

## JUST ONE LOOK

By Joe Hanrahan

LENNY ANDERSON, enters the stage. He is an older man, but still dresses as he did in the 60's.

LENNY: Good evening. Please, allow me to tell you...about a dream of mine...one that came true.

My name's Lenny Anderson. You probably don't recognize that, but I'm sure some of you of a certain age have read some of my writing. In magazines...like *Crawdaddy*...*Creem*...*Circus*, remember that one?...*Musical Express*, from England. Once in a while I even managed to get into *Rolling Stone*.

Covered them all back then. Spent a year on tour with Zeppelin. Almost got thrown out of a Sunset Strip hotel window. Toured with the Stones. Couldn't really even physically finish that one. But I did get some good stories out of it.

But one story I never got - and it's been a stone in my heart ever since - was a story about my great, unrequited love. I'm talking about...a Rock Goddess...the Venus of Rock & Roll. On the cover of *Rolling Stone* six times. (Six times! And I never got to do the story!). She filled stadiums, and she stayed at the top of that treacherous Rock & Roll mountaintop for years. And then she moved right into brand new chapters in her life - exploring new music and old - but always...always...looking for that next great song to sing.

That's Linda Ronstadt. Let's take a quick look at her career, shall we? (checks notes) Three Number 1 hit albums, 10 albums in the top ten. Recorded over 30 albums, and appeared as a guest on 120 albums by other artists - from Philip Glass to a duet with Homer Simpson. A number 1 single, 3 number 2s, 10 top ten singles, and 21 reaching the top 40. Two number 1 hits on the Country charts. Worldwide album sales totaling more than fifty million. She won ten Grammy Awards, she's a recipient of the National Medal of Arts, and now she's in the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame.

But beyond all that for me...maybe before all that...was her...devastating... beauty. Rock Goddess, indeed. Linda Ronstadt was simply the most amazing looking thing that ever graced a rock 'n roll stage. That, and the...simple...grace...and joy that she emanated on stage...coupled with her unique, powerful voice...made her...someone who was very hard not to fall in love with.

As I did. As many did. From afar. All it took was...just one look.

But today, I get the chance to meet her. She's retired to her hometown of Tucson, Arizona. Linda suffers from Parkinson's disease. And though she doesn't sing anymore, she does stay right in the middle of a...of a lot of things. Very public stances - against racism, and against illegal immigration laws...fighting for gay rights. And she's one of our most eloquent spokespersons for arts advocacy.

But today, I just wanted to talk about her music.

LINDA enters the stage. Sits. Dressed in a shawl, which covers her head, much of her face.  
LENNY takes her arm to help her to her chair.

She begins to hum a SPANISH SONG from her youth.

LENNY: Linda was born in Tucson. Partly of Mexican descent, on her father's side. And it was from her family she gained her wide range of musical tastes...radio and records of all kinds of music were constantly played in her home. Her dad sang and performed Mariachi, and her mother turned her on to classical music and Gilbert and Sullivan. And she took that music with her wherever she went.

LENNY: Ms. Ronstadt...

LINDA: Linda. It's Linda.

LENNY: Linda. Linda, thank you for the opportunity to talk with you...write about you...

LINDA: OK. Watcha want to talk about?

LENNY: I want to focus on your music...

LINDA: OK...

LENNY: Your love of...all kinds of music...

LINDA: Sure.

LENNY: You were exposed to almost every type of music when you were little...here in Tucson...

LINDA: We listened to everything...rock and roll...rhythm and blues, opera, country...

LENNY: Mariachi...

LINDA: ...Mariachi.

LENNY: You started singing early. Did you know that's what you wanted to do?

LINDA: That's all I ever wanted to do.

LENNY: (sits, wherever he's going to sit) So, then as a teen-ager, you decided to go where the music was.

LINDA: Los Angeles. That's what I was told. If I wanted anybody to listen to me, that's where I'd have to go.

LENNY: How'd you get there?

LINDA: I'd started singing with Bobby Kimmel in Tucson, he's the guy who got me out there. He had a friend, Kenny Edwards. And we became the Stone Poneys. We played around, and then got to do a record. It didn't get a lot of attention.

LENNY: But then you did a second one. And a song came out of it. That song was written by Michael Nesmith.

LINDA: (giggles) Mike Nesmith. From the Monkees. Before he was a Monkee.

LENNY: And that song hit.

LINDA: Uh-huh.

LENNY: Big.

LINDA: Real big. Sure surprised me.

