

**Conversations with Dallas & Travis Good (of The Sadies)
by Frank Goodman (11/2007, Puremusic.com)**

Our proclivity for Canadian music has slowly taken us by surprise over the years, and continues to do so.

One of our favorite acts north of the border is The Sadies. We've reviewed and interviewed them throughout our history, and hope to capture them in a video interview sometime, as we did recently with their paisanos Blackie and the Rodeo Kings.

For one thing, we never get to talk with bassist Sean Dean or drummer Mike Belitsky, which we'll have to remedy the next time around. The Good brothers, Dallas and Travis, are each fascinating and diverse characters that front the band. Travis is the kind of consumed and consummate guitarist that seems rarely to set the thing down, at home or on the road. Dallas is also a great player, but plays keys sometimes and gets more wrapped up in the lyric side of things as well. They are five years apart, and different to talk to, which makes the conversations interesting.

After a rather monumental 2 disc Live record that featured a long list of luminary friends, The Sadies embarked on a soundtrack for the movie *Tales Of The Rat Fink*, about the life and times of the outrageous cartoonist Ed "Big Daddy" Roth, whose work swept through 60's culture. The Sadies were perfect for this film, since their breakneck instrumentals and genre bending attitudes ran parallel to the subject himself. Surf, Country, Psychedelia, Spaghetti Western, Punk, Bluegrass, Folk, Rock--it's all there in the Sadies music, and much more.

The latest release, *New Seasons*, is a return to the studio; it's a great batch of new tunes that run their fabulous gamut, produced this time by Jayhawks icon Gary Louris, half in Canada at Greg Keelor's (Blue Rodeo) place and the other half in the new heart of audio bohemia, Paco Loco's studio in Cadiz, Spain. Cameos include their talented parents and uncles, known in the Canadian Country Music Hall of Fame as the Good Brothers. They sometimes gig together as The Good Family. However you cut or combine it, it's some of the finest music out there, as many stars they've backed up (Kris Kristofferson and Neko Case among them) will attest. And now, in turn, conversations with Travis and Dallas Good, of The Sadies.

Puremusic: I realized looking back this morning that we did our first interview three years ago almost to the day.

Travis Good: Really?

PM: It was also practically the first day of autumn last time. So how does the advent of autumn 2007 find you, my man?

TG: It looks good out here. I live out in the country now. Well, I did then, three years ago, actually. I mean, full bloom out here, the colors are incredible.

PM: Oh, that's nice.

TG: And the weather is also spectacular this week. We're at 80 degrees right now.

PM: Nice. Yeah, we got kind of gypped color-wise this year because it was so frickin' hot that all the leaves fell off the trees.

TG: It looked like California here all through August, just like brown grass and the fields are brown. It was kind of cool.

PM: Wow. It's been a very Sadi-fied morning here in Nashville. I've been just working and listening to *New Seasons* over and over, as possible points of conversation and questions climb on to the page. It's kind of neat, as a Canadian way up there, that there's a journalist in Nashville listening to your version of country music over and over and over in his morning. It's funny, how what goes around comes around.

TG: [laughs] I hear that.

PM: As satisfying, or Sadies-fying, in a bunch of ways as the last epic live album was, it's always a pleasure to hear a new studio record by the band.

TG: Yeah, it's been a while. We've stayed busy during that time, doing that live record. We also did that sound track for *The Ratfink*.

PM: Yeah, you guys are some of the busiest musicians I know. I live in Nashville where people are plenty busy, but you guys, you're always hitting it.

TG: Well, we spread ourselves out pretty wide with all the people we've been playing with. And the list of people we want to play with is always getting bigger.

PM: And the people you keep meeting keep growing in magnitude. You guys are becoming more famous all the time.

TG: If there's seven degrees of separation of people that we play with...

PM: Right. And the seven degrees keep getting shaved. So when it came time to do a new studio record, how did it come about, picking a producer, picking a studio. How did the process begin?

TG: I guess it all began on that Jayhawks tour. That would be the beginning of it, and getting to know Gary Louris. He said shortly after that he wanted to work with us, producing some stuff. And we were quite flattered. It had been a while since we'd done a record, and this time we kind of all went off our separate ways before we went and

started to try and get some ideas--not necessarily write whole songs, but just get a few ideas each, because we really wanted to get as much of Gary's influence as we could, too.

PM: I see.

TG: We were saying beforehand that it would be kind of a waste to go in there with Gary and just do a bunch of surf songs.

[laughter]

TG: So I don't know if it was consciously or subconsciously, but we went into the direction that we thought we could use some help in, and I think that was kind of the singing and songwriting aspects of it.

PM: Yeah, that's his specialty, after all.

TG: Yeah, yeah. So we went to Spain, because he's got a place down in Spain. And through going there with Golden Smog and stuff, he found this really great, great studio.

