

**A Conversation with Joe Pisapia**  
**by Frank Goodman (12/2006, Puremusic.com)**

We've covered the multitalented Joe Pisapia several times over the years, both with his outstanding band Joe, Marc's Brother and his unique and beautiful solo and duo efforts, *Daydreams* and *Watercolor*. We can never seem to find enough good things to say about this artist, but we continue to try.

The last four years, Joe has been a member of Guster. They were friends of JMB, and Joe was slowly but surely drawn into their picture, and quickly became a very important part of this great band. (The other two members of JMB, by the way, are (Joe's brother) Marc Pisapia and "Hags" Haggerty, who for years have been the mighty rhythm section behind another of our favorite artists, Josh Rouse.

The new Guster record, *Ganging Up On the Sun*, is clearly one of their best to date, and shows the Joe P. influence in how their infectious and expert tunesmithing has continued to blossom into the rich pop sound so many of us crave. Joe is the "utility" guy (as it's called) in the band, playing whatever the tune requires, from bass to banjo, keys to percussion.

We talk about the band a lot, but above all, for me it's a chance to catch up with one of the most fascinating guys in my acquaintance, and one of my favorite musicians and people anywhere. Cat's a prince.

**Puremusic:** Joe, so good to speak with you, always. We never have opportunity enough. Tell me, how did you meet the Guster guys, which eventually led to your joining the band?

**Joe Pisapia:** Well, Josh Rouse and Guster did a tour together. Both Josh and [drummer] David Gehrke claim that they gave Guster the Joe, Marc's Brother CD. And those guys really liked it. And then they called us, and they said, "Hey, we liked your disc a lot. Would you guys play with us?" And it was right when we got the disc done, before we even had them printed up and all that. So we said, "Sure." It was great.

**PM:** Wow.

**JP:** And we had heard the songs on the radio, and all that, the "Fa Fa" and "Barrel of a Gun." And so we were like, "Yeah, bring that on. We'll do that." So we ended up going on the road with them.

**PM:** Was it a bunch of dates?

**JP:** It was. I think we did two separate tours.

**PM:** And what year would that be?

**JP:** That was in 2000. So we went out. And one thing leads to another. You're out hanging with a band, everybody becomes friends. We became friends then. And we kind of kept in touch, and would jam. Whenever we were in New York and they were there, we'd jam together or have a beer, or whatever. They'd come down here, we'd hang out for the day. And then while I was doing the *Daydreams* record, I was all into that--deep into this folkie groove. And Ryan came over one day, and I showed him some of the stuff I was doing. They were doing their record *Keep It Together* at the time. And they were doing some overdubs at Sound Emporium.

**PM:** [laughs] Just down the street.

**JP:** Just down the street. So he would come over, he'd walk over. And he came down. Actually, no, it was before they did that record. They had a show here at the Ryman. He came over in the afternoon, and I showed him what I was doing, what I was planning on doing. And it was before I had the record done.

**PM:** I always loved that record, still do.

**JP:** Oh, man, thanks, Frank.

**PM:** Yeah.

**JP:** So we were just riffin', and we wrote this song, "Jesus on the Radio," which was on the *Keep It Together* record.

**PM:** Ah, that's where you wrote that with him, at your pad.

**JP:** Yeah.

**PM:** Wow!

**JP:** We just pulled out a banjo and a guitar and sang.

**PM:** Now, what did you have of that song, at that moment? Something?

**JP:** We had pretty much the chorus. We had the verse part and kind of the melody. But we kind of wrote the chorus right then and there, I believe.

**PM:** Nice.

**JP:** And then we just were like--I remember Ryan was on the floor, banging pedals with his fists for the bass.

**PM:** [laughs]

**JP:** It was like, "Yeah, I'm like into this ragamuffin kind of recording vibe lately."

**PM:** Definitely. [laughs]

**JP:** It was fun. And I was really surprised that it went on that record, because it had nothing to do with the rest of the record.

