

# Neil Young And Daniel Lanois: Love And War

By [Jaan Uhelszki](#) December 15th, 2010



*Photos by Alissa Anderson*

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Serious, intense, with hooded blue-gray eyes that always seem capable of pinning you to the wall, Neil Young looks like a man who has forged an uneasy peace with himself and the choices that he's made. Gone is much of that early restlessness and ire; the kind of discontent that found him pitching televisions out of third story windows into southern California canyons, or scowling onstage amid a 15-minute version of "Down By The River," without ever acknowledging his audience. Two months from his 65th birthday, there is an air of quiet acceptance about him as he sits with perfect posture in his smart white Panama hat, trimmed beard and green military jacket. His lived-in features – chiseled and defined – give him the air

of an aging leading man, and as you take a step back and squint, he resembles no one so much as Gregory Peck, with the same mixture of obsession and righteousness.

Usually just as tough and stoic as the late actor, Young seems uncharacteristically forthcoming in this unassuming restaurant perched in a redwood grove on the side of a mountain near his rambling Broken Arrow Ranch, the 1,500 acre spread he purchased back in 1970 for the princely sum of \$350,000, naming it after a Buffalo Springfield song. Perhaps the reason for the lightened mood has much to do with his new association with Daniel Lanois, who produced Young's latest album *Le Noise*. What makes this new partnership propitious is that according to Young, Lanois is the first person who has told him the truth about his music, since the death of his former producer David Briggs in 1995. But not only that, Lanois was able to coax a whole new panorama of sounds out of the august artist, creating a work that pays homage to Young's storied past, but also looks to the future by using an entirely new sonic palette and hallucinatory echoes without sacrificing his rough edges. If the truth be told, *Le Noise* is like a Crazy Horse record without Crazy Horse. And just as revelatory. Not only does Young divulge his creative process on the song "Love and War," but he has allowed himself to mourn lost friends – specifically, L.A. Johnson and Ben Keith – in the simple eloquence of "I lost some people I was traveling with," on "Walk With Me" – in a way that he hasn't since the Ditch Trilogy and 1994's *Sleeps With Angels*. Young talks to *American Songwriter* about what keeps him up at night, how he knows when it's time to write, the spectral power of the moon and whether there is another ride for Crazy Horse.

**You've lived in the U.S. for so long, does working with Daniel Lanois make you feel more Canadian? I noticed that Toronto turns up in the lyrics of two of the songs on *Le Noise*.**

NY: I feel pretty Canadian.

**After you released *Living With War*, I thought you might consider running for office, and applying for American citizenship.**

NY: No, because I'm a Canadian. I'm born Canadian. You know, you can't change some things. Nothing can change that. Like a piece of paper's not going to change that. So I'm not going to get that piece of paper, because it won't work. You can't become something that you're not just because it's convenient.

**You haven't had a producer in some time. Can you tell me about how it was to work with Daniel Lanois on *Le Noise*? What is he able to pull out of you?**

NY: It's great, it's fun. I think we get along real well and we complement each other. I got a lot of respect for Dan. I'm a cheerleader for him. I get off on some of the things that he does even though I kept saying to him, "No one knows what the hell you're doing, but keep going. It sounds great. Keep doing it. Go farther. Yeah, let's go farther."

**When you heard some of the effects he put on your voice and on your guitar, was it a look back to when music was so much more adventurous in the past? Or did you see it as a look to the future for you?**

NY: Actually I think it's a look back. Wouldn't you say that? (To Daniel, who nods 'Yes.')

What it is, it's a look back but it's done in a very futuristic way because he has a control over

all of these things that would have been hard to manage earlier. But the pieces and old records that we used to listen to, man, some of the swapbacks on those early ones, that's where it all came from. And that's just because it was on a fader or maybe they just had it on a tape recorder and then they're doing the take and the guy will just, okay, this word right here, jack it up and record, and then back, and you know, live, as it went down.

**DL:** I see it as a continuation of some of the adventurous work that was happening in Jamaica back in the day, like early Lee Scratch Perry. They had very little equipment but they really did a lot with it. Like some idiosyncratic detail on a piece of equipment would become like the backbone of an entire production.