PM: Sure, we're definitely on to the whole Paco Loco thing.

TG: Oh, are you?

PM: Oh, yeah, because my friend Brad Jones, who is a Nashville producer, he makes records with Paco down there, too, like Josh Rouse.

TG: I just did a session with Josh Rouse at Paco's studio.

PM: Really?

TG: I was there on a holiday, and I went in to say hello and visit, and he was in recording, and I did a guitar part.

PM: Get the hell out of here!

TG: Yeah.

PM: Oh, yeah, Josh is a friend of mine, and one of my favorite writers.

TG: There's the seven degrees of separation of the Sadies coming into play.

PM: It's unbelievable.

TG: I'd only met Josh maybe once. And I went in to say hi to Paco and Muni, and there he was.

PM: Wow! And so did you meet Brad, too?

TG: No, I think it was just the two of them. They were overdubbing.

PM: Right.

TG: I believe Brad was there when they were doing the beds and stuff, and then surely for the mixes. I think Josh just went because they both had some down time and they were listening back to tracks, and they were doing some fixing and stuff like that.

PM: Amazing. So do you know if the track you did for Josh--did that jump onto a record already, or is that--

TG: I don't know. I doubt it would be already, because that was in mid to late November that I did that session.

PM: Right. I got to look--he put out a record a little while ago called *Country Mouse City House*. I've got to see if it's on there.

TG: He would have really rushed it--unless it just came out, I doubt that's the one. But you never know.

PM: Unbelievable. But you didn't meet his other guys, like Hags on the bass, or Marc Pisapia on the drums?

TG: No. But they were listening back to the band tracks, which sounded really good.

PM: So who is Muni? Is that Paco's wife or girlfriend?

TG: Yeah. She sings on our record. [<http://www.myspace.com/muniloco>]

PM: Yeah, yeah. I saw her credited with singing on one and catering on five or six tracks.

[laughter]

TG: Well, we lived there for the whole time that we were recording. And the catering was an important aspect of the whole recording process.

PM: Oh, yeah, that's what Josh and Brad told me about Paco's, that it's all about the atmosphere.

TG: Well, yeah. He's got olive trees, and there's this beautiful garden. It was exactly how I pictured a studio in Spain would look. That's what we were hoping for; it was the perfect environment to sit around and work on songs. So we would usually start the day

drinking coffee and having breakfast, and sitting around with acoustic guitars around the table and saying, "Who's got an idea?"

PM: Beautiful.

TG: And there were very few entire songs when it came up to those ideas. A lot of times people just set a piece of paper down on the table.

PM: Wild.

TG: There it is.

So that was, for sure, the most "from the ground up" we've ever approached the studio. It's kind of luxurious, but Spain is--it was affordable in Spain to do that, really.

PM: Right. And also you just get a different idea about how to live and how to make music, and how to make a record, in an atmosphere like that.

TG: Yeah. Geography often plays a part in recording, too. And certainly your environment--that's one of the reasons we record a lot at Greg Keelor's place. I mean, he's just got a little home studio, but it's in a beautiful location, and we're all really comfortable there.

PM: Wow. And after all, it's all about the vibe. I mean, you can go in and pay 750 bucks a day for a studio, but if it doesn't have a vibe, you're screwed.

TG: That's it. I've done that before. I walk in and it feels like a hospital or something.

PM: Yeah right.

[laughter]

PM: So what is Paco himself like? What kind of cat is he?

TG: He is great. He's incredible. He's very enthusiastic and encouraging. He's one of the funniest guys I ever met. [<http://www.pacoloco.net>]

PM: Wow. And is his English pretty perfect?

TG: He never tied up his shoes, so he does walk around with his ass hanging out half the time. I didn't really know much about him, but he seems to be quite legendary, especially in Spain.

PM: What about Gary Louris? What kind of a cat is he? I don't know the man.

TG: He's a great guy. And he's a great singer. He pushed us to sing a little harder on this record. There were times when I would think, yeah, that's what I sound like. And he'd be like, "Yeah, but you could sound a little better."

[laughter]

PM: Yeah, I love the guys that do that, "Yeah, that was good. Give me another one."

TG: Well, he said some funny ones though, like he would say, "Come on! You can sing higher than that." I'd be like, "No, that's as high as I can go." He'd be, "Ah you"--and I'd go, "No, I don't want to do that. If I get up that high I start to sound like I'm singing like a girl. I sound like a girl when I do that, and I want to sound like a guy." Gary is like, "Oh, come on, I've made a career out of sounding like a girl."

PM: That's funny.

