

A Conversation with Steve Tannen of The Weepies
by Frank Goodman (6/2008, Puremusic.com)

I fell in love with the recent CD *Hideaway* by The Weepies so much last month that I had to go back and interview them for this one. The infectiousness of this record and the preceding smash *Say I Am You* that landed 42 placements (!) on TV is endemic. Steve Tannen and Deb Talan can do consistently what so many have tried to do before them: make super catchy and yet thoughtful and well composed songs that are no less or more folk than they are a sweet retro pop, and make stunning records literally at home and in the home studios of your friends around the country.

Every cut sounds good. Literally, if you listen and don't pull out your credit card, you mustn't like this kind of music. It's all there.

Steve was a very canny and kind person in our phoner, like an old friend. He was a very generous and spontaneous subject, and as friendly as I'd hoped. They're raising their first and still recent child, Theo. There was some issue in the air about tour dates that had gotten messed up, but it was coming around.

There is a lot of genius and a lot of spirit in these Weepies records. And Deb Talan has a very intoxicating voice. Their blends are sublime; not just vocally, but all the many elements. Just the bounce and the shimmer that the clean electrics have throughout the record is alone worth the price of admission. It's the highest recommendation to say that *Hideaway* is a lovely record to give to somebody, and to give one's self.

ST: Hi, Frank, my name is Steve Tannen. I'm in a group called The Weepies.

PM: You mean you're in my new favorite group called The Weepies.

ST: Ah, thanks, man.

PM: I haven't really loved a record like this in a long time.

ST: Wow.

PM: You know? And you know how many cross the desk of a person like myself.

ST: I can only imagine. As a musician we'll get a half a dozen a week, just from hanging out with musicians.

PM: Exactly.

ST: And you guys--I don't even know.

PM: Yeah, it's crazy what you get. So I'm very happy to meet you. Are you guys northern or southern Californians?

ST: Oh, God. We would like to resist that label as long as possible because of some of the negative connotations. We are technically living in southern California. We're about 45 minutes North of Los Angeles.

PM: So where does that put you?

ST: It's a place called Topanga. It's absolutely beautiful. Here, I'm taking you outside onto the porch, and I will hold the phone up, and you will tell me if you can hear a car, because--

PM: I hear nothing.

ST: Yeah. There is basically nothing out here.

PM: Oh, that's a beautiful thing.

ST: It's the Santa Monica Mountains, you can hear a plane in the distance. But we're on the state park. So it's thousands of acres of pristine mountains.

PM: Did you guys grow up in that area?

ST: Oh, no. Deb is from the Boston area, and I'm from New York.

PM: City?

ST: Well, my parents are from Brooklyn, and I grew up in Australia and Canada.

PM: Wild.

ST: My dad just moved around a lot and sort of took us all with him. And then Deb and I were living in western Massachusetts in 2003--we had finally moved in together and we just were looking for a change. And a buddy of ours had a cottage, like a little grandma house in the back of their place, really small, but essentially rented it to us for like \$500 a month.

PM: Amazing in that ZIP code.

ST: Oh, yeah. So that's how we ended up in California.

PM: My affection for The Weepies was so immediate it was illuminating, that someone could make a sound so infectious as to make you literally love them in a period of seconds.

ST: You're making me blush, man.

PM: But it was confounding to me. So how did the partnership begin?

ST: I was a fan of Deb Talan. I was in New York. I was actually playing around--I think you just interviewed a guy named Richard Julian.

PM: Right. He's a buddy of mine.

ST: Okay, well, Richard was one of the really good guys playing around when I got to the city. In fact, he was the first guy I saw play when I got there and I thought, "Okay, cool. Cool." This was like '98, '99, and I had just gotten to New York, and Richard Julian, I used to go see him at the Living Room all the time.

But anyway, around 2000 I started hearing about this girl from Boston named Deb Talan. I got a hold of her record through a buddy named Teddy Goldstein and I just thought it was awesome. I started driving around in my car listening to it and harmonizing with it. And I went up to play a show in Boston. I had just come out with my first solo debut record. And I was playing a show, and Deb Talan came to the show.

PM: Wow!

