel reunion show 13 years later. And journalists always began their articles **by quoting** it. But at the time, I was just writing about the aging cycle, about old friends.

Playboy: The next album was your biggest - Bridge Over Troubled Water. **Ironically**, it was the last you made together.

Simon: Some of the songs on that album I liked : The Boxer was a good song.

Playboy: What inspired it?

Simon: I think I was reading the Bible **around that time**. **That's where** I think phrases **such as** 'workman's wages' came from, and 'seeking out the poorer quarters'. That was biblical. I think the song was about me: **everybody's beating me up**, and I'm telling you now I'm going to go away if you don't stop. **By that time** we **had encountered** our first criticism. For the first few years, it was just **pure praise**. It **took** two or three years **for people to realize** that we weren't strange creatures that emerged from England but just two guys from Queens who used to sing rock'n'roll. And maybe we weren't real folkies at all! Maybe we weren't **even** hippies!

Playboy: What was happening to you and Artie during the **period** that **preceded** Bridge over Troubled Water?

Simon: Artie was **off** in Mexico making Catch-22. I **was writing**. One of the songs was **about his going away** to act in that film : The Only Living Boy in New York. "Tom, get your plane right on time" was a reference to Tom and Jerry. "Fly down to Mexico. Here I am / The Only living boy in New York." I was alone.

Playboy: When you wrote bridge Over Troubled Water, did you know immediately that you **had written** a hit?

Simon: No, I **did say**, "This is very special." I didn't think it was a hit, because I didn't think they'd play a five minute song on the radio. **Actually**, I just wrote it to be two verses done on the piano. But when we got into the studio, Artie and Roy Halee, who coproduced our records, wanted to add a third verse and drums **to make it huge**. **Their tendency was to make things** bigger and **lusher** and sweeter. **Mine was to keep things more raw**. And **that mixture**, I think, **is what** produced a lot of the hits. It probably **would have been** a hit with two verses on the piano, but it **wouldn't have been the monster hit that it became**. I think a lot of **what** people were **responding to** was that soaring melody **at the end**? **Funny, I'm reminded of** the last verse. It was about Peggy, **whom I was living with** at the time: "Sail on, silver girl ... / Your time has come

to shine" was half a joke, because she was **upset** one day when she had found two or three gray hairs on her head.

Playboy: How do you **feel about** the song today?

Simon: Totally **detached**. I **don't feel** that Bridge Over Troubled Water **even belongs to** me. When I think about it now, I think first of an elevator. it makes me laugh - it's nice to **have** any song that you write **played** in an elevator. It's not **as good a feeling, though**, as walking down the street and hearing somebody sing a song of yours. **That, I think**, is the best feeling for a songwriter.

Playboy: Do you ever **fear** that your success - **even** the fact that you travel **mostly** in taxis and limousines - means that your experiences **necessarily** differ from **those** of the people who buy your records?

Simon: No; I still feel very much **in touch with** my **background** and my childhood. On a certain level, I'm still thinking, Not bad **for** a kid from Queens. And **so are** my friends, I **suspect**. Mike Nichols is thinking, Not bad for a little boy from Berlin, **which is where** he was born. Lorne is thinking, Hey, pretty good for a guy from Toronto. Michael Jackson must think, Pretty damned good for a guy from Gary, Indiana. you don't forget. Now, Harper Simon - I don't know if he'll be able to make the statement. he's starting from a different place.

Playboy: What about Carrie? She had something like Harper's situation, **being** the child of famous parent.

Simon: You know what she says? "Most of the movie-stars' kids I know are **fucked up** or dead. They killed themselves. I survived. And that **makes me a success in life**." She's right. Of course, she's also a success in her career.

Playboy: **Going back** again, were you **aware as** you wrote Bridge Over Troubled Water that Simon and Garfunkel were **likely to** break up?

Simon: **Definitely. That's essentially why** I wrote So Long, Frank Lloyd Wright. For most people, it was about Frank Lloyd Wright. **Even Artie didn't know** what I was talking about. But it was directly about us: "So long, Frank Lloyd Wright." Artie had been an architecture student. "I can't

believe your song is gone so soon / I barely learned the tune ... So long. So long." It was direct.