**I'd heard that you were planning to record this acoustically and Daniel, you convinced him not to. Is that accurate?**

**DL:** Oh, no, there was no convincing. That was the invitation [from Neil]: "Let's record some acoustic songs and make a film of the performances." I said, "Okay, that sounds great." We did that, and at the end of the first session Neil says, "I got more. Let's try it on electric." And

he pulled out “The Hitchhiker.” At that point I said, “Wait a minute, I see there’s a doorway to another set of tones here we could operate by.”

**NY:** We found another sonic pillar.

**DL:** Yeah. It’s all coming back to me now. There was an early rant from me about sonic pillars. Once you have your sonic pillars in order then you can build a bridge.

**Okay, do we need a glossary here?**

**DL:** At a certain point we both felt that it would be good to investigate some new material electric, which was not part of the initial invitation. Neil kept coming in with them and they were great. When “Walk With Me” came in, that really opened a door because at that point he had brought in the Gretsch White Falcon, which has a split pickup allowing us to put the bass strings in one amp and the high strings in the other. And as soon as I had that freedom to treat the bottom separate from the top, it allowed me to go even further with this kind of dub technique.

**Was there an organizing principle at work with all these songs?**

**NY:** What ties “Hitchhiker” and “Walk With Me” together? Well, they just came to me one by one. When I realized that I was going to use the White Falcon and we were going to explore that area, I brought it in and we recorded a couple of songs on it. One of them had been one that we tried acoustically earlier and another one was a new song, “Walk With Me,” and then there was another song, “Sign Of Love,” that I had, and for that full moon segment.

But “Walk With Me” was a full-on song. It was twice as long as it is now, and Dan and I worked it together and trimmed it down. Dan took out part of it and said to me, “You’re probably going to wonder what happened to this part.” I said, “There’s only really two lines in that part that you took out that I miss, and I know where to put them, and we already recorded them. So we’re just going to take ’em and put ’em in over here, and it’s on the same version. You did this but let’s just save those two lines and put them in over something else, and that’ll work. There’s a place where I turned around and don’t face the amp, and we can put it right there and then no one will know what the hell’s going on, and it’d be like an afterthought.”

A lot of it was very creative, with both of us working together, communicating together about what we wanted. I wasn’t there when all the mixing and everything was done, when Dan did his thing with all of that. But I was texting with Dan all the time about details and talking about the songs. My job was to write the songs and to perform them so that he had a palate to work with, and then he was free to do whatever he wanted with them for the next three weeks until I got back.

I went somewhere – either to Hawaii or back to the ranch – to write and set up my electric guitar and do what it was that I wanted to do. I don’t think I wrote “Walk With Me” at the ranch because that was the electric stereo thing, and I was experimenting with that. So I started going, okay, this is cool. Now we got a big riff, a big sound, a big whole thing, so what can I put on top of it? I’ve always gone to these weird little tunings that I like and so I said, “Well, I’ve already used all these tunings. So I’ll use ’em again but if I want to, I’ll change them even more and make them even weirder than they were before.” So I did that a few times and did tunings that I’ve never used and that I’ve never heard. That made things

different. But really the essence of the songs and where they're coming from was just, it's like it always is. It just happens.

**DL:** You know, there was kind of an automatic Canadian curating system at play here. I mean to be honest, we had an excess of material. Neil came in, it was a nice set of songs and we recorded them all. And then as new songs came in, they bullied some of the other songs and pushed them out.



**I remember you said you wrote the songs on *Prairie Wind* chronologically because the songs just started coming out as a whole, almost like a suite. Is that usually the way you write or is it never the same twice?**

**NY:** Well, these songs are not presented chronologically on the record but they were recorded as they were written, more or less chronologically. So if you see a timeline of the record you can see the evolution of the writing. But there's really no method other than when I feel like writing, I write.

What makes me feel like writing is the knowledge that I'm not going to create something that's going to be a problem. In other words, if I create something and then there's nothing to do with it, then I have to walk around with this thing. So knowing that I had a guy that was working with me and a great team, that we're going to take the music and go with it, that I could go in there and deliver it and we could have a great time doing that, and then I could just back off and go try to find something else, kind of go hunting, and they could keep all the stuff back in the teepee. Come back, and then 'wow, look what you did with that. That's very good. Sounds good.'