(LINDA laughs)

MUSIC: LIGHTS will adjust. Band will go into opening notes. Shawl will come off. And LINDA, full of smiles, will sitting will begin to sing DIFFERENT DRUM. Half-way through the song, she will stand and finish it.

LENNY: So you did a third Stone Poneys album...

LINDA: Yeah...

LENNY: But Different Drum...?

LINDA: That was different than other stuff we did. We'd been doing mostly folk stuff...

LENNY: And that song...

LINDA: Sure changed things. (pause) Capitol Records thought I should be a solo act...

LENNY: And so the Stoney Poneys...?

LINDA: We broke up. Amicably. The boys went their separate ways.

LENNY: And that resulted in your first solo albums. The first one was called...(checks notes)... Hand Sown, Country Grown...

LINDA: They wanted me, but they didn't know what to do with me. On the cover of the record I was country western, wearing a cowboy shirt...and on the back, a hippie wearing a granny dress.

LENNY: Well, you looked good in both.

LINDA: Well...thanks.

LENNY: I guess that was the first example of your beauty...your looks, giving you...

LINDA: OK, I know, I know...See, I never thought about any of that. What I looked like on stage. I carried around this Betsy Johnson dress in my purse for years, and a lotta nights I'd just throw that on. I really didn't care.....as long as I got to sing the songs I wanted to sing.

LENNY: OK, got it. So then, on your second solo album...you did fight for a song you wanted to sing.

LINDA: I loved it. But the record people said I shouldn't do it. "Too slow, it'll put people to sleep."

LENNY: Wouldn't be the last time somebody said "Don't do that" to you, huh? But you did it anyway.

LINDA: Mmm-mm.

LENNY: They agreed to release it as a single. And it was...another hit.

MUSIC: Band introduces, and LINDA sings LONG, LONG TIME.

LENNY: You recorded that album in Nashville.

LINDA: Great musicians there.

LENNY: The album was called...Silk Purse...

LINDA: ...sounded great. But it was the only time I worked there. I was more of a California chick. The music...different kinds...was just starting to explode then.

LENNY: And you met some new friends there...who became backup musicians...

LINDA: I'd hang out at the Troubadour. Everybody played there, or went to see other people play. I met Glenn Frey there, and then Don Henley. They were in different bands. But they agreed to back me up.

LENNY: Then...a bit later...with another guy who backed you up...Randy Meisner...all of them went on to form their own group.

LINDA: The Eagles.

LENNY: The Eagles. They all backed you up on your next album, which had a distinct country-rock feel.

LINDA: Country-rock had been around in some form, for a good while, really...Elvis, Everly Brothers. But we brought it back out front again. Soon it was...all over town.

LENNY: That album...(checks notes)...called, simply, Linda Ronstadt...finished your time with Capital Records...and then you signed on with David Geffen...

LINDA: David. Elektra Records. New label.

LENNY: Unfortunately, neither of your previous two records had done very well. But Geffen's label was going to change that.

(LINDA nodding)

(slight pause)

LENNY: The previous records were produced by John Boylan...and John David Souther.

(slight pause)

LENNY: Now both of them were...um...

(slight pause)

LINDA: ...Boyfriends.

LENNY: And producers.

LINDA: And producers. (slight pause) That wasn't the best mix. They were great guys, but... see, L.A. then it was...I guess it's always that way out there, right?; But most of the singers and songwriters then, it was a boys club. They were all out there, running all over, free range (laughs)...exploring the music...exploring how to live. Wild men.

LENNY: One song you did really captured those guys, huh? And it was written by a couple of the wild men. Friends of yours.

LINDA: Don...Don Henley. And Glenn Frey. Eagles.

LENNY: It was one of their biggest songs, but Henley told me "It wasn't a hit until Linda sang it."

MUSIC: LINDA sings DESPERADO

(LINDA exits stage for costume change)

LENNY: When Linda signed with David Geffen, she also put her career into the hands of a new producer - Peter Asher. Peter'd been working with Kate Taylor, James Taylor's sister. Kate and Linda were friends, and when Kate decided to back out of the business for a while, she suggested Linda give Peter a call.

Now Peter Asher certainly had the pedigree to move Linda's career forward. His sister was Jane Asher, who had been engaged to Paul McCartney for a time. Peter befriended The Beatles, and McCartney wrote several songs for his singing duo, Peter and Gordon, including hits

like A WORLD WITHOUT LOVE. Peter became a producer for The Beatles Apple label, and worked with James Taylor on his first album.