Playboy: How did you break up **then**?

Simon: Well, Artie waited until the album was finished to tell me that he was going to do Carnal Knowledge. I realized **then** that I was certainly going to follow my own instinct and make my own albums. We did our last concert at Forest Hills tennis stadium, **shook hands** and didn't see each other **for years**.

Playboy: Were you **hurt**?

Simon: Definitely, **though** I'm not sure I realized then how much. I **felt as if** Artie had **fucked me over** - not because he did the movies, which was our understanding, but because part of him saw those movies as an opportunity to fuck me over. It was **as if he were saying**, "Hey, I've always felt like a **nobody**. Now you're going to be the nobody." And he **rammed that home**.

Playboy: How?

Simon: **By saying**, ' You can't come to the movie set. I'm really only interested in movies. Movies are the much more important art form. I'm **into** movies. I'm very **good-looking**. I look like a movie star. My friends are Jack Nicholson and Mike Nichols." I **mean**, he really **made me feel bad**. I understood his **frustrations**, but I hadn't done anything to him. I never said that our partnership had been **unequal**. Maybe that made it worse. I lied. He lied. We said, "We're Simon and Garfunkel; I write the songs, Artie arranges them." We would parade that. It was a **joint** statement **all through** the Sixties. Everyone believe it, and of course it was never true.

Playboy: When it was clear that Simon and Garfunkel were finished, what did you do?

Simon: I went to Clive Davis, who was the Columbia Records president at the time, and said, "I'm going to make a solo album." And he said, "You're **making a tremendous mistake**. You'll never be **as** popular. Don't do it" But I did, of course. I wanted to **get away from** the big orchestrations, **anyway**, make simpler, funkier records. **It**

made me nervous that I wasn't going to be a hit, but I **set out on my own**.

Playboy: How did you find the going?

Simon: I began to stretch as a songwriter. **Before**, I just wrote a song, and if it wasn't good **I'd say**, "They can't all be good." Now I'd say, "why didn't that **work**?" And I started **exploring** more **kinds** of music. I traveled to Jamaica to cut Mother and Child Reunion as a reggae tune. I wasn't going to cut it with L.A. studio musicians and try to imitate, **the way I might have** with Simon and Garfunkel.

Playboy: Mother and Child Reunion became a hit, and **so did** Me and Julio Down by the Schoolyard, from that first album. Were you happy?

Simon: I was disappointed in its sales. I **was used to** Simon and Garfunkel albums! **selling** 3,000,000 to 5,000,000 copies. My solo **sold about half that**.

Playboy: And your second, There Goes Rhymin' Simon?

Simon: That sold better than the first album, and the writing developed. There was a hit on that album. I can't remember what it was. Oh, yeah. Loves Me Like a Rock. My first 1,000,000-selling single as a solo. I did Loves Me with a Gospel quartet. I was traveling **around**, playing music I really liked. I went to Alabama to play with the Muscle Shoals rhythm section. I was **the first** white pop artist **to play** with them. **Until then**, they'd cut all R&B with black artists.

Playboy: **Actually**, you had two hits on that second album. The other was Kodachrome. Where did that come from?

Simon: I started to write a song called Going Home. I was singing the melody, and then I decided, No, it's too **trite** an idea, the but sound of Going Home **fit** those notes perfectly. So I just **let my mind slip into** similar sounds. And one of them was Kodachrome. **Also**, I had that first line, the true one: "When I **think back on** all the **crap** I learned in high school / It's a **wonder** I can think at all." It was a good first line for a pop song.

Playboy: You won a Grammy Award **for** your next album, Still Crazy After All These Years. Did you believe that it was your best work?

Simon: I felt I was defining a real identity. Musically, I was beginning to **put together a kind of** New York rock, jazz influenced, with a certain kind of lyrical sophistication. It caught a moment in time, 1975 - 1976. Fifty Ways To Leave Your Lover was a very hip song. **which** is funny, because it had a lot to do with my son. I was teaching him about rhyming. "Slip out the back, Jack / Make a new plan, Stan" - they came out of rhymes I taught him.