TG: Yeah, it was really cool working with him. Before that, I mean, I'd done the tour with the Jayhawks. Dallas has done a tour opening for the Jayhawks with Neko Case, and got to know him pretty well on that. I'd met him on the tour for two weeks. And then we didn't see him for about two years, and then he came up to Toronto to do the live record with us.

PM: Right. I forgot about that. What part did he play on the live record?

TG: He sings "Lucifer Sam," the Floyd song, and he sings one of our songs, "Good Flying Day." And we did "Tailspin."

PM: Right, "Tailspin," that was a great cut on the live record, oh yeah, that's right. He must be a very smart cat, Louris, right?

TG: Yeah, he is.

PM: He seems like a guy that has a real musical intelligence.

TG: Yes.

PM: So which of the brothers is playing string bender on "Never Again"? Is that you? [For the general audience, it's a contraption invented by Gene Parsons and the deceased and revered Clarence White of The Byrds, that bends the string more like a pedal steel guitar, by pushing down on the strap, producing a most pleasing sound.]

TG: No, that's Dallas. He's got the B-bender.

PM: Who made that for him?

TG: Well, he bought that one. But you know the story, those are made by Clarence White originally, right?

PM: Sure.

TG: They used to be Parsons/White, now they're Parsons/Green.

PM: Oh, you mean Meridian Green?

TG: Meridian Green?

PM: I think Gene Parsons is or was married or partnered to a musician named Meridian Green. They are often and still a duo, I do believe. [Meridian and Gene are from the Mendocino area, she is also the daughter of folk legend Bob Gibson. <http://meridiangreen.com>]

TG: Oh, that's cool. I never knew who the Green in Parsons/Green was.

PM: Yeah. Boy, I love those string bender guitars. The welcome stiffness of the banjo and the slinky rubbery quality of a good bender, those two things just go so well together.

TG: Yeah, they do! For a while we had a steel guitar player, too, in the band. He kind of became obsolete when Dallas got that bender.

[laughter]

TG: Yeah. Yeah, we were kind of getting to the point where we were like, "Can you play this part on the steel?" [mimics twangy sounds of a B-bender] He goes, "Yeah, I think I could probably do that." And we're like, "Ah, fuck it, we can just do it." That must have been a bad day for steel players when they went and invented that thing.

PM: Yeah, well, not as bad as drum machines. That had to be a bad day.

TG: Who would have thought? At that time I didn't think so, but yeah.

PM: So when you do finally relax and you get out to the country, what do you like to do? Are you much for movies or any of the HBO stuff, or anything like that? What do you like to do when you're relaxing?

TG: Well, these days I've been splitting and piling wood. And I watch a lot of movies. I watch a movie a night for sure, sometimes two.

PM: Yeah, I enjoy that, too. You can't be on output all the time. You got to be on input sometimes. And movies are good for input.

TG: Yeah, input. My favorite writing quote from Keith Richards is, "I don't really write songs; I just put up the antenna, and I catch what's floating around in the air."

PM: Isn't that the truth. What about places? Is there anywhere you'd like to go to get away now and then?

TG: Well, just here. I mean, it's pretty quiet out here at my house.

PM: Right. And that's good enough.

TG: I don't really have any neighbors, I just have a bunch of dogs, and I walk around a lot.

[I screwed up here. Travis had to call me back because his phone was dying, and he headed out to the trailer. I paused the recorder, and missed a couple of minutes before I realized it was not recording--we'd started talking about acoustic playing, and his early days, playing with his father, who's one of The Good Brothers, members of the Canadian Country Hall Of Fame.]

TG: I did a year of college, and I gave that up, and then I went and joined my dad's band. I started playing bass in my dad's bluegrass band. And then I started playing guitar in it. And Doc Watson was the first thing that my dad and uncles were really into that really got me into playing the acoustic guitar. And then, yeah, just through playing with his band. And then we needed a fiddle player, and I took up the fiddle.

PM: So can you play fiddle tunes on guitar, too, the Doc Watson stuff?

TG: Yeah.

PM: Wow.

TG: Well, a lot of that is from sitting around--I got no neighbors, so I play guitar by myself an awful lot. And it's so much more satisfying to pick acoustic guitar flat picking stuff when you're sitting by yourself on the porch than it is to plug into an amplifier.

PM: And so do you have bluegrass friends in Canada? Is bluegrass pretty big in Canada?

TG: No, I wouldn't say it's big, but I have friends who are really good bluegrass pickers. I mean, our dad is still going at it, playing bluegrass. We all have a lot of friends who pick bluegrass. I mean, it's obviously a big influence on us. Dallas has been doing a lot of pickin' lately, too. He finally bought a Martin a few years ago.

PM: Wow. Do you guys, from time to time, get yourself in acoustic situations, or are you always plugged in?