ST: I was like totally nervous. And she had gotten my new record and was really psyched on it. So we started writing together, started singing together--and I think there's a lot of--I don't want to speak for Deb, but for me, I just love singing with her. And I hope that comes through, because it was a dream, and then I sort of made it real.

PM: Wow.

ST: That's it, man, that's the story.

PM: Wow, that's so amazing.

ST: It was awesome. I mean, you're being very nice, but my reaction to meeting Deb was like that, it was like, "Wow, who are you," type thing. And when she said she liked my music, too, I was like, "Well, that's really nice of her." And then we played the songs with a guitar, across from each other, like until 4:00 in the morning.

PM: Wow, that's so story-booky.

ST: It's story-booky, dude. And it's the truth. And it took us about two years from there to sort of tiptoe into the joint thing, because Deb Talan was really hot in the folk scene in Boston.

PM: Right.

ST: And I didn't want to step on that, and she didn't want to lose that. At the same time I sort of had this thing going in New York City where I started getting a little bit of attention and being able to do it. And Deb lived in Boston and I lived in New York. So it was easier to tiptoe in.

PM: Is The Weepies more like Deb Talan's music or more like Steve Tannen's music?

ST: Well, what happened was, we made two records together, one was mine and one was hers. Hers was called *The Bird Flies Out*. Mine was called *Stopped at a Green Light*. And this is all in 2003. And then we had all these songs that didn't fit on either record, and it was like this other thing, and it was mostly stuff that we'd co-written. She had written a couple, I had one I wrote with my brother, but we had sort of worked them up. And just because we had a little tiny home Protools, the LE version, we were able to just keep going and do it. And we sort of thought, well, whose is it? And so we thought we'd put it out as a different musical entity. And sort of--I don't know, like we didn't want to alienate the people who loved Deb, and were like, "Who's this guy?" And we didn't want to alienate the guys who liked me playing in a dive bar with a rock band.

PM: Oh, because there was a rock band you were doing?

ST: It was singer-songwritery, but we would play at midnight at the Bitter End, or similar joints. And it was great, it was fun, but it wasn't quite what Deb and I were doing. We'd do some touring together where I would just back her up. She was doing sort of the coffeehouse circuit.

PM: Was she self-released, or did she have a label?

ST: Totally self-released. So when we started doing that, it was completely acoustic and all harmony. And then we added the bass player from my band and the electric guitar player from her Boston band.

PM: Who was that?

ST: Meg Toohey.

PM: Oh, yeah, yeah! I want to talk about her.

ST: Meg Toohey is the bomb. But that sort of was the first time. I mean, there were other characters involved as well. It's a much longer story. But in effect, what we did was we went back to the same club where we met, it's called Club Passim. And we played two shows. And rather than people being sort of not very psyched on the fact that it wasn't really Deb Talan and it wasn't really Steve Tannen, it was completely sold out and wildly enthusiastic. And we were sort of stunned. That was before we released the first quote, unquote, Weepies record.

PM: I hadn't had this on my list of questions, but it almost makes me think of Glen Hansard from The Frames in *Once*.

ST: Yeah, yeah.

PM: And how incredibly and unpredictably that duo has taken off, too.

ST: That just warms my heart, man, that story. Great stuff. So for us it was really easy, because it's much easier to work with Deb than it is to work alone, and I think she feels the same. And since there seemed to be a swelling of support, we were like, "Well, let's make another one." And we did.

PM: So what did you call that record that was kind of a mixed project?

ST: That was called *Happiness*. And we named ourselves The Weepies completely on a whim. It was clearly sort of nakedly emotional. And we thought that's what we want to do with music is get at that place where you weep from joy or from sorrow.

PM: Yeah.

ST: And we thought it's sort of jokey, but sort of serious: The Weepies. You know what I mean? Like that's funny. And it made me laugh, and Deb thought it was funny. So we did it, and we just sort of appeared as The Weepies. And then it was like it's out of your hands, then it is The Weepies.

PM: So talk to me, please, about the songwriting process of the group today.

ST: Sure.

PM: How do you write together? Does it happen all possible ways, or is one of you more the lyricist, et cetera?