**PM:** Oh, really? Because I don't know that record yet. I will by the time I do this setup, but I don't yet.

**JP:** Yeah, it's really just kind of a deep record. It's kind of like the one we just did.

**PM:** Oh, that's a great record, that last one is great!

**JP:** Ah, thanks, Frank. Thank you.

**PM:** And I hear you all over that.

**JP:** [laughs] Yeah, thank you. So that's like a long story short. And then they asked me, oh, jeez--they were starting to sniff around. They were like, "Man, we're going to need some help on this upcoming tour"--when they released *Keep It Together*. I think they thought that when they did that *Lost and Gone Forever* record with Steve Lillywhite, that they'd sort of captured the picture of the three-piece band playing live and doing their kind of thing. They more or less took that all the way, and captured it there, and then they kind of wanted to go beyond it.

**PM:** Right.

**JP:** And that was when everybody started to learn how to play different instruments, write on different instruments, this and that.

**PM:** And the sound got expanded to a point that they couldn't reproduce live.

**JP:** Exactly. And I was going to come in and, just as a buddy, kind of help them out, get the record off the ground, do their release stuff, and maybe do a few months. You know what I mean?

**PM:** Yeah.

**JP:** Maybe three, four months.

**PM:** But then they got hooked on the Joey P. vibe.

**JP:** Well, what happens is you start "Hey, let me try some banjo on this, let me try some keyboard on that, let me try some--yeah, might as well." And then all of a sudden it was like you started changing everything.

[laughter]

**PM:** Yeah, right. Then it became the arrangement, yeah.

**JP:** You got it.

**PM:** So before you signed up for this hitch, how much of a keyboard player were you? Just like, "Hey I'm a two-finger guy in my apartment if I just hit the right two fingers"--or what?

**JP:** Yeah. I'm a right-handed keyboard player.

**PM:** Right.

**JP:** You know what I mean?

[laughter]

**JP:** Yeah. I'm that guy. For me, I learned how to kind of dabble in all this stuff just from wanting to do my own music at the house.

**PM:** Right.

**JP:** And a lot of times, you know how it is, Frank, you're in the groove, it's like 2:00 in the morning. You're like, "I can't call somebody now, but I really want to get this done."

**PM:** Right.

**JP:** You stay up until 5:00 until you get it.

**PM:** "I'm the only one here."

[laughter]

**JP:** Exactly. So yeah.

**PM:** Because I mean, that's very likely your banjo approach, too, like, "What? Bluegrass, clawhammer? Who gives a shit about any of that?"

**JP:** Exactly.

**PM:** "There's a banjo in the corner, I pick it up and the make the sound."

[laughter]

**JP:** Exactly. I actually was at the Family Wash the other day, and somebody was doing--I don't know what--I guess it was bluegrass style because they had picks on.

**PM:** Oh, yeah, that's bluegrass.

**JP:** His tone was amazing. I don't even have fingernails.

**PM:** Oh, yeah. And they get those picks on, and position their hand right on the bridge, so that if you ever stuck your ear on top of that, it could blow your eardrums right out.  
[laughs]

**JP:** He had a [Shure] 57 pointed into it. It sounded hi-fi, you could hear it in every corner of the room.

**PM:** Wow.

**JP:** Yeah, it was awesome.

**PM:** I love the banjo. It is a five-string that you play on tour and on the record, right?

**JP:** Yeah.

**PM:** And it's a piece of shite, or it's a good banjo, or what?

**JP:** Actually, I got to tell you our good friends at Alvarez--

**PM:** Ahh!

**JP:** --made this amazing banjo. I mean, this guy pulled out all the stops.

**PM:** Oh, they're capable of great things, Alvarez--

**JP:** Yeah.

**PM:** --when they put their minds to it, that's a phenomenal company, yeah.

**JP:** Really. And I don't know how they do it, where they like score the wood, or whatever, and then they kind of varnish that in, and it looks deep, and it has grooves in it. And they did all this really fancy stuff on the headstock.