Some of the big hits he brought to Linda were covers...redos of classic rock and rhythm and blues songs. In doing so, Peter and Linda were reintroducing kids to some of the great rock 'n roll that had come before. And he was also helping Linda become rock's only female superstar. Unlike most other rockers of the day, Linda didn't write her own stuff. She was an interpreter. But one who did only great songs. With a voice that killed 'em.

MUSIC: LINDA enters, sings WHEN WILL I BE LOVED and YOU'RE NO GOOD.

LENNY: Linda, you did some great songs, but you have to admit your success was certainly propelled by the image you began to acquire.

The Venus of Rock.

(LINDA laughing)

LENNY: The first...Rock Goddess. Those Annie Liebowitz photos started it. Cover of Time magazine...cover of Rolling Stone...

LINDA: ...too many times!

LENNY: But what could you do?

LINDA: What could I do?

LENNY: You were hot!

LINDA: Yeah...I was hot!

(LINDA laughing into song)

MUSIC: LINDA sings HEAT WAVE

LENNY: Around this time, you did begin another...important relationship. One that brought you a lot more attention. And a lot more awareness of what was going on outside the world of rock 'n roll.

LINDA: Well, he was running for President!

LENNY: Governor Jerry Brown of California. And you were out there, day after day, on the campaign trail with him.

LINDA: Just trying to...save the country! Save the world!

LENNY: You were changing then. In interviews, and talk shows...

LINDA: After being in the middle of the music scene, thinking about nothing except where my next gig was, I was finally opening my eyes. To what was going on all around me. Jerry was trying to make a difference. And I wanted to help.

LENNY: That's where love will lead you...

(LINDA smiling)

MUSIC: LINDA sings IT'S SO EASY

LENNY: Concerning...love...you sang so many eloquent songs. Your ballads are so beautiful...

LINDA: Those were my favorites. The ballads.

LENNY: But one of my very favorites from that time...took a more light-hearted look at romance...

LINDA: Love does have its ups...and downs...

(both laughing)

LENNY: Oh, yeah!

MUSIC: LINDA sings POOR, POOR PITIFUL ME

LENNY: So you had your ups and downs with...different guys...but I guess many of your ups came from some of the women that became your friends.

LINDA: Mmm-mmh.

LENNY: There was Emmylou...

LINDA: Emmylou Harris. First time I heard her sing, I almost died. Such a gorgeous voice. She was singing what I wanted to sing. I was a little jealous at first, but then I realized...I just have to accept her talent and love her for it. I did, and we became best friends.

LENNY: She introduced you to Nicolette...

LINDA: Nicci...Nicolette Larson. I met Emmylou while I was on tour opening for Neil Young. Later, Neil asked me to come sing backup on an album, and I brought Nic along. She and Neil hit it off, and...one day...uh, she was riding around in his car, and he put a cassette of some his demos on, and one was...Lotta Love.

LENNY: Uh huh...(starts to sing "Gonna take a lotta love...")

LINDA: (cutting him off quick) "...take a lotta love, to make the whole thing right, gonna take a lotta love..."

LENNY: Good song. Never knew it was Neil Young.

LINDA: Yeah, in the car Nicci loved it right away. And Neil said, "It's yours."

LENNY: And Emmylou also introduced you to...Dolly...

LINDA: Dolly! We met at Emmylou's house, sat in the living room, and just started singing. We all loved each other right away. And we told each other we gotta do something together someday. It took a couple years to get to it, though.

LENNY: I want to get back to...back to kind of the timeline we're covering in your career...It's So Easy and Poor Poor Pitiful Me came from your Simple Dreams album. That album also contained... what probably became...your signature song.

LINDA: Blue Bayou. Roy Orbison song.

LENNY: Blue Bayou.

MUSIC: LINDA sings BLUE BAYOU.

LENNY: And one more song that came from that great album...came from you hanging out with...Mick.

LINDA: Mick.

LENNY: I knew Jagger...just a bit...I was on tour with them. And...God... he's still going!

LINDA: Still going. Mick. (laughs) Always going.

LENNY: He helped you with the cover of one of their songs.

LINDA: Mmm-mmh.

LENNY: So, you hung out with Jagger for a while, and...?

LINDA: And so we did. Hung out. (pause to Lenny's searching look)...and that's all I'm going to say...

LENNY: Ok.

MUSIC: LINDA sings TUMBLING DICE

LENNY: So you and Mick...just hung out...

LINDA: YES!!!

LENNY: All right, OK. Say no more.

LINDA: I'll say no more.

LENNY: OK. But someone we should talk about...you dated him...for several years...

LINDA: George?

LENNY: George Lucas. The creator of...Star Wars!

LINDA: (hums a bit of Star Wars theme)

LENNY: But...you were never engaged...?