ST: Yeah, I'd hate to be vague, but it happens all possible ways.

PM: Because I write a lot of songs so I know it just happens all ways.

ST: Exactly. And I don't know if you're like this, but we're like Hamlet in the mad scene, like Hamlet when he's like, "Where are my notes? Where are my notes?" because he's got to write something down.

PM: [laughs] That's funny.

ST: And when I met Deb, you know our names are so similar, and we sort of look like we come from the same European stock.

PM: Right. I see that.

ST: And we have a very similar writing style: we basically write all the time. And it's no big deal for one of us to get up from the dinner table and be like, "I'll be right back. I got to write something down"--or to bring the guitar out and say, "Hey, what do you think of this?" So that was very natural right from the start.

And it continued to be like that. I think that the one thing that we've been able to do now that we're a little more comfortable with it is go off to our caves alone, as well.

PM: Ah, so that's part of it too, that's good.

ST: Sure. And particularly it started with this record, we were really...we felt a little scared to even begin really writing, because we'd been on the road for more than a year, and we were just out of touch with writing. And I think at the beginning of this, particularly, each of us was wondering whether we could still write.

PM: Yeah, "Are we washed up?"

[laughter]

ST: Yeah. Or, "Did I say everything I had to say?"

PM: Right.

ST: Before that we felt like we were really working on a craft. And that helps you get tapped in. You're working it, and you're working it, and then when you get out on the road and there's all this other kind of business bullshit stuff going on--

PM: You can't hardly write.

ST: Exactly. You get a little further away from it all the time. So that's the sort of cave model where you bring your thing back to the table, and you're like, "Well, what do you think of this verse and chorus?" And then after a few months we got much more comfortable with: "Hey, that's a cool riff. Play that, play that." And we'd be in the same room doing that.

PM: So many people that we both know are doing kind of a folk pop thing. It's very unusual when you see someone doing it kind of with unerring infectiousness. It's like, "Wow! What are they doing?"

ST: That's nice. I don't know, man. That's nice of you to say. We often question it. But we don't just like folk pop. I love pop. Like, "I Want You To Want Me," what a phenomenal song. [Cheap Trick]

PM: Yeah, I'm just a pop junkie. I get that.

ST: Come on. And we both grew up with that. "Wrapped Around Your Finger"--any of... you know....

PM: Yeah, because you can't get to real folk pop unless you're a pop junkie. Otherwise it sounds like folk.

ST: I swear, we were playing in a festival in Colorado, and it's really folky. It was called the Folksfest.

PM: Oh, yeah, Folksfest, right.

ST: And I'll tell you what, those people are pop fans, and they don't know it. Obviously they're fans of musicianship, which I think is the hallmark of a folk fan. You know what I mean?

PM: Yeah.

ST: Like some of the great mandolin players who show up at those festivals, it's off the hook. And also the appreciation in the crowd when somebody like Rickie Lee Jones played was just through the roof when she would play, "Chuck E's In Love." It was like, oh, yeah, *everybody* loves pop. That's why it's called "popular music."

[laughter]

ST: [laughs] Well, you know what Louis Armstrong said? He was asked if he liked folk music, when Bob Dylan was coming. And he said, "All music is folk music. I never heard a horse sing a song."

PM: The worst thing about downloading from iTunes--and yes, I did go back and buy the first record, too, so acute was my condition--

ST: Ah!

PM: --is that you have hardly any credits. So maybe you'd enlighten me and the readership about how *Hideaway* actually came about, the nuts and bolts.

ST: The first thing I'm going to say is we just posted on youtube *The Making of Hideaway* just to address exactly this problem which drives us--as fans drives us insane. Because even a band like--oh, God, I don't know, Tool, you just don't know who did what.

PM: Right.

ST: In group bands, like Pearl Jam, is it just Eddie? I don't think so.

PM: Yeah, I doubt that, yeah, right.

ST: Yeah, tell me. So anyway, basically, we had each musician just film themselves in their homes.

PM: This is such an incredible idea.

ST: And it's only possible through the magic of youtube. And a couple people did it on their cell phones. And I edited it all together on iMovie in like half a day, and we posted it.