TG: No, we're almost always plugged in except for when we play with what we call The Good Family, which is like our dad's band, and then some cousins, and our mom and stuff like that. So there's like nine of us. And then we play just acoustic, really. And I believe we'll be doing our first acoustic show on this West Coast tour. It'll be just acoustic, because we're going to open for the Mekons on one of their shows, for their 30th anniversary.

PM: Wow.

TG: And those Mekons always have rules.

PM: The rule is, "And you're opening, you're acoustic, dude"?

TG: Acoustic. They want all acoustic opening acts for that tour. So we're going to do our acoustic show.

PM: Unbelievable. Do you know where that Mekons opener is?

TG: Yeah, that's going to be in Portland, OR. And the other reason we wanted to do it acoustically is because as soon as we finish we're going down the road to play our own show. So we want it to be a little different.

PM: [laughs] As soon as you finish, you've got another show down the road.

TG: Yeah, so we want to have our back line set up with our amps and electric guitars, and we want to just bring our acoustics over to the Mekons gig.

PM: Oh, that's excellent.

[laughter]

PM: So as a Nashville writer, I find it interesting that you guys do all your songwriting credits and your publishing as a band.

TG: Yeah.

PM: And that's just the way it's always been, huh?

TG: Yeah.

PM: Even when somebody like your friend Rick White is involved, it's still Rick White and the Sadies.

TG: Yeah. I mean, because we all write songs, and we all have input to various degrees into other people's songs. Like sometimes I'll have a song and someone will put a lot into

it. Or other people will say, "Oh, that sounds really good just the way it is." And so rather than like--it would be really difficult with all those songs to sit down and try to figure out what everybody's input was.

PM: Right.

TG: And probably a recipe for disaster. And also, like a friend of ours in a band--you know that band Sloan from Canada?

PM: Uh-huh.

TG: They do it as well, and they kind of recommended it to us the very first year we started. They said, "It's kind of important with you guys that you keep to the core members of your band. You really are a band, as we are. And the healthiest atmosphere for that band to be in is to be pretty much communal."

PM: Right.

TG: And otherwise, we get a lot of movies that will be asking for songs for a soundtrack and stuff. And I can't imagine if they were each individually credited--and they usually aren't anyways--but you'd start fighting over who did the song and stuff. And you'd also resent the guy who is making more money for doing the same amount of work.

PM: Exactly. And when does a song *stop* getting written?

TG: Right. That's a good point.

PM: When you bring it to the table, or when it's on the record? I mean, by the time it gets to the record, it's a whole different song than when you brought it to the table.

TG: And then even when you play it live, after you've recorded it, then you just continue to reinvent it. Six months after touring, the song might be very different than it was when you put it down on tape.

PM: Yeah. When you're at home or on the road, are you sometimes listening to music quite different than the music you play?

TG: Yeah. Yeah, I think we all listen to a lot of different stuff. And there is no real rhyme or reason. We listen to country, we listen to old '60s rock. The only thing that I would say is consistent about it is there's not a whole lot of new music in what we listen to. It's usually pre-1980s.

PM: Right.

[laughter]

TG: But other than that there's country, folk, bluegrass, rock, punk rock.

PM: Right, roots music.

TG: If you would call pre-1980s "roots," yeah.

[laughter]

PM: Well, it's all relative; but yeah, it's getting to be that way.

It's really good to talk to you, Travis. And I want to see you when you come to town.

TG: I'll definitely let you know if we're going to be in early and if we can swing that video interview, that'd be great.

PM: Okay. I'll talk to Jude and Angie and see if it's possible to swing a video interview. That would be a nice opportunity for everybody, and to talk to the brothers that way would be fun.

TG: Yeah, that would be cool.

PM: Well, thanks, man, for your time. It's always a gas, Travis.

TG: Thank you, Frank, always a pleasure.

[continue to interview with Dallas]

Dallas Good: Hello?

PM: Hi, Dallas, Frank Goodman in Nashville. How are you doing?

DG: Oh, fine, Frank. How are you?

PM: Oh, great. It's been too long. I looked back in the issue where you last appeared, and it was three years ago--

DG: Oh, man, really? Yeah, that makes sense actually. That would have been around the time we put out our *Favourite Colours* record.

PM: Right. It was again like the advent of autumn. So how does autumn 2007 find you?

DG: Well, it looks good so far. It looks a whole lot like summer to me.

PM: How so?

DG: Well, it just didn't look like fall, looks like the middle of summer.

PM: Yeah, our fall is going to be all screwed up because it was too dry and too hot, and a lot of leaves fell off the trees already.

DG: Pardon the expression, but I guess you could say that we're all facing "new seasons."

PM: Right, exactly.

DG: So how you been? You doing well?

PM: Yeah, life is good, really good, no complaints. Going to Mexico in October, lots of new songs. That kind of thing.

