

**The following interview with  
LOU ADLER  
was conducted by the Library of Congress on  
August 12, 2015.**



**LOC: By the time of “Tapestry,” though Carole King was completely respected as one of rock ‘n’ roll’s great songwriters, she was still unproven as a performer. How did you come to sign her with your company, Ode Records, and produce her?**

From 1961 to 1964, I represented the publisher of Carole’s music on the West Coast so I was very familiar with her on a professional level and a personal level as well. When she moved from New York to Los Angeles, and she started thinking about doing any recording, she called me. This was ’69, ’70.

I always thought of her as someone who could record and perform even though I had never seen her on stage. At first, she was not too thrilled about performing. James Taylor had a lot to do with her stepping out onto the stage as a solo performer.

So, to answer your question, it was an easy decision for me. She was part of the group The City with Danny Kortchmar, Charlie Larkey and Jim Gordon. She was trying to be a group member and not a solo artist.

**LOC: Did you work with her on finding her singing voice as a recording artist?**

Carole’s voice was developed as far as it was going to or needed to be. She had a natural sound. She never sounded like she studied.

I remember the first review we got--it was horrible. I always remembered it, some writer out of Long Beach. He said she had a screechy voice and sang through her nose!

But [with her voice] there was nothing to develop. Technically, Hank Cicalo, our engineer, and I were always conscious to NOT do anything that would take away from her natural sound, or try to enhance it.

**LOC: Did Carole’s singing voice and voice as a songwriter influence how you produced the album?**

As a publisher for Carole, we would send out her demos, that were just her piano and voice, and we couldn't get them back from the A&R men, producers or artists! They all wanted to keep them! So, I knew, when we started to record her, we had to stay as simple as you possibly can. I always wanted to make it sound like, whoever was listening to it, that it was just them listening to Carole singing and playing the piano. That was my direction for "Tapestry."

**LOC: What were those "Tapestry" recording sessions like?**

Carole's amazing. The most prepared of any artist I have ever worked with.

Before going into the studio, we went over the songs she had written or was writing, with an album of 12 in mind.

Obviously she plays piano and any other keyboards but then she also did the arrangements. She also sang on most of the backgrounds. Virtually anything I asked of her. I would say "Wouldn't it be nice if we had..." and then we would have it! Not many artists are that complete. Joni Mitchell is. Maybe Neil Young. Total and complete.

**LOC: For an album that has been one of the biggest, continuously selling in record history, I was surprised to learn that it didn't cost much or take much time to record, did it?**

I think we did the whole album for \$22,000, around the time that was medium to low [cost]. We recorded three to four weeks, again, that was a medium to low amount of time. Carole's very conscious of that. She doesn't waste time. We were there to work. It's not that she's not loose enough to have a laugh with the musicians but she was right there, where we should have been.

It's not always that way but we were both that kind of artist and producer.

**LOC: Were there any songs that you recorded as part of the "Tapestry" sessions that ended up not on the record?**

There were two songs that didn't make the album—"Out in the Cold" and "Early Morning Rush."

The reasons for them: "Cold" had a more rhythm and blues flavor to it, well, maybe not rhythm or blues, but Motown feel to it.

"Early Morning"-- it didn't feel right with the other songs.

**LOC: While working on the album did you know you were working on something that was going to have such an impact and be so long-lasting?**

I knew it was special. The musicians knew it was special. I remember, when I was standing outside the studio one day, I was talking to Danny Kortchmar, the guitar player on the album. "Love Story," as a movie, was big then, and I said to him, "I think we just did our 'Love Story,'" as a record, meaning it was something so many people were going to relate to. It would be like a soundtrack of their lives. People could listen to it and say, "Yeah, this is me" and "Yeah, this is my life," "This is what I am going through."

At the time Ode was distributed by A&M [Records] and it was like a school campus with a lot of people milling around and exchanging thoughts and ideas. We got lots of feedback. All of the feedback was so exceptional. Like "This is me," "This is my life," "This is great!"

**LOC: Did you have the final say on which songs were going to be released as singles to radio?**

Since Ode was my company, I had final say. But I was picking up a lot of input from around the lot.

“Natural Woman” and “It’s Too Late,” were the ones everyone singled out and since, “Natural Woman” was Aretha’s, “It’s Too Late” became Carole’s first single from the “Tapestry” album.