PM: That's a freakin' fantastic idea, Steve, wow.

ST: So please let people know that, and tell other bands they should do that because people--

PM: Oh, yeah, we'll up the link to the youtube thing right in the interview, yeah. [That video is at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yp49E0ksF98>]

ST: Nice.

We wrote and recorded the album at home. And we had a real modest setup. We have like one great mic.

PM: What is the platform?

ST: Protools light, man. And we used never more than two inputs.

PM: You're killing me.

ST: Are you a gear head, too? You're going to be disappointed by my gear.

PM: [laughs] Not really, because I like the simple story, too.

ST: All right. Well, we borrowed a Neumann 147 from a buddy of ours.

PM: Shall we credit him?

ST: Sure. His name is Richard Furch--a fantastic engineer, by the way. He works with Jimmy Jam and Macy Gray, he was working on while we were working on this one. He's absolutely great. He lives in L.A. So we had the Neumann. And we borrowed from Joe Ross who mixed the record, borrowed his--I'm going to get it right--

PM: He had the preamp--

ST: The preamp that's a copy of a Neve 1073.

PM: A Vintech?

ST: It's actually a Brent Averill 1073, right into Protools.

PM: Right.

ST: Now, we also used a C-12 vintage mic for some of the instruments, including, very importantly, the drums. Because the drums, we used three mics. We did two overheads, which I think were ribbon mics, and one C-12 right in the middle of the kit.

PM: Right in the middle of the kit, totally cool. Thank you for the very specific data.

ST: Oh, it was angled right over the kick drum, sort of aimed a little bit at the high-hat.

PM: Love it.

ST: Because we tried to over-mic it, and when you stripped it all away and just had the C-12, it was phenomenal. And then when you added a little bit of the room sound it just gave it a little space.

I love the Police, I love Rush, but we don't need that. And let me say, a lot of that has to do with Frank Lenz, the drummer. We basically just did guitar, some keyboards and Wurlitzer, and the "basic vocals," as a sketch, here in our place. And let me say that most of those were sort of one take, and in many cases, most cases, we just went with it in the end because it was the moment of grace, and you catch it, and you're like, "That's something, I don't know what it is, but we can't beat that."

PM: Yeah, right, before your mind takes a hold of it.

ST: Yeah. You're just like, "That's cool. I want to listen to that again, so we'll leave that." So then we went to Frank's. He's down at Huntington Beach. We just drove down and did the drums.

PM: He's a fine player. He really played all the right stuff.

ST: Dude, we met him right before we were making this thing called *Say I Am You*, which is the last record.

PM: Yeah, that's another great record.

ST: We just clicked immediately. And his drumming on that just blew us away, just blew us away. And then there's our buddy Whynot Jansveld out of Brooklyn, who's on tour with Gavin DeGraw. He couldn't come by for the session, so I just e-mailed him the files. I've been playing with Whynot since '99.

PM: I see, that kind of a friend.

ST: Yeah. He's an unbelievable player, very much in demand. And I used to be able to just go over to his house when I lived in New York, and now he's Mr. World Tour.
[laughs] He plays with Jonatha Brooke.

PM: Oh, he does. That's where I might have run into him.

ST: Yeah, yeah.

PM: Because I did something with Jonatha not that long ago.

ST: And Jonatha and Deb are friends, actually. So there's a connection all the way around.

So anyway, we took all of that and we had Meg come up, Meg Toohey.

PM: Good. What's the deal with her?

ST: Okay. The deal with her, she is a Berklee graduate, she's a drummer and a singer, and she also happens to play guitar better than anyone we know.

PM: Just one of them people.

ST: Yeah. She's like Prince. She can play it all. She produces at home, produces other artists. Her pallet is broad; she eats everything, she loves it all.

PM: Wow.

ST: And I met her through Deb because when Deb got to Boston Meg sort of took her under her wing because Meg was really popular in Boston.

PM: As a songwriter herself, or as a player?

ST: She had the Meg Toohey project going on. And then she had this band called the So and So's.

PM: That's a great name.

