

Wild side catches up with Lou Reed

Liver transplant has saved him, his wife reveals

Tim Teeman New York

The American rock star Lou Reed is recovering after undergoing a life-saving liver transplant. Reed, who is 71, was close to death before having surgery early last month in Cleveland, Ohio, his wife, Laurie Anderson, has disclosed in an interview with *The Times* published today.

Of the circumstances behind the transplant, she said: "It's as serious as it gets. He was dying. You don't get it for fun." She described the operation as "a big surgery which went very well".

Reed, formerly of the Velvet Underground and famous for songs such as *Walk on the Wild Side* and *Perfect Day*, had mysteriously cancelled five concert dates in April including two performances at the Coachella festival in California, with one venue citing "unavoidable complications".

Anderson, a performance artist best known for her 1981 hit single *O Superman*, said that the couple had chosen transplant surgery at the Mayo Clinic, Cleveland, over New York because she claimed that the hospitals in New York were dysfunctional. "Fortunately we



The singer had to cancel five concert dates in April

can outsource like corporations," she said. "It's medical tourism. The Cleveland clinic is massive. They have the best results for heart, liver and kidney transplants. Whenever I get discouraged about how stupid technology is and how greedy and stupid Americans are, I go to the Cleveland clinic because the people there are genuinely very kind and very smart."

Anderson, who has been with Reed for 21 years and married for five, vividly described the drama behind his liver transplant. "You send out two planes — one for the donor, one for the recipient — at the same time. You bring the donor in live, you take him off life support. It's a technological feat. I was completely awestruck. I find certain things about technology truly, deeply inspiring."

The last few weeks had been emotionally draining, she added. "When you've been with someone for a long time, it's almost like it's happening to you because of the empathy between



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Lou Reed has spoken many times of his drink and drug use and has chronicled his excesses in his songs

partners," she said. "This is no longer an operation that is life threatening. They put it [the new liver] in immediately and it started to work immediately. Every week it gets better. I can imagine a world where you can get everything transplanted."

Asked how long Reed's recovery

would be, Anderson said: "I don't think he'll ever totally recover from this, but he'll certainly be back to doing [things] in a few months. He's already working and doing t'ai chi." She added: "I'm very happy. It's a new life for him."

Reed has graphically evoked his drug and alcohol addictions. His 1964

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song *Heroin*, released with the Velvet Underground three years later, features the lyrics: "Heroin, be the death of me/Heroin, it's my wife and it's my life."

In a 1971 essay, *Fallen Knights and Fallen Ladies*, Reed wrote of being introduced to drugs and getting hepatitis in the process.

He told the journalist Lester Bangs in 1973 that a single shot of Scotch "is so small that you've gotta nurse it like it's a child or something. I drink constantly ... I'm getting tired of liquor because there's just nothing strong enough. Now if we were drinking 150-proof saké, or something like that, then I could get drunk."

Of his drug-taking, he said: "I take drugs just because, in the 20th century, in a technological age living in the city, there are certain drugs you have to take just to keep yourself normal like a caveman, just to bring yourself up or down. But to attain equilibrium you need to take certain drugs. They don't get you high even, they just get you normal."

In 1992 Reed wrote: "I tried to give up drugs by drinking ... It didn't work."

It's only rock and roll (but the BBC can't show it)

Kat Lay

Rolling Stones fans who failed to get tickets to see the band headline this summer's Glastonbury Festival can only hope that the BBC resolves a tussle with the rockers over whether their full set can be shown on television.

The Stones are playing the festival's Pyramid Stage on the night of Saturday June 29 but it is understood that they only want television coverage to screen their four opening songs.

Mark Cooper, BBC head of music television, spoke to Sir Mick Jagger on Thursday night. "There's always negotiations with the headliners," he said. "Bruce Springsteen said he would only allow 25 minutes but the show went so well they gave us 90 minutes in the end. Blur didn't want any filming at all but they allowed it in the end."

But yesterday neither side seemed to

have got what they wanted, with the BBC saying that the talks were still ongoing and had been "extremely constructive".

There were reports that the band may have agreed to allow at least an hour of their set to be shown, but a spokesman for the Stones said he wished to remain tight-lipped.

"Mick agreed to do Glastonbury for the fans who are there, he didn't sign up for a TV show," a source was quoted as saying. "It's not about money. This show will go around the world. If there's torrential rain, it will play havoc with their performance and they want to sound and look at their best. There's a lot of factors out of their control."

The Stones charged \$40 (£26) for a worldwide pay-per-view telecast of a concert in New Jersey, in December.



Facing criticism in November over the high prices charged for two 50th anniversary gigs at the O2, Ronnie Wood said: "We feel no bad thing about ticket prices. We've got to make something."

But earlier this month they were forced to "flex" the prices of thousands of premium seats for their US arena tour, which had charged up to \$2,000 for a VIP ticket, to avoid an empty arena.

Documents published in Holland in 2006 showed that Jagger, Keith Richards and Charlie Watts paid only 1.6 per cent tax on £242 million earnings over the past 20 years. The band moved to the South of France in the 1970s to escape British taxes.

Jagger and the Stones only want four songs to be broadcast as the band "didn't sign up for a TV show"



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