**DL:** You know, there was kind of an automatic Canadian curating system at play here. I mean to be honest here, we had an excess of material. Neil came in, it was a nice set of songs and we recorded them all. And then as new songs came in, they bullied some of the other songs and pushed them out into the corral.

**NY:** Yeah, they did.

**DL:** And in fact Neil had some very beautiful songs— my favorite one called "For the Love of Man," isn't even on the record largely because I felt that we had the slow songs covered. We had "Love and War" and "Peaceful Valley Boulevard," and if you were to then do "For the Love of Man" or another great one called "You Never Call," now that pushes the record down to a lower tempo. And I thought that these new electric ones that were coming in were offering us an advantage at a better balance. So the direction of the work was largely dictated by the new songs coming in. That's always a tough one because you write a song, you think, well, surely we must put it out. We've done a good job recording it and it's beautiful, so it takes a lot of courage to say, 'well, let's just put them aside for now and have a look at this other selection.'

**So was it more a sonic palate rather than a thematic palate that was the determining factor of what songs made the record?**

**DL:** It was an instinct that we were operating by at a certain point. I think at a certain point, I actually said, "Please consider these eight." It would give us a 39-minute record, and we always talk about how there was something right about the length of vinyl. People's attention span seems much more attuned to that.

**NY:** We never heard anybody complain about the length of this record.

**No one said it was too short? Maybe they were afraid to tell you.**

**NY:** That's a long record in my history. I hate it when they're too long. The bonus track is a bummer. First of all it's an uncontrollable thing. You'll leave the CD on and suddenly you're listening to this other track and you're like, "Where did this come from?" It's not part of that, and it's a bonus. Oh, great. Thanks. Got a bonus track here. How can we handle that? And the hidden track. That's a record company thing. That's all bogus. Seventy-six minutes. Just because a CD can hold 76 minutes, it doesn't have to. Why not make the 40 minutes that it should hold sound better? Anyway, don't get me started on that.

**Do you think your creative process has changed much since when you first started out? Working with Daniel Lanois it seems like you have a really good backup support system.**

**NY:** Well, in the old days I had David Briggs and he was great support system, and whatever I did with him and Crazy Horse, I knew it was going to be a certain thing and we were going to be able to go for it, and the Horse was going to do everything they could to provide the beat and there was going to be a process that we go through, and I knew what it was. Briggs and I were completely committed to everything. So really, the process hasn't changed that much. It's just that for a while—for fifteen years or so— I didn't have Briggs. And now that I know Dan, I have someone else who's committed to the music in the same way that I am, and someone who is not scared to say something to me that other people might not. So he can make a concrete observation something like, 'You know, the song's too long. It's not right. We're not getting the point. *This* is the point of the song and *this* is superfluous.' I'll look at that and I'll go, 'That's fine. That's good.' That means that I don't have to worry about that part anymore. Rather than be threatened by what Dan says. I'm not threatened by anything like that. People may think that I am but I'm not. What I see it as that having Dan do all this means I'm running lean and mean now. I can just focus on the real meat.

**So besides his producing talents, is Daniel's greatest gift being able to tell you the truth?**

**NY:** He has the ability to tell me the truth of how he feels, which is all I ask for. But so many people miss it.

**Well, it's back to the idea of your bigger-than-life persona. People are frightened of you.**

**NY:** Those poor people. They were frightened of me? Oh, my goodness. They're frightened of something that they think I am. I think that's in everyone else's mind. It's something that I really haven't been able to figure out. They don't know me. I don't think that people really want to believe that I'm accessible. I don't think they want to believe that they know what they need to know about me.