ST: Another one of these local hero fantastic musicians, who for whatever reason, the vagaries of the record industry, sort of never were signed to Columbia for unknown reasons, and who has made a fantastic career as a side person for the likes of Lori McKenna. I know that as a solo artist she toured with--hey, baby, who did Meg tour with in Ireland?

Deb: The Saw Doctors.

PM: Oh, yeah, right.

ST: Meg's very much an entity unto herself.

But because Deb and Meg have known each other for like ten years, it's really easy for us to work in the same way that Whynot and I also work.

PM: There's a lot of great guitar stuff on the record. Of course, nobody but you will know who played what. But there are a lot of great tracks.

ST: Yeah. And some of that actually was Whynot also. But some of it was me, and some of it was Deb. But the heavy lifting is Meg. And I'll give you a great example. There's a song called "Orbiting," which is the second song.

PM: A fantastic song.

ST: And that guitar riff, I just think it makes the whole thing.

PM: Yeah.

ST: I love it. I love it. The chorus comes in, and it's got this counter melody going up, just beautiful. And that's why you play with Meg.

PM: Right, because she composed it, she came up with it, right.

ST: Yeah, man. And all of this, this is why you want to do this crazy thing in the first place.

PM: Right, because it's uphill, there's no doubt about that.

ST: I know it. I know. So then we sort of added all the pieces from people that we knew or loved. The other thing that you need to know is at this point where on the last record we were sort of done. It was like Deb and I had our dibs, and then Frank and Whynot filled in the bottom end, and then Meg sprinkled the fairy dust. At the end here, Deb was six months pregnant and sort of out of commission.

[laughter]

PM: Oh, right, done.

ST: And of course, so was I. We were just sort of like, "Okay, we're having a baby. What are we going to do? We need a crib, we need a this we need a that." And Deb's nauseous. And we basically went for help to our favorite musicians. Brad Gordon we met on the Hotel Cafe tour in 2006--just a multi-instrumentalist that we loved. And a guitarist named Steve Walsh, a friend I've played with since--I started playing with him in like '98, '99. But we very much took different paths, and he's a Nashville stalwart guitarist now.

PM: Oh, because I live in Nashville, so I might know--

ST: Steve Walsh and Jill Walsh. He plays with--I can't tell you who, but once in a while I get an email like, "Hey, you might want to check out so-and-so" or "Oh, this is a great record, I'm on it." But look him up. He's fantastic.

Anyway, there was a song called "All this Beauty," which we were struggling with tone-wise. You know what I mean? We sort of had the '60s thing going. And I was talking with Steve and I asked him if he still had that sparkly 12-string. He's like, "Do I have the 12-string? Come on. What do you think of me?"

PM: Who sells 12-strings?

ST: I was like, "Could you lay it on?" And he did some acoustic--he punched up the whole track.

PM: Wow.

ST: And then we did the same thing with a guy named John Deley, who was Dido's music director. And I know him from the dive bar days in New York. And again we were just talking because his wife is having a baby too. And I said, "Man, you want to just take a listen and tell me what you think?" And he called me back and he's like, "I uploaded some stuff for you."

[laughter]

PM: That's amazing.

ST: Yeah. And we're all friends. Because we had a little bit of a gap here when we finished--we sort of came to a little bit of a stopping place, we were able to let these other people in and do their things, and we're really glad they did.

PM: It's so cool that you could make that space, and not only you could make it, but they could fill it, jump in there and say, "Yeah, I uploaded some stuff."

ST: I think because we knew everybody, and we'd played with everybody for years, I think that's what it was. And I don't want to leave anybody out.

PM: Nice bunch of friends, by the way.

ST: Oh, come on, you've been in the business 10, 15, 20 years longer than me. You must have some friends.

PM: Yeah, got some friends, for sure. And live in Nashville. It's like, yeah, a lot of friends.

ST: I know, dude, that's the thing about Nashville, the players in Nashville are so technically phenomenal--

PM: It's so scary.

ST: --that it intimidates me.

PM: It's like if you got a song, you can't think of an instrument that you need that you can't call three people and go, "Okay, I got 50 bucks, you want to come down and play this track for me or not." They say, "Yeah, yeah. I'll be there."