**PM:** Damn!

**JP:** And it plays and sounds awesome.

**PM:** Now, does it have a resonator, like a bluegrass banjo and all that, around the whole circle of it?

**JP:** Oh, yeah, like that metal piece, and then the kind of snare drum head, or whatever.

**PM:** Right.

[laughter]

**PM:** Wow. So am I led to believe that you're not playing that much guitar in the band, that you're playing banjo, bass, and keyboards? Or do you play tons of guitar, too?  
[Although Joe plays a number of instruments convincingly, his guitar work is truly stellar and unique. Along with the clips from the Daydreams solo record, we urge you to sample Puremusic clips from Joe, Marc's Brother, one of our favorite bands.]

**JP:** It's weird, Frank. It's kind of like I'll just work around--I'll just kind of grab something off the lazy susan, as it were.

**PM:** [laughs] "I'm the lazy susan guy."

**JP:** Like spin the lazy susan, grab an instrument. Some nights, I'll play a lot of guitar; some nights--depends on the set.

**PM:** Wow.

**JP:** Sometimes it's like, man, I've been on the bass for like six songs in a row. But sometimes I'll be like, oh, I'm on guitar for five songs in a row. It's weird.

**PM:** So when you're not on the bass, is somebody else on the bass? Or some songs don't have any bass?

**JP:** Yeah, exactly. Ryan is usually the other go-to guy on bass.

**PM:** Ah. But somebody is always on the bass--or not necessarily?

**JP:** Well, here's what they do, and this is from the old-school Guster: Adam uses one of those Chet Atkins guitars, the solid body ones, because they're so--I don't know, they're just solid.

**PM:** I'm not a big fan of those, particularly.

**JP:** It's like driving a U-haul through the city.

**PM:** [laughs]

**JP:** But he has one of those midi pickups on there, and he gets bass out of that.

**PM:** Oh, does he pick up the strings separately, or something?

**JP:** It only picks up the back two strings for the bass.

**PM:** Oh.

**JP:** And then he can play like a little guitar. Like if he does an A bar chord, it's going to have an A in the bass, and then you'll hear the strings ring on the other one.

**PM:** Oh.

**JP:** It's kind of wild. And that's how they used to get away with it back in the day.

**PM:** So does it drop the bottom two strings down an octave or something funky?

**JP:** It actually samples like a bass sample, like a stand-up bass, it triggers a midi thing.

**PM:** Oh, my God. That's totally cool.

**JP:** Yeah, it's pretty wild.

**PM:** But is it a quality bassy sound, or just kind of a kitschy bassy sound?

**JP:** I never heard it out front. I'll tell you one thing, it's like really deep--

**PM:** Wow.

**JP:** --because it's kind of artificial, it gets all that sub stuff going on that you can't get on the bass guitar.

**PM:** Subsonic, yeah.

**JP:** Yeah. When I first saw them, I didn't know how they were doing it. I thought they were just triggering a tone down below to make it appear like there was something filling up the low end, because it wasn't even defined. [laughs] But they didn't have the best sound then, back then.

**PM:** Because I saw a samba guitar player in Miami recently. And he had one of these RMC pickups in his nylon string, and it was very sophisticated. And he processed the bottom strings with a kind of an octave divider, and he dropped them down an octave. And it was super hi-fi, and it sounded like a two-piece, it sounds like he was playing with an upright bass player. And it was frightening.

**JP:** Oh, that's awesome.

**PM:** So has this gig taken you all over the world already, Joe?

**JP:** All over the country, pretty much. We go to England. We were going to England once every six months, just to get something started there. And then with the new record--it's funny, just being in a band that actually has momentum, it's sort of overwhelming when you realize that there are certain things you just have to do. But no, we can't go there, because we have to do these markets, and we have to go back to there because we haven't been there in this long.

**PM:** Wow.

**JP:** When you sit down and have a meeting, you talk about things like if you haven't been back to this market in eight months, you have to go back there. I mean, it's weird.

**PM:** Amazing. And so you're serving accounts.

**JP:** Exactly. And it's kind of like--

**PM:** It's like, "They're out. We have to go fill them up."

**JP:** That's it, right. And whereas it used to be like--or what I'm used to is like, "Hey, if we just--we could play these shows."