DG: Ah, great.

PM: And you and Amanda are still in the city, right? [Toronto, that is.] How is she doing?

DG: She's doing great.

PM: I thought she took excellent photos again. [for the cover of the new album]

DG: Oh, I will tell her that, thank you very much. Yeah, this one, we definitely had the photos in mind exactly, with a small margin of error.

PM: Yeah. Because, again, I'm working with advance copies, and on some of the publicity you see black and white versions of the photos that are intended, but I'm excited to see the final art, of course. And I'm reminded when I looked back at the other interview that, man, I meant to contact her to get prints of some of her photos, pay her to do some stuff for me. I wonder--

DG: Well, she'd love to. She's the last of a dying breed at this point.

PM: Of people who actually do prints.

DG: Yeah, exactly. And from film negatives and--

PM: Wow.

DG: Absolutely. The one catch with shooting film is there's not a whole lot of options to choose from. We were just laughing about how on the latest record we use the Hasselblad camera and I think she shot a total of 12 photos for the entire photo shoot--no, it would be 15, I guess.

PM: Oh, my God. [laughs]

DG: So it's just kind of funny, because of course now in the digital world in the same amount of time you could have done 3,000 with a similar result, if not inferior. But of course, with that comes a whole lot of little tiny hoops you got to jump through. I know she'd be flattered by any sort of contact, though.

PM: I just talked to Travis, and so I asked him some things--we talked about Gary Louris, that was an inspired choice, and I thought he did a really good job.

DG: Oh, yeah, it was great--calling it an inspired choice is an excellent expression, because he kind of chose us in a lot of ways, too. After touring with the Jayhawks, he was quick to contact me and just say that he was enthusiastic. We became really good friends. And for the longest time we would have filed each other under the sort of "one day" or "rainy day" category. And it turned into calling each other every month and saying, "Next month, next month, next month." It was just so amazing because he's got so much on his plate, too. And the fact that he knew he could do something with us was flattering and interesting. But then from there--we had no idea which way it would work, but we just also didn't really care. We just figured we got nothing to lose by hooking up with our buddy in Spain at a time when we're already on tour. It was very cost efficient. And then we really, really enjoyed the process. We quickly made him one of five.

PM: Wow. I feel like I know Paco Loco now--I mean, my buddy Brad Jones makes records down there, and Josh Rouse. And I've talked with both of them about Paco Loco's, and have written about him in Puremusic now several times.

DG: Oh, he's unbelievable to work with.

PM: That's the place to go.

DG: Somebody with unrelenting incredible sense of humor is so rare when you're working 13, 14 hour days, or whatever.

DG: Right.

PM: He was the perfect man for the job--and also for breaking the ice with us and Gary--just creating a palette or platform, whatever you want to call it, for making a record.

PM: What is his recording platform down there? Has he got a Protools setup down there?

DG: Absolutely not. That was the other thing.

PM: He's an analog guy.

DG: Yeah. So we were instantly comfortable when we showed up there to see like a Studer tape deck and Cadac desk and all of the analog effects that we have ever come to rely on.

PM: Really?

DG: And we mixed them onto half-inch. Yeah, for my taste, I couldn't pick a better studio. And the thought of having to go to the south of Spain to find it is ironic. It's very homespun. I don't know if any other engineer could operate his studio, but I know that I wouldn't want to work with any other engineer.

PM: Yeah, and I thought it was funny that Muni got credited for catering on a number of the songs.

DG: She did. Unfortunately there's a last name typo.

PM: Oh, really?

DG: She's listed as Muni Paco, and not Muni Loco.

PM: Oh, she got his first name for her last name?

DG: Yeah.

PM: Oh, well.

DG: But whatever. But yeah, Muni was amazing. She sings on the record. And she was just an absolutely--you know, when you're basically in one room for the duration, for days and days on end, anybody in the compound becomes a part of the process. Yeah, I couldn't imagine doing it without Muni, for that matter. Again, I've never found such generous and intelligent people that I could immediately feel that I could relate to. Psychology is half the battle with finding an engineer and a place to do it.

PM: Yeah, because it's all about atmosphere, it's all about the vibe.

DG: Exactly. For us, it didn't feel like we were in Spain, it just felt like we were in a very unique setting making a record, because we were working long hours. We only did half of the record out there.

PM: Right. You did the other half at home, right?

DG: Yeah, with Gary. So again, the emphasis, I guess, was just sort of on a comfort level, and a concept that we had nothing to lose.

PM: Yeah, right. And hey, it turned out really good, as usual.

DG: Thank you.

PM: I like that you were playing some bender guitar on this record.

DG: Ah, yeah, thanks for noticing. Yeah, I love that thing.

PM: So who made that?