**You've been a celebrity for more than 45 years, so people will always react to that, rather than who you really are.**

**NY:** I'm the same as I was, though. I'm exactly the same. It's just that because I want what I want, and I won't take anything less, and that is the frightening thing. Yesterday this guy from London said to me, "You're quite ruthless." I woke up in the middle of the night because I've been listening to this – it's a bit of a tangent here, but I've been listening to this album called *Treasure*, which I have in the can that was done in 1985. I've been listening to it because I plan on releasing it someday, and it's a great record. But all of the people – the key people – are all gone. I have this history of these people that are playing the greatest music of our lives, playing unbelievably great, and now they're gone, and I didn't continue playing with them. At some point I had to say, "I'll see you guys later. I gotta go do this. I'm gonna go play with Crazy Horse now. I'm gonna do this or I'm gonna do that." In that way I am ruthless, but I'm ruthless for the music. What is ruth? I don't know what ruth is. If I don't have any of it, you know, I'm okay.

**It's well documented that you record during full moons. Do you write around the cycles of the moon as well?**

**NY:** No. I just write whenever I feel like it. Sometimes it's the right time, sometimes it isn't. I just do what I feel like doing, so I don't close any door. I'm just open to things. I don't close things off, I don't have a lot of beliefs that stop me from doing things. I'm sure I must have

some but I try to be open and follow the muse wherever it goes. And if it's not around, I don't push it. There's no sense in trying to fan a flame if there's no flame. Sometimes we get what we're going to get, and then I stop because I know the moment is gone and I don't try anymore. You've got to rest. And you don't have to go against the grain.

As for the moons, I guess if I track when songs were written, there would be some sort of pattern but I've never done that. When I feel like going in and recording the songs, I like to have them prepared. I don't want to be just writing them right then and there. I have to have them ready – I have to be loaded. And then when the time comes, I'm ready to unload. Then the moment passes, and I don't want to do it anymore. I've tried to make records so that I didn't waste anybody's time. When we go in the studio [during a full moon] to do it and we're ready to do it, the moment is there. I know sometimes it seems like, "What are we doing? What did we wait for? Now we're here and he's not doing anything and we've been here for eighteen hours and nothing's happened." But then when it starts happening, we get two or three things.

**It's clear you're in touch with something the rest of us aren't aware of, and recently you said on your website: "I still see the vista and hear the muse, I will continue." Can you talk about that?**

**NY:** I still do see the vista. I feel good. That's my way of feeling good. That's my way of knowing that I can still continue. There's no reason to not continue because I can still see where I'm going. Can't see it clearly but I know it's out there.

**Is there any time that you feel more creative than another?**

**NY:** There's no set time. But if I do pick the guitar up in the morning, the first time I pick it up if I haven't played it in a while, whatever I play first is the secret. Now if I'm playing the same thing all the time it's just, not really music. That is just a physical exercise. But there's a difference between that and when you sit down and just start playing something and you don't know why you're doing it. When you do that, that's time to pay attention. And I do. So that's what I do. And then the lyrics, they just all come real fast and I just write them all down. Quite often my biggest struggle is remembering a song. You know, I'll have the lyrics and I'll have the song, but I don't remember how the lyrics go with the song. You can write something at night, go to the studio and not remember it. Then just sit there for a while until it comes back. But you know, it's a very vague thing. You can't box it in, you can't fence it in. If you trust yourself and you don't try to box it in, you'll get it. It's like catching a wild animal. You can't corner it, you can't scare it. You can't be concerned about it though, just ignore it. But you just consistently stay there with it and wait for it to come out.

**Yeah, or not scaring yourself.**

**NY:** Yeah, right.

**You've said that after Greendale it took you two years to write anything.**

**NY:** It was a while. I just feel like, hey, it'll come. And when it comes I'll be ready, and I'll drop everything else I'm doing to do it.

**Are you ever worried that another song might not show up?**

**NY:** Well, it always has showed up, so, and I just respect it. I think if they [songs] come in big groups, I'll try to get 'em all. One shows up, I'll try to get it. I won't ignore any but I'm not going to go looking for it. I don't have time to find them. So a song has to knock on the door and say, here I am. But I got my eyes open, so it happens, it happens. I'll be there.

**Is the person who makes the films any different than the guy who writes the songs?**

**NY:** The songwriter thinks, but there's more thinking goes into movies. I'm always making songs— it's an instant gratification. The song is there. It's really something that you can express, it's a performance. You sing it and you play it, and the words come out, and an illusion is created of some sort. But a movie's not anything like that. It's much more organized. You have to have a plan. You have to have an idea that's worth spending money on. You really have to think far down the road.