Playboy: You were talking with Garfunkel again **by then. In fact**, you recorded My Little Town with him, which was on Still Crazy and on his solo album, Breakaway.

Simon: It was written **originally** for him. I said, "Art, I'm going to write a real **nasty** song for you, because you're singing a lot of sweet songs and it'll be good **for you to sing** a real nasty song." Then, when **I'd actually written** it, I said I'd sing it with him. And he said, "I know you. If you're going to sing on this, you're going to feel bad it's just on my record. **Why don't we put** it out on both of our records?" And I said, "You're right. Thanks a lot." It was **quite an act of generosity**.

Playboy: The song Still Crazy After All These Years seems in some ways like the **quintessential** Paul Simon song. Was it as autobiographical as it seems?

Simon: Yes, it was. I **was staying** in a Manhattan hotel. I **had left** my marriage. I had a 16-month-old son. I was pretty depressed, just **sitting and looking out the window**. **That's all I used to do**. Just sit and look out the window: "Now I sit by my window and I watch the cars..."

Playboy: **What had gone wrong** in the marriage?

Simon: I wasn't ready. I didn't understand what marriage **meant**, really. I didn't understand that if **things were uncomfortable** or you were unhappy, you could **work it out**. I was young. **Also**, Peggy wasn't a **rock-'n'-roll person, a show-business person**. And, of course, I **didn't think I was, either**, but I was. **That's all I ever was**. All my friends were musicians, actors. And she could be critical.

At first, I was attracted to it. I liked it that somebody was critical, because I felt that I was someone who **was praised** too much. And I **thought**, Finally, someone who's honest. But I began **not to** like it.

Playboy: Depression is a **thread** that seems to be woven through your life.

Simon: I **didn't realize that until I'd felt it behind**. Then I realized there was a long stretch of time when I wasn't happy.

Playboy: **Beginning** when?

Simon: I'd say early Simon and Garfunkel times. **That's when** I started to **experience** it. In 1966, '67. By '69, it **got so serious** that I stopped smoking **dope**. I said, "This isn't helping; it's **making things worse**." I didn't smoke **another** joint for 11 years.

Playboy: What depressed you so?

Simon: **Stuff** I don't want to say.

Playboy: That's a surprising answer from **one** who's been so candid **until now**.

Simon: They were feelings about myself that were very negative. Most people could look at me and **wonder**, How could that guy be depressed? And I now **feel** that people were seeing a more accurate picture of me than I **was**. I **eventually** realized, Jesus, **all** I've been looking at is this thin slice of pie that has got the bad news in it. And I'm **disregarding** the rest of the **picture**.

Playboy: what bad news are you **referring to?** **Being** short?

Simon: Being short. You could say That's bad news. **Not having** a voice that you want. Not looking the way you want to look. Having a bad relationship. Some of that is real. And if you start to roll it together, **that's what** you **focus on**. I was unable, fundamental, to **absorb** the bounty that was in my life. **Even when** people **would** say - a simple statement that I used to hear **countless times** - "Hey, man, I love your music," **you'd think** that I'd begin to feel something good

about my music, **right**? But that's a statement I would **ignore**. Totally ignore it.

Playboy: Why?

Simon: There's something in me - in a lot of people - that says, "**Gee**, if I admit that **things are actually going well**, maybe they'll stop." Or "If I admit I'm happy, maybe I won't be able to write." I think the psyche **comes up with all kinds of** contrivances to protect **what** it thinks is **vulnerable**. And sometimes those contrivances are that you stay in **a state of** unhappiness. Or victimization. It's almost saying, "Hey, don't **get mad at me for being** so successful and **doing so well**, because look how unhappy I am."

Playboy: What changed that feeling?