DG: Well, my particular guitar is this weird Frankenstein--the neck was custom done with my name inlaid by a guy named Don Windham, who is a luthier in Phoenix who just shared my enthusiasm, and got it done. I've yet to pay him. It's been ages. And then the body--I've put a bunch of hardware from a guitar I really liked into it, and the body I just bought because it had the B-bender on it already.

PM: So where did you find a body with a B-bender on it already?

DG: This guitar shop in Toronto called Capsules searched it out for me. I don't know if they used a computer to find it or what.

PM: [laughs] It sounds great, especially when you couple the slinky-ness of that with the stiffness of the banjo. I never heard those two together consciously before. I thought, wow, that really works!

DG: Oh, wow, thank you very much. That was actually the first song that we recorded with Gary. That was the only one that I could bring to the table thinking, "I think Gary will know what to do here."

PM: Right. I mean, that's right up his alley. Come on.

DG: I'd like to think so. I mean, I certainly would say that Gary and I share similar tastes. And I was hoping it would be familiar ground.

PM: Yeah.

I meant to ask Travis something like this but I didn't get around to it, but maybe you'd consider describing your current relationship with Travis. After all these years of working together, how do you guys keep making it work?

DG: I guess basically just the way anybody would make it work after 10 years of living in a cage on wheels and not sleeping or eating properly.

PM: [laughs]

DG: You got to be patient and forgiving. Not that we're much of either, but there's just enough give and take that I feel that at this point there's not a big difference between my relationship with my brother than there is to Mike and Sean.

PM: Right, brothers from a different mother.

DG: As long as we're not drinking, everything is fine.

[laughter]

PM: So in what ways are you and Travis most different, and in what ways most alike?

DG: Interesting. Our discipline falls into different emphases within the band. I focus much more on the lyrics and Travis is very disciplined with his guitar playing. So that lends itself to lots of demoing and stuff. But pace-wise we're very like-minded. But I guess I'd say the best way for me to sort of explain the difference between my brother and I would be, say, his love for the Grateful Dead, versus my love for -- well, actually, no, because I'm not much for the Grateful Dead, so I'd have to pick something that he doesn't like. So let me think about that. What do I like that he does not...?

[laughter]

DG: This is going to be tough.

PM: He's a Deadhead. I might have known that.

DG: I'm still trying to think of a band that he definitely hates that I definitely love.

PM: Because you both have punk in your roots, right?

DG: Exactly. He was a big influence on me there, growing up; I was very much inspired by his record collection.

PM: I noticed this time, as opposed to several years ago, that the brothers are interestingly different to speak with.

DG: Oh, yeah, well, we're over five years apart. And we've definitely pursued very different childhoods. But I guess the apple doesn't drop far from the tree. I don't feel that there's a failure to communicate, let's put it that way. We can talk for hours on end without really noticing, and then go days without speaking, without noticing. We have a very unique relationship with our parents, and my uncles as well, and that's one of the major differences between my brother and I. While I was sort of cutting my teeth in the city, he was pretty much full-time with my father's band at a point when they were very, very busy throughout Canada and Europe, touring and everything else.

PM: And at that point he was playing bass with them before he went to guitar, or--

DG: Yeah, exactly. He went bass, guitar, to basically a front man within the band before The Sadies kind of took predominance, I guess you could say. So The Sadies were already a band and had been playing for over a year before Travis joined.

PM: Well, I remember hearing that The Sadies were a duo first, with you and Sean. And then what happened after that?

DG: Well, the duo relationship was what really lent itself to the involvement of Travis on fiddle and second guitar; it was when we played as a three-piece that was a little more jarring. Basically, we've just always kind of been all over the map. Yeah, everybody works well.

PM: I noticed your Uncle Brian is credited with playing Lightfoot's 12-string? Is that literally the case?

DG: Quite literally. Gordon Lightfoot is a very good friend of my father and Uncle. He's been a very integral part of their careers.

PM: Wow.

DG: And to this day they talk fairly regularly. He called up my uncle and said, basically, "I got this guitar I was going to leave you when I'm gone, man, but I just thought maybe you'd want it now." And he gave him his '68 Martin 12-string, that I believe is on the cover of one of the records. I can't remember which one. I'll try and dig it out right now while we're on the phone.

PM: Let's see, what record is that...

DG: Well, the thing is I want to say it's from Lightfoot, but he's playing acoustic on the cover of that. But let's see here--

PM: Ah, you have Lightfoot LPs at your fingertips?

DG: Yeah. I have a lot of records.

PM: You have Lightfoot LPs, that's unbelievable.

DG: I have a complete set of the early ones.

PM: And people don't know how great the first ones are.

DG: Oh, yeah.

PM: But I mean, "That's What You Get For Loving Me," and "Early Morning Rain."