**So what would you consider your job to be?**

**NY:** One job that I have right now is that I want to play music. But the most important thing for me right now is creating, or trying to create an energy that can be used, that'll change things. And my goals are very lofty. I may never reach my goals, but I want to try to reach them. I don't think you can't get there unless you aim, unless you try to go there. That's important. So the goal of eliminating gas stations, roadside refueling, with some kind of fuels— people's fuel—something that everybody has access to. And we're smart enough to figure it out. We'll figure it out.

**Are you talking about your LinkVolt car that carries its own power source?**

**NY:** Yes, It's a Lincoln. Powered by electricity and biofuels and possibly by water. The mission is clearly to eliminate roadside refueling. And your car powers your house when you get home, and the car is the grid after it's finished powering your house, and everything that you need, the car can do it. You put it in your basement and you could heat your house with it. You could power your house and the excess would go out into the grid. All of that way of thinking, distributed power sources instead of power plants with tentacles going out, have distributed power sources everywhere going in, where everything charges everything else. Everybody works out. Everybody's house is charging the grid. Everybody's car plugs in and charges the grid. It's not to take energy from the grid, it's put energy into the grid.

**Has doing something like this always concerned you? I mean you live in a very remote area, so has the idea of self-sufficiency has probably always been a concern for you.**

**NY:** Yeah. I've always wanted something like this. In the back of my mind I've always thought that I was a builder and the music was just kind of a hobby. But I've never really been able to get a handle on that. I've built buildings and I love building buildings. I've built a wacky house and I've got studios and I design things. I've designed a house, and here and there did build things. I love working with carpenters and watch them build things. I love drawing things and seeing them come to life. But really, the real challenge is the energy. So to create a system that enables cars to move around and houses to be powered without using the coal powered plants and without using the oil, cleaning the energy, cleaning the planet and eliminating the need for a war.

**You're really lucky you're getting to do what you love now. But the music always seems to have been the vehicle for your dreams?**

**NY:** That really seems to be happening, doesn't it? My mom always told me I was an architect. She said, 'I know you're going to be an architect. I know that's what you are because when you were just a kid, all you would do was build things.' I got my building blocks, got so many building blocks and I was building all these structures, and ways you get in and out, and then building big sand castles on the beach. Trying to figure out how to catch the water, and make the water stay. Then trying to make the water do things. How it would be replenished, keeping things that would never go away when the source would come and go, but the water. This was the kind of stuff that I was thinking about even when I was a little kid. Not much has changed. What I'm doing now at this point, it's along those lines. I looked at everything like it has to do with energy. Breathing, you breathe in, you breathe out.

**Do you have any rituals before you record?**

**NY:** Just the timing.

**JU: And Daniel, you were okay of just working during the full moon?**

**DL:** Oh, yeah, yeah. I thought, okay, that sounds great. It was a way to narrow things down.

**NY:** Yeah. It's very organized.

**DL:** Just one guy with a guitar, and under the full moon. Okay, let's go.

**NY:** Pretty straight ahead. It really took away a lot of indecision or having to figure those kind of things out. Let's you know when you gotta have people there to be able to work with on that, and it just really simplifies everything.

**When did you first spot the pattern of the moons?**

**NY:** Well, I saw a pattern a long time ago when I realized that I only recorded when I felt like it. I was used to being very free about that because everybody was there at my beck and call whenever I wanted to do anything. When I had Briggs and the Crazy Horse and we were working that way, things would go for a couple weeks and we wouldn't even see each other. I mean we might play in some bar or something and do this or that, just spontaneously. Then I'd say, 'I kind of feel like recording.' And then I noticed a couple of, three or four, a lot of sessions, that the moon was full. And I also noticed that I would be recording and we would be doing great, and then suddenly it would go away. I started to pick up on what was making that happen, and what the moon cycle was, and so you can almost predict when you were going to lose the edge. So I started using that as my planning tool.

**Are you ever worried another song might not show up?**

**NY:** Well, it always has showed up, so I just respect it. I think if the songs come in big groups, I'll try to get 'em all. One shows up, I'll try to get it. I won't ignore any but I'm not going to go looking for it. I don't have time to find them. So a song has to knock on the door and say, "Here I am." But I got my eyes open, so if it happens, it happens. I'll be there.