LINDA: No.

LENNY: Never talked marriage?

LINDA: Not really. No. George was a bit of an...introvert...and...

LENNY: An introvert created Star Wars. Kind of makes sense.

LINDA: Yeah, it does.

(pause as they both reflect on this truism)

LENNY: One album you did during this time was called LIVIN' IN THE USA, from a cover of the Chuck Berry song.

LINDA: (nods)

LENNY: And then you got to do it live at the big Chuck Berry celebration in St. Louis.

LINDA: It was a movie...

LENNY: HAIL! HAIL! ROCK 'N ROLL. Such a great band.

LINDA: Clapton and Robert Cray on guitars. Etta James was there.

LENNY: And Keith...

LINDA: Keith Richards put the whole together.

LENNY: And you sang...

LINDA: ...Livin' in the USA! With Chuck!

MUSIC: LINDA sings LIVIN' IN THE USA

LENNY: Now at one point, during the rehearsals for that show, didn't Chuck Berry...punch out Keith Richards?

LINDA: Oh Yeah. Yeah. He decked him.

LENNY: That's rock ' roll, huh?

LINDA: Boys will be boys.

LENNY: Ah...Your next project...would be...entirely unexpected. A Broadway musical!

LINDA: Yeah, well...

LENNY: This was just the first in a series of adventurous, artistic endeavors that...

LINDA: Actually it happened because I wanted to take a break.

LENNY: A break? By doing a Broadway musical?

LINDA: No, a break ...from stadium tours. I wanted to sing...but I wanted to sing somewhere maybe a little smaller...maybe...with a...theatrical style to the place...not a football stadium... and maybe...maybe a place where I could play for a while, and not have to travel.

LENNY: A Broadway musical.

LINDA: Why not! (LINDA, laughing) exits for costume change.)

LENNY: Linda was talking about what she wanted to do with John Rockwell, a music critic for the New York Times, who was a friend and a fan. And Rockwell suggested that perhaps she connect with Joe Papp. That was a good suggestion. Papp had the vision and imagination that Linda could relate to. And the same drive for artistic excellence that Linda cherished. After all, this was Joe Papp, Founder of the Public Theatre in New York City. He introduced the city to outstanding productions of Shakespeare in the Park during the summer. And he introduced the world to some of the most brilliant theatre of the 20th Century. Papp and the Public produced Charles Gordone's NO PLACE TO BE SOMEBODY, the first play by an African-American to win the Pulitzer Prize. And Larry Kramer's THE NORMAL HEART, which looked the AIDS crisis right in the face, when the rest of society was turning away. And as Linda certainly noticed, the Public also was the first to present A CHORUS LINE and HAIR.

Joe Papp and Linda had something else in common. A history with, and a real love of, the work of Gilbert and Sullivan. Linda's mom had introduced her to it. So Papp very astutely, and very bravely, cast the Venus of Rock 'N Roll in...THE PIRATES OF PENZANCE.

MUSIC: LINDA sings POOR WANDERING ONE from PIRATES

LENNY: That must have been fun.

LINDA: Great fun.

LENNY: It opened Off Broadway, but then...

LINDA: Broadway!

LENNY It ran for almost a year there

LINDA: Yeah.

LENNY: And it won several Tonys. You were nominated for a Tony. And then it became a movie!

LINDA: Lots of fun. But Hard hard work. I could sing it, but my voice had become...pretty rock 'n roll.

LENNY: You kept challenging your voice. You did an opera after that...legitimate opera. Gilbert and Sullivan is...light opera...yes? But you took on...

LINDA: La Boheme. Puccini. Joe Papp kind of pushed me into it. It wasn't received that well. But it was an adventure.

LENNY: And then, you went back to an early love...classic American songs.

LINDA: I'd always loved Nelson Riddle. His arrangements...for Sinatra and other people. I wanted to do something just like that. Just like Riddle. I started asking around and someone said..."Why don't you ask Nelson Riddle to work with you?" So Peter Asher called him for me. At the time, Nelson didn't know who I was. So he asked his daughter about me, and she said "Dad, the check won't bounce."

LENNY: Wasn't this another example of "Linda, you can't do this!"

LINDA: Yeah. "Oh, Linda, it'll hurt your career. Your fans want rock 'n roll."

LENNY: But you did it. Three albums with him. The Great American Songbook trilogy.

LINDA: I love those songs so.

MUSIC: LINDA sings WHAT'LL I DO from Songbook trilogy.

LENNY: Great song.

LINDA: All of them.