ST: That's it, it's like, which didgeridoo player do we want? That guy has awesome tone, but this guy is a real great whatever. Exactly.

PM: Oh, yeah, you can call up certain guys, well, I'm covered. Just bring a bunch of stuff. And you know he plays eight things extremely well.

ST: Exactly, exactly. We've had a couple friends move down there, and it's intimidating, man.

PM: Do you ever go down to Nashville to play?

ST: We played there in 2006 twice just sort of passing through.

PM: And they probably weren't the gigs you deserved?

ST: That was a thing about 2006, because 2005 we're essentially like any other indie band and very unknown, and really tough gigs in the Midwest. Great shows in Boston and New York and Philly, and then you get out to Detroit, and it's rough. And then after *Happiness* came out and then *Say I Am You* came out, I think it's because there was a lot of TV and film usage, we would get to a place--Chicago is probably the best example--we're in our ancient Toyota, packed like sausage, touring as a duo.

PM: Amazing.

ST: And we showed up at this place that we begged them to give us a show. And they said, "Okay, we'll give you the 7:00 o'clock show" at this bar called Martyrs. And it was sold out. And we were like--

PM: Wow. How exciting.

ST: Well, beyond exciting. It was like funny.

PM: It's like, "Wow, they're here to see us?"

ST: Like, "Who are you? Did I go to high school with you?"

[laughter]

ST: Exactly. And Nashville, we actually played--shit, I forget the venue?

PM: The Basement?

ST: No. It was a split level where the big band gets the bottom and the little band gets the top. It's like this great loft area for the top.

PM: Oh, the Mercy Lounge.

ST: The Mercy Lounge. Exactly. So we got there, okay, and The Fray, who had just hit number one, are playing.

PM: Oh, my God.

ST: So we get there. We can't even park because of the 15-year-old girls. And I was just thinking like, that's unnecessary to do to our egos right now--to sort of like put 500 people downstairs and like 10 people upstairs. And our show actually was almost full.

PM: Really?

ST: It was really well attended, just with people who like knew the records.

PM: Amazing.

ST: And it was awesome. You know what I mean?

PM: Yeah.

ST: The difference between that and not that is [laughs] the difference between wanting to go on and not.

PM: Oh, yeah. It's beyond night and day.

ST: Totally.

PM: So in one of the website photos, I notice you're holding two really nice axes. One is a ukulele, maybe a baritone from the '60s. Is that what it is?

ST: Good eye!

PM: I have one just like it. It's a Harmony, right?

ST: How do you know that?

PM: Well, I may have the same one. I bought it on Ebay.

ST: Well, Deb bought it in Colorado when we were on tour--

PM: Yes, they sound so great.

ST: --in order to have a new instrument to write with. And I'm not going to go out on a limb here, but I think it was 60 bucks.

PM: Yeah. I did pay a buck-forty for mine.

ST: Exactly, exactly. And I was like *nice*. That is nice, baby. And it stays in tune, which for a baritone uke is like out of this world.

PM: Truly.

ST: And the other one is a 1960s Gretsch, which is great, but the neck has now been snapped off twice.

PM: Oh, jeez. Airlines, you mean?

ST: Yes, sir.

PM: Ooh. So what kind of a case was involved?

ST: I don't want to bad mouth them because it wasn't their fault.

PM: Yeah. But was it one of those Canadian cases we shall not name or--

ST: No, no, no. It was an Anvil from California.

PM: Oh, really? It was an Anvil case and it still busted?

ST: We saw it. They dropped it from the top of the plane.

PM: Those mothers.

ST: They just dropped it.

PM: From the top of the plane.

ST: You know what I mean? Because they can either carry it down and put it on the belt, or they can just toss it off. And we were getting off the plane and they just tossed. And

we were like, "Oh, my God." And you just saw it go. You know what I mean? Well, nothing--what--you could drop a car and it would break a headlight.

PM: Something is going to shatter, yeah.

ST: So, yeah, but air travel fun, many stories if you want them. So anyway, that still is our main electric. I have an old Fender Strat that I use. And then I just borrow Meg's guitars.

PM: Oh, yeah, right, because she's got everything under the sun.