**How did a song like “Love and War” come into existence? It has this self-referential movie-within-a-movie dynamic when you sing, “I sang in anger, hit another bad chord, but I still try to sing about love and war.” Did the song begin with those words?**

NY: I just started playing A minor in E, and going back and forth and going, well, that’s interesting. That sounds like something that’s been around for a long time but I’ve never heard it. Then I started singing, making up the words, you know. “When I sing about love and war, I don’t really know what I’m saying.” After that it all started coming out.

**Your writing on that particular song feels like a conversation. It seems over the past few albums you’ve dropped a lot of the metaphor and a lot of the poetry and you’re really almost reporting on your life. Was that a conscious effort, or is that just how the songs came to you?**

NY: Well, that song is pretty plain speaking. It’s pretty direct.

**Your last few albums have been more autobiographical and less metaphoric than things you’ve done in the past. What do you attribute that to?**

NY: I just started to explore my own beliefs, and it was just a natural thing. I find it hard to talk about those things and generally I don’t. Well, I don’t like to, and I certainly don’t want to judge anyone else’s beliefs. Sometimes just stating your own beliefs does that. So I tend not to. All faiths are just stories to me. And I’m a story writer and I look at these and I go, these are classic stories, you know, Buddhism, Christianity, they’re all the same story. And I think, “Let’s just remember that. Step back, it’s a story. It’s a metaphor, nothing less, nothing more.”

**What about on *Le Noise*?**

NY: Yeah. I think so. I’m not sure there’s some saga. “Sign of Love” is not exactly like that. “Sign of Love” is in a landscape, walking on the land and stuff. It’s pretty broad. And even “Walk With Me” is not really very specific. Most of the songs are pretty wide on this record, but the ones you mentioned aren’t. There’s “Hitchhiker” and “Love and War,” they’re pretty direct. But “Hitchhiker”’s even more so. It’s about a memory. It’s the drug chronicles. Drug chronicles, TMI. That’s like a TV show, you know?

**So why record it now?**

NY: Well, I just finished it.

**You mean adding another verse?**

NY: Yeah. Finishing was important. The song never could have been done without those verses.

**Do you have a lot of things that...**

NY: Unfinished songs? Yeah.

**And you return to them?**

**NY:** Yeah, I'll go back and I'll go, "Well, I never put that out." Why? And I'll go, "Well, it's not done." Then when it's finished it's easy to put it out. When it's not finished, you might try to put it out, you may record it but you'll never release it. So I have recordings of "Hitchhiker" from the '70s but there was never any reason to put it out. I felt like, "Whoa, that's not really a good idea."

**For a drug chronicle, it's pretty upbeat at the end. You almost end it on a prayer.**

**NY:** Yeah, it's kind of like that. But it's good that way. I wouldn't have the prayer if I hadn't finished the song.

**Especially because if you'd finished it in the '70s you would have prayed for other things. If you'd prayed at all.**

**NY:** Yeah. Where I am now is, it's okay to do that. I never could get there before, so it's all right.

**On "Walk With Me" you say, "I lost some people I was traveling with. I miss the soul and the old friendship." Are you thinking about your own mortality because you have lost people this year—Larry Johnson and Ben Keith?**

**NY:** I think it's become more evident. It's in this record a couple places. But it's okay, it's just the way it is.

**Do you think that acceptance is the way to deal with things?**

**NY:** Well, you have to. You can't fight some of the things that happen. You can't go, "Well, that never happened." It happened, you know. There's nothing you can do. I'm glad that Dan's journey toward the pavement ended with a happy face.

**What do you mean?**

**NY:** Well, you're talking about fate. He was on his motorcycle and he ran into something. So that's what I meant. He might not be here. But he is.

**DL:** It's not that everybody should know about it. We did four sessions, four full moons. The third one had an intermission.