[laughter]

**PM:** Just whenever we want.

**JP:** Yeah. More like, "Oh, we're so thankful to play *anywhere*," without any real rhyme or reason.

**PM:** And it's amazing to have been so good for so long, in several really amazing bands, and then, as you say, suddenly be in a situation with its own momentum.

**JP:** Yeah, right.

**PM:** That's incredible.

**JP:** It's a lot different than I would have expected it.

**PM:** How much are you home? I remember you bought a house on the east side there.

**JP:** I'm not home that much. I'm home now. But I leave on Saturday. I've been home a couple months a year kind of thing, not much--I had no idea it was like that. I knew those guys were busy, but I didn't know they were *that* busy.

**PM:** Now, for the diehard--and they'll be plenty of them--Guster fans that read the interview, let's talk about the three principals, what they're good at, what they're like, and stuff like that.

**JP:** Sure.

**PM:** Because through you, and because of our friendship, some of those people could get a really unique perspective here.

**JP:** Right, right. Well, let's see. Actually, I got to say that it started with Ryan, because he was the first guy I was really friends with to begin with, just because he's so outgoing. He's real focused about keeping his friendships.

**PM:** Wow.

**JP:** Like for me, I'm too overwhelmed on the road lately, because it's like, "Oh, shit, I forgot to call my college buddy from so-and-so to invite him to the show." And Ryan seems to be very organized with all that, and I'm sure he's used to it from having done it for so long. It's almost as if his social life on the road is just an extension of his home life. Because when we were over here in the basement with Joe Mark's Brother, they were out there doing that.

**PM:** Right. The road is his home.

**JP:** Yeah, exactly. And he's a real friendly outgoing guy. One thing about that guy, and this kind of goes for the whole of Guster, is that those guys are relentless, especially Ryan, about melody. Melody is everything to them, especially to him. And it's unusual like how--and just being around it, I would lose--not interest, but lose perspective. You know what I mean?

**PM:** Right.

**JP:** Like recently Ryan was trying to improve this four note melody, spending a lot of time and thought on it. Like what do you try to improve about it?

[laughter]

**JP:** But he's like a melody scientist.

**PM:** [laughs] I love these melody scientists. It's so brilliant.

**JP:** It's amazing. But then when you go to the show and you see everybody singing along, I'm like, well, I guess he knew what he was doing.

**PM:** Right. As if it's some mathematical metaphysical formula--

**JP:** Yeah.

**PM:** --that you say, "No, no, no, these notes in this order produces this effect inside people." And oh, it's amazing. I mean, like Ron Sexsmith writes melodies frequently with no instrument in his hands. He said, "Oh, no, I like to do it walking down the street and then play with it that way. The limitations of my guitar playing do not come into play."

**JP:** Interesting. I like that.

**PM:** Now, what kind of a Texan is Ryan? I mean, is he any kind of Texan at all? That's where he comes from, right?

**JP:** He's a Texas anomaly. Of all the guys, he's the most Northeastern of them all.

**PM:** Wow. Because when you look at his face, he looks like he's from Jersey. [laughs] You know?

**JP:** And he's a ball buster and a wise-ass, and everything else.

**PM:** [laughs]

**JP:** I mean, he has none of that southern gentility.

**PM:** [laughs]

**JP:** And I don't know, his parents--I think his parents met there--I don't know whether his mom is from there, but yeah, it's weird. He grew up in Dallas. But his parents no longer live there, they're in Baltimore now.

**PM:** Wow.

**JP:** And they hated the heat. They were saying, "Oh, we got to get out of this heat." So he's an anomaly for Texas. I could never figure that one out.

**PM:** Wow. Now, this particular trio that you joined, how long had they been together as three?

**JP:** I think they're going on about fourteen years now.

**PM:** And they've been like wildly successful, or successful enough to stay together, or somewhere in the middle or--

**JP:** I think they've just been successful enough to do what they're doing for a living, but not like to get a personal jet or anything. When I came on with them, my idea of success was like, "Oh, *this* is success."

**PM:** Right.

**JP:** But it's a relative thing. Those guys get frustrated with, "Oh, we wish one of our singles would take off, or we wish this and that."

**PM:** Right. It's all relative, always relative.

**JP:** Yeah