PM: Dude, we consider ourselves song writers and singers. Meg is a freakin' musician.

PM: Yeah, you've got to have at least one of those in your pocket.

ST: Oh, yeah, but so is Whynot. I mean, really, I feel like I'm slighting Why because he's a great player as well on electric guitar. His stuff, particularly on "I Don't Know Why" and "Lighting Candles" and "Wish I Could Forget"--

PM: Right. I mean, every one of them, just great songs. There's not a sleeper on that record.

ST: Thanks, man.

PM: Well, I'm just shocked. I make myself listen to a record at least three times before I do an interview.

ST: I hate that.

PM: But no, I've just been playing this all day because well, there's nothing else I'd rather listen to.

ST: Oh, that's so awesome. That's the one thing about jazz that I think is awesome. If I'm in the mood, I can pretty much listen to the same good jazz record over and over and over.

PM: Wow.

ST: And that, in some ways is what we both aspire to.

PM: Yeah, it's amazingly listenable.

ST: Awesome.

PM: And it's so wonder that music supervisors and those kind of people started putting you all over the TV because it's amazing when you listen and go, "Okay, I got to have that song."

ST: The first few times we were really psyched, and then it became a little bit of a mystery, because from that record we ended up with 42, 43 placements.

PM: Oh my God.

ST: Oh my God is right.

PM: Because that's a lot of dough.

ST: [laughs] Well, it varies. It varies.

PM: Of course, greatly. I mean, I remember Dan Hicks told me, "Yeah, well, I got that tune at the end of the *Sopranos*, it was four grand for that play, and then two grand every time it plays in syndication." And then another friend that will go unnamed got a tune on *Grey's Anatomy* it was \$24 grand." [laughs]

ST: Yeah, we heard those second stories, mostly it's the first stories. And not only that, the fact is that a lot of times it's less, because it's--you get to know these guys and they're friends, and they're like they hooked you up for *Grey's Anatomy*, let's say, that has great budgets. But they're like, "Listen, I'm on this upstart show, it's a pilot, we have no money. You got to help me. Help me out, baby."

PM: "I helped you on the other one."

ST: Right, exactly. And you're like, "Yes, sir, absolutely." And we've gotten a surprising amount of grief about it.

PM: Why?

ST: Well, I don't know. I don't know.

PM: Well, is it selling out? Like hell it is.

ST: We really think it's sort of like being on the radio.

PM: Of course.

ST: People discover the music through TV and film.

PM: It's broadcast, baby.

ST: I remember hearing Rickie Lee Jones "It Must Be Love" from the *Magazine* CD ten years ago on a show. And I hadn't heard that Rickie Lee Jones song. And I was like, "What is that?" And I had to go get the record.

PM: How many people now, after *Grey's Anatomy*, go right to their computers and they say, "What the hell was that song tonight?"

ST: And there are whole websites about the different shows' music. Totally. So we're on board. We think it's healthy.

PM: Big time. Besides, what are you going to do? Rely on the record business? I don't think so.

ST: Ha ha ha. A whole different discussion. Not for print.

[laughter]

PM: Yeah, I slight them enough in print. We don't need to go there.

ST: Oh, man.

PM: I noticed there are no dates on the boards at the moment. Are you done touring behind *Hideaway* or just busy raising a child or--

ST: The second, for sure. The first tour fell through. It was sort of just--I don't want to badmouth anybody in the whole world, but it was difficulty promotion-wise with promoters and stuff. And it just looks like it was going to be a big financial black hole.

PM: So that must have been a major issue to say the least.

ST: Really disappointing. But we are working on it to do it for the fall.

PM: Oh, good.

ST: We want to do it. The desire is there. We have people who are helping us out. But it has to work.

PM: Are you sticking with Rosebud?

ST: We love them. We just love them.

PM: I never heard a bad word breathed about them.

ST: No. They're awesome. This is really not a reflection on them. It really is just sort of-- I think the expectation was that we were going to go out in our broken down Toyota again. And we can't do that with the baby.

PM: Ain't going to do that, right.

ST: And so we're trying to make it work so that everybody wins. And it just came up too fast, and at the end we sort of had to be like, okay restart. We'll shoot for September. And I know that we're disappointed.