**Because of your accident?**

**DL:** Yeah, a three week intermission.

**NY:** Missed one.

**There are certain things you don't do after a certain age. One is cocaine, the other one is drive motorcycles.**

**NY:** Oh, try to tell a lot of people that. They won't believe you. Particularly the motorcycles.

**DL:** The doctor did say that if that had happened when I was eighteen, those ribs might not have broken. He says once you get in your fifties and your bones are more brittle...you might do better on four wheels.

**NY:** Yeah, Dan said he was going to only drive a bus after this.

**I spoke to Eddie Vedder recently and he said one thing about Neil Young is that he doesn't care what anyone thinks. He does what he does. But the question really is, do other artists come to you for advice?**

**NY:** Not really, no. Not many people talk to me, actually. I mean Eddie comes to me and we hang out. He's not looking for advice, in fact he doesn't need advice from me. He knows what he's doing.

**I often ask people what they do before they go onstage, and I had a run of people telling me they did what Neil Young does. The problem was they all said different things. James Mercer from The Shins said he runs in place; Robert Plant said he does scales like you. And Beth Orton said she meditates like you do. Could they all be right?**

**NY:** I showed Robert the scales. He visited me once and I said, "Go do it with us."

**Did he?**

**NY:** Yeah, he did. So did Dylan. He came to one show and I said, "Come on, Bob." So Bob did it but he did it his own way. He was doing harmony parts and going sideways and everything. Everybody does it their own way. But I'm big on rituals. But not so much before I record. Although I do sometimes before I play. I go through a certain thing, which is a combination of meditation and a rehearsal, or an opening. I just go through vowel sounds on the piano, scales. I go through that, and by the time I'm finished I'm oriented. It's just a mindless thing that I do. Just to see what happens.

**So you don't run in place like James Mercer says? He'll be disappointed.**

**NY:** I do. There have been times when I've gotten on a treadmill or something like that. I like to do calisthenics to warm up because if your hands get cold and you walk onstage, you might have to play two songs where your hands are freezing. I do whatever. I've been doing different things for a long time. It just keeps changing. Now I warm up my voice and become familiar with the sound of in-tune pianos.

**DL:** And there are nice vocals on this record. On "Love and War" and "Peaceful Valley Blue," we really had a chance to go hi-fi on those. There's a very beautiful vocal sound on "Somebody's Gonna Rescue You." It's sort of haunting. The only one that gave us a little trouble was "Rumblin'" because we hadn't figured out that technique yet that we used on the later songs. If we'd put Neil in a slightly different spot it would have suited that quieter vocal delivery. So it was a struggle on the mix, a little bit of a struggle.

**It's a rougher song, though. It almost seems like a Crazy Horse song.**

**DL:** I love after that little orchestra, when Neil kicks in with a guitar, like other people are playing with you. It's mystifying to me. I'd say, "What's going on in that speaker? Just put it down."

**NY:** Just put it in there.

**It's like there's a band in there with you. Except there's not.**

**NY:** They were able to just focus on me, so if there's nothing else in the way, you can get a lot closer and it gets a lot bigger when you do that. And then Dan had the freedom to add anything. Actually almost all the songs in the album are Crazy Horse-type songs.

**I feel like Crazy Horse is there in spirit.**

**NY:** Yeah. Heck, yeah.

**You haven't worked with Crazy Horse for some time. Is there still collaboration with Crazy Horse in your future?**

**NY:** Well, you know, there is, somewhere out there. They have to be together before I can be together with them. They haven't been doing anything together, so they need to be able to do it. I don't have the time to support things. I have to go with things that are going to support me. But I think they can do it.

**Can we talk about you and Daniel in the studio? Did the two of you fight?**

**DL:** We were thinking of setting up a little wrestling ring, pulling out the boxing gloves. I don't recall any fights. No, so far, so good.

**Please don't tell me you guys agree on everything.**

**DL:** Well, I mean I do have my psychological ways of dealing with people and sometimes you have to be patient and –

**NY:** We discussed a lot of stuff. You have little meetings. Right? Little meetings here, little meeting there. It's good.

**What do you think of Jimmy Fallon's impressions of you?**

**NY:** Oh, it's great. I think he's fantastic. I'd like to see him do me now. See what kind of legs he has.

<http://www.americansongwriter.com/2010/12/neil-young-with-daniel-lanois-love-and-war>