DG: Well, the guitar from that particular song is a guy named Red Shea, one of the best guitarists ever, and he taught Travis how to play.

PM: Red Shea did?

DG: Travis took lessons from Red for, oh, at least 8 years. He was Red's youngest student ever because he had these freaky long fingers at the age of 8. So even though Red kind of didn't like teaching kids, Travis kind of squeaked his way in.

PM: Yeah, "You with the Hendrix fingers, come over here."

[laughter]

DG: So yeah, again just sort of showing that we do have an interesting link to Lightfoot. But I couldn't help putting that in, because I mean, that guitar is The guitar. When my uncle received the guitar, it arrived with his union card, and photos of him in the '60s in the case.

PM: Oh, Lord.

DG: It was just such an inspiring moment, like I couldn't just credit my Uncle Brian on 12-string--

PM: Hardly.

DG: --as though it was just a 12-string.

[laughter]

DG: That song in question was co-written with Rick White; he and I have a band with the Sadies and another friend, called The Unintended.

PM: The Unintended, right.

DG: We recently did a split 12-inch with a Toronto band called The Constantines, where we did all Lightfoot songs, and they did all Neil Young songs. The song "Anna Leigh" that my Uncle Brian played 12-string on is very much inspired by Lightfoot in the grand scheme of things.

PM: The last time I saw you, in Guelph [a great little festival of 5000 that sells out before the roster is announced, on an island near Toronto], you had just played a show with The Constantines. They were great.

DG: Yeah, exactly. That was the same tour, I believe. Those guys are really good friends in fact. Just on an interesting sidebar, the bassist from The Constantines, Dallas--his name

is Dallas, too--I believe he'll be making a video for the song "Anna Leigh" with the 12-string guitar. I have a very small insular world.

[laughter]

DG: I cherish my friends, but I don't have a lot of them.

PM: Well, when you're on the road so much--

DG: That's just it. Musicians are the only people that I see and can relate to, I suppose.

PM: And when you get home to Toronto, does the group of friends change or stay the same?

DG: I don't have a group of friends.

PM: It's not like that.

DG: No, I'm just kidding.

PM: "I have a girlfriend and the road." [laughs]

DG: And I got a couple of cats, basically. I'm on the road a lot. But that's because my groups of friends and the people that I socialize with, I end up touring with, ultimately.

PM: Right. How well are The Sadies acquainted with my friends Blackie and the Rodeo Kings?

DG: Quite well. Unfortunately whenever we've shared a stage it's been on a fairly superficial level--I mean, to the best of my memory, I believe it's always like festivals and stuff where we're two bands apart. It's never been just a split bill. But they've always been supportive of The Sadies, and yeah, they are a great bunch of guys.

PM: Yeah, I really dig those guys. And I was telling Travis that when Blackie came to town recently, we did a video interview at this recording studio of ours on the Row, and it turned out really good. And should the opportunity ever arise, I'd love to do that with The Sadies.

DG: Oh, that would be my pleasure, absolutely.

PM: Just sit and talk, and play some tunes. It's really a precious document for any fan of the bands to see them in such an intimate setting.

DG: Yeah, plus I'm most comfortable in that environment, absolutely. Talking face-to-face is much better than sitting at home with my other line beeping and fire trucks going by.

PM: When you guys play Toronto, are you very big in your own city?

DG: We like to think so. But we make a point of playing smaller-size venues. We've been a bit of a mainstay at the Horseshoe Tavern in Toronto for a long time, so we've played there stubbornly doing two nights, and so on, because they've been so good to us over the years, and why change--but having said that, I suppose it's any which way the wind blows, and we don't take it for granted. But we love this city, and we've always had the opportunity to do dry runs in this town with all of the people we've worked with over the years. We don't necessarily go to the people we work with, if you know what I mean. We get them to come to us. And Toronto has just been nothing but supportive over the years.

PM: Wow. I thought it was interesting that although Amanda did the photos for the record, that your buddy Rick White from The Unintended did the layout.

DG: He and I did it together. It was because Amanda had the vision, totally, for how we wanted it to be done--although there are a million computer graphic designers and illustrators out there that can do stuff like that in their sleep, basically, Rick is completely self-taught with the html code, and with any digital alterations. And I just prefer his sensibility, because he's always analog, and pen and paper minded. So I just find that he is a much better vessel than some top-dollar designer. Although he only knows what he knows, the perimeters of what I want are completely within our scope.

PM: Right.

DG: And again, it's just so nice working with a friend who is an artist that never ceases to amaze me. As an example, he designs our myspace page, which he learned how to do every single detail on that page just from trial and error, late at night, never took a course, nothing--just a genius. [laughs]

PM: And I thought your myspace page was really good.