Simon: I think the success of Still Crazy **loosened me up**. **Made me feel good about** myself. My friendship with Lorne Michaels was very good. I could talk with him about anything, without any competitiveness. **Also**, my relationship with Shelley Duvall, during the same period. **While** it wasn't **ultimately** satisfying, it was really something that I enjoyed. **As much as** I **was frustrated by** it - and, of course, ultimately we broke up - I was very pleased that I was going with Shelley. I truly admired her work. I really liked **the way** she looked. We just weren't **a match in terms of personality**. So I think **despite** my habitual looking at the negative as a form of protection, I began to get happy.

Playboy: What role has **being short** played in the negative feelings?

Simon: I think it had **the most significant single effect on** my existence, **aside from** my brain. **In fact**, it's part of an **inferior-superior** syndrome. I think I have a superior brain and an inferior stature, if you really want to **get brutal about** it. The **concept** goes **much further** than that, but **that's where it starts**. And the inferior-superior feeling goes **back and forth** so fast sometimes that it becomes a **blur**.

Playboy: To what do you **attribute** the vacillation?

Simon: Well, on the negative side, **it's because** I'm **extremely critical to** myself. On the positive, **every once in a while**, I'm **amazed at** what I can do. And the world confirms that I should be amazed. Then that's quickly **knocked out** by the critical **side of me** that said, "Look, what does the world show? It knows the guy who writes the songs. That's not Paul Simon. So let's not **get carried away**." Then you have to add the fact that the lead singer in a rock group was defined by Elvis Presley and later redefined by Paul McCartney. And **here I was**, a rock-'n'-roll star. I don't know if the world said that, but I thought **it did**. And **that's why**, in my opinion, people thought that Artie wrote our songs.

Playboy: Because he looked as he did?

Simon: Yes. You know, he was angelic looking, with fluffy blond hair. And he was tall and thin and he had this voice, and it seemed right. He **should have been the one who** wrote the songs. That body **should have contained** the talent. And I think that's part of **what caused him anguish**, too. I think that's probably why our partnership was **a good one**. Between **the two of us**, we made the feeling. And I think that's also part of why I felt, Hey, I've got to get out of rock'n'roll.

Playboy: Get out of rock'n'roll **so you could do what?**

Simon: Become invisible. **But then, an astonishing thing** happened. As I **got older**, I **got better-looking**. **Which** is the reverse of **what** happens to most people. And **by the time I was in my late 30's**, I was **starring** in a movie. Forget **the fact** that I had written it. I had to be able to carry it. I had to look enough of that part to star in a movie. **Which I did**. I played a leading man!

Playboy: Did you do anything to make yourself look better?

Simon: Well, I **lost weight**. I began to run. Lost 15 pounds. And I did something **about** my hair. I worked on my hair **so it would** look better. **It also helps to shave off your mustache**, if you have **one**. I basically began to take a professional interest in how I looked. Which I never **had**. And that was a healthy statement.

Playboy: So, apparently, was your marriage to Carrie. How did that happen?

Simon: It was Carrie's idea. She said, when we were touring last fall, "Let's do it right now. Let's agree that we'll solve our problems, we won't leave when we're frustrated or angry." And I, of course, said "What? Get married in an odd-numbered year? **Why not wait** till '84?" My style is to procrastinate. It just made me real nervous. I **had been married** and divorced and **found it really painful**. But Carrie **got frustrated**, and she was preparing to leave again. And then I went to a two-night double header at Yankee Stadium. I always **get very calm** with baseball. and **by** the seventh inning, it was eight to one, Yankee, I said, "**even if** Guidry **gets in trouble**, the Goose will save us." So I was feeling very **secure**, on my second beer. And I thought, Well, **come on**, Paul; you're going to **do it**, you're going to do it! I'd always loved Carrie, **even when** we were most separated. After the game, I went home and said to her, "All right, let's do it." Five days **later**, we were married. And immediately; I felt **a sense of relief**.

Playboy: So what now?

Simon: I would like to **take a year off** and just try to live happily with Carrie. **That's what** we're planning to do.

Playboy: So the interview has a **happy ending**.

Simon: Well ... yes, you're right. It **does have** a happy ending. **That's very hard for me to say**. But that's the truth. And probably not **the least of the accomplishments** is that I'm able to **recognize** it.