LENNY: And you got to do some more great songs when you finally got to do that record with Dolly and Emmylou.

LINDA: We tried to do it in the 70's. Different record labels, different problems. But we finally got it together. TRIO we called it. Even did a TRIO 2 a few years later.

LENNY: Good songs...

LINDA: So many good songs. So many laughs. Such a great time, with those girls.

LENNYI: What was your favorite...song...from then those records...

LINDA: Well, Emmylou and I...no matter what the song...we wanted Dolly to sing lead.

So those were probably my favorites. There was one by my old buddy, Neil Young...Dolly sang lead...

MUSIC: LINDA sings AFTER THE GOLD RUSH from TRIO/TRIO 2

LENNY: Linda...it's always been...clear to me. Your love...the love of your life...was the music.

(LINDA nods, settles back into chair. Puts on shawl.)

LENNY: I knew you...most people know you...from your legendary rock 'roll career...the big hits, cover versions of classic rock, beautiful ballads. But you loved every kind of music...equally, it seems.

LINDA: Oh, yeah.

LENNY: And you brought your magnificent voice into every genre of popular music. I don't want to go over some of these things too quickly...but I don't want take up your whole day.

(LINDA nods)

LENNY: But before...before you stopped singing, there were a several more big hits - DON'T KNOW MUCH with Aaron Neville. How'd you two connect?

LINDA: I was in New Orleans for the World's Fair and Aaron was singing at Pete Fountain's Club, so I had to see him. And then he invited me to come up on stage with him. I normally didn't do that, but this was Aaron Neville.

LENNY: The song won a Grammy.

(LINDA nods)

LENNY: And then, another big hit, with James Ingram. SOMEWHERE OUT THERE.

LINDA: From a movie...

LENNY: FIEVEL GOES WEST. An animated film...

LINDA: Cartoon. About a mouse from Russia who comes to the USA. The video was fun... James and I were shot in the same poses as Fievel...and his girlfriend, Tanya.

LENNY: And then there were many more albums...all sorts of music...a Cajun roots record, a Christmas album, an album of Spanish music... Can...

LINDA: Canciones de Mi Pare...Songs of My Father...

MUSIC: LINDA sings POR UN AMOR from Canciones de Mi Pare.

LENNY: And many more albums...one was covers of 50s rock songs...that you did as lullabies.

LINDA: For my babies.

LENNY: You adopted two kids.

And as you were finishing up, you...much more...you appeared at a celebration in Japan honoring John Lennon...sang on a record honoring Ella Fitzgerald...produced albums for Jimmy Webb and Aaron Neville...so much more.

I don't know if there's a genre of music you didn't touch...and enhance...with your voice.

Linda...thank you. Thank you for this. The one big interview that I always felt was missing from my...portfolio. You made a dream come true.

And...thank you for your music.

LINDA: Thank you...Lenny.

LENNY: (to audience) Linda Ronstadt lives...in some seclusion...in her hometown of Tucson. But her music will live forever.

And the true beauty of this Rock 'Roll Goddess will never fade.

In a cutthroat business...in a deadly competitive town...she was universally loved. You'll never hear a bad word about her.

That's not only because of her enormous talent, and prodigious output of great music. It's because of her unique nature. Truly simple. Loving. And dedicated to just one thing...a great song...no matter what the genre...performed as only she could.

Linda never married. But she left a string of broken hearts from L.A to London...and beyond.

Now there's no more songs from her. But she's still working - offering the love she feels for music in a new area - food. She just published a cookbook...called...Feels Like Home: A Song For The Sonora Borderlands. She shocked her family with this book - the one thing she was famous for was not knowing how to cook. After all, she'd spent her life in hotel rooms, on the rock 'n roll road. They told her you can't do a cookbook. But you never told Linda Ronstadt that she couldn't do something. She worked and she learned, and just like her music, she's produced something simple and loving, in this case...recipes And she continues to learn and reflect about this new passion. Linda said...

LINDA: These days...chefs are going to get laid a lot more. They're kinda like lead guitar players now.

LENNY: I still remember the first time I saw her. It was in some small club. On Melrose, I think, Los Angeles.

I was at the bar. Concentrating on my tequila. When something...just...struck me. That voice.

(LINDA up from chair, takes position behind the mike)

LENNY: I heard that magnificent instrument...and so I turned...zeroed in on that singer...

And when I saw Linda Ronstadt on that stage...gorgeously alive, almost levitating, full of the joy that her talent brought her...I was instantly done for.

I would be her greatest fan, forever.

All it took...was just one look.

MUSIC: LINDA sings JUST ONE LOOK.

END