DG: I love it. But again, I don't know the first thing about that stuff. It's all about taste, in my opinion. And again, we're very fortunate to have crossed paths with so many like-minded individuals over the years, and through mutual respect and admiration, been able to develop both a strong personal friendship and make stuff.

PM: Yeah, and speaking of making stuff, he co-wrote some really good songs on this record.

DG: That's right. He co-wrote "Anna Leigh" and "My Heart of Wood."

PM: Oh, "Anna Leigh," that's one of my favorite songs.

DG: "Anna Leigh" is the one with the 12-string, and the Lightfoot inspiration.

PM: Right.

DG: And I think it's pretty obvious to most people who know The Unintended that those two songs certainly would have been on The Unintended record, had we made one, or made another.

PM: So the last one was in 2004, The Unintended record.

DG: I know we recorded on March 3rd, 2003. Yeah, it came out in 2003.

PM: Was that the album called "ST"?

DG: Yeah, *Self-Titled*, exactly. It's the untitled Unintended. That's a tongue-twister.

PM: So I see that you're playing keyboards on this record, as you do in The Unintended. Is that an instrument you'll play by yourself at home in one style or another, and sing?

DG: Never. But that's what I was taught on as a child. There's a perfect example of the difference between Travis and myself. I grew up taking piano lessons; he took guitar lessons.

PM: Right, oh, those are two different roads.

DG: I, of course, had no need for the keyboards so I gravitated to electric guitars, because I heard enough punk rock.

PM: Yeah, right.

DG: But yeah, so I suppose my strengths lie more in composition and theory and lyricism, and so on.

PM: Right.

DG: And his is all from Red Shea's leather crops that he'd bust on Travis' knuckles.

PM: Yeah, he's a shredder, right. At home or on the road are you sometimes or frequently listening to music quite different from what you're generally playing?

DG: Well, take for example today I've listened to nothing but the Spiders and the Tigers, the Japanese groups. And these are records--well, two of them are from '69, one is '70. So it's a really weird time for them, because they're experimenting with all kinds of sounds. So I'm not name-dropping a garage band, or some weird Asian psych-odyssey. You don't have to print those bands, because they're so irrelevant, and I don't like being obscure. It's irrelevant to the reader. It doesn't reflect my personality. I think that the line is blurring more and more with what The Sadies can't and won't try within the scope of what we

like. We don't listen to music we don't like, we don't try to make music that we don't try to like. So my record collection is relatively vast and very, very well used.

PM: Wow.

DG: But I don't gravitate towards one style, necessarily.

PM: It's curious, but many of my musician friends don't tend to listen to too much music, which is always a mystery to me.

DG: That's so true. I know so many people who really like to shut off when they get home. And I know other people who feel as if they're some type of sponge that is going to be influenced by these things in a plagiaristic way. And for me, I'm quite the opposite. I'm quick to take credit away from something because it's too familiar. And I would always use that as a guide and an absolute tenet to live by. That is to say, love whatever you do, but there's no point in spitting out the same crap.

We don't reinvent the wheel with what we do, and we're quick to list our influences. In fact, we're very quick to perform covers, and explain what has brought us to where we are musically. As you can probably tell by all the people I've name dropped in this interview already, I would never deny that we have a huge list of influences and idols, and it's shaped who we are and what we do. However, we would never try to emulate something else. We're just making sure that we're just doing what we do well together.

On the other hand, that is a total contradiction of the entire *Rat Fink* soundtrack.

[laughter]

DG: I just realized we made a record that was based on going like, "Okay, for this scene we're going to want something that's kind of like this." What I just said does not apply to our instrumental music or our covers. But it applies to *Favourite Colours* and certainly *New Seasons*.

PM: Right. In fact, on both of those records, especially the lyrics of the band usually have some definite weight to them, sometimes in a somewhat foreboding category. And it occurs to me to ask you, especially, if you're what you'd call a spiritual guy at all?

DG: Well, I move by the scriptures, but I don't live my life by any type of spiritual code, unfortunately, and maybe that's why there's so much torment in my storytelling. I don't know how to answer that question. Although I beg the question by always referring to verse in songs, biblical verses, passages almost directly at times. But I just like to consider those references to be for the listeners to make what they will out of it, more so than me trying to send some coded message.

PM: Yeah, and one of my favorite answers to that question is: I don't know how to answer that question.

DG: Okay.

PM: Because it shows that somebody heard the question, anyway.

DG: I want to answer the question, for sure. Like I said, I beg the question. But yeah, it's a slippery slope, I guess. I suppose if I had more answers I would ask fewer questions in songs.

PM: It's always a pleasure to talk to you, Dallas.

DG: Oh, the pleasure is all mine.

PM: Yeah. I love the new record.

DG: Thanks, Frank. It's good talking with you.