PM: There are a lot of good vehicles out there. My brother, who happens to be a rather doughed-up individual, has one of those high Mercedes vans, those cushy vans that are like a tour buses on the inside.

ST: I know of what you speak. That's awesome.

PM: You need one of them.

ST: And we actually just had--I'm not trying to name drop, but we talked with Emily from Indigo Girls. And I was like, "Em, hook me up, baby."

PM: Yeah, right.

ST: She was like, "Oh, we rent that thing."

PM: They rent it.

ST: So no way. She's like, "You need a vehicle." We were hoping that they owned a tour bus and we'd be like, "Can we just borrow it for a few weeks."

[laughter]

PM: Right. "Loan us your party wagon," yeah, right.

ST: Exactly. No--and by the way, we have nothing but admiration respect and love for the Indigo Girls.

PM: Oh, yeah. They're totally happening.

ST: They're awesome, and they've been really great to us.

PM: They're good to their musician friends. They're good musicians that way.

ST: They're good to everybody. Their hearts are in the right places, their minds, and obviously their songwriting.

PM: So are you guys avid readers?

ST: Yeah.

PM: Yeah, because you seem like smart people.

ST: Well, I don't know about that. You should see where we live and what we drive and then talk about it. But reading, yeah, yeah.

PM: You read anything good lately? Anything kicking around the house?

ST: Absolutely. Deb read a book called *Motherless Brooklyn* by Jonathan Leetham and wrote a song called "Tell Your Story Walking." And the film rights to the book got bought by Ed Norton's company.

PM: Wow.

ST: And we don't know Ed Norton or anybody who knows him, but this song is smokin', and it needs to be in the movie--so you can print that. We actually have heard that he's sort of got a million projects.

PM: Of course.

ST: He's one of these guys that that's one of his projects, but there's like a dozen.

PM: Right.

ST: So yeah, both of us are total nerd readers. I like trashy stuff, too. I just picked up the Clapton biography, but I haven't read it yet. He's the artist who really turned me on to all the old blues guys. Well, him and Stevie Ray Vaughn, I was a big fan of both. And through Clapton talking about it, I picked up the *Robert Johnson Complete Recordings*. It blew me away, blew Deb away. So profound. I think the songwriting in those old songs is just so distilled and so powerful. And that is what we would like to do.

PM: Well, since you're home at the moment, what's on the CD player? What might you guys be listening to?

ST: Well, we're listening to the *Charley Patton Complete Recordings*. We're listening to some Elvis because we're reading Peter Guralnick's Elvis biography.

PM: Oh, he's an amazing fellow. I've spent a little time with him.

ST: Personally?

PM: Personally. And he's a wonderful man.

ST: That book, that first one, *Last Train to Memphis*, should be required reading.

PM: Indeed.

ST: They should teach that in high school instead of *Ethan Fromm*. I'm telling ya.

PM: Yeah, I did a little hanging out with him in Nashville when he was teaching at Vanderbilt.

ST: Really?

PM: He's just written so many good books. The Elvis may be his crowning achievement, but they're all good.

ST: It's the only one I've read to the end, and it's just so evocative and such good writing.

PM: And you'd just love him as a guy. He's so incredibly right-sized, it's amazing.

ST: Yeah.

PM: So just by virtue of the fact that "Say I Am You" comes from a Rumi poem, I know you guys must be, to some degree, spiritual folks.

ST: Absolutely. I think it's tied in with the literature and poetry and music. I think it's all different ways of saying the same thing.

PM: Do you have any particular orientation in that regard, or are you just free-form spiritual--

ST: In general we respect it all, but we're not joiners.

PM: An alarm from the next room tells me I've nearly taken advantage of your generosity.

ST: No. It's been very comfortable. Have we hung out before?

PM: No. But I think we will.

ST: This felt like talking to my brother.

PM: You've been very kind with your time today. And I had a really good time talking to you. Just crazy about the record and I'm not going to shut up about it from here on out.

ST: No, that's awesome. Thank you for taking the time for us.

PM: And please send fond regards to Deb and to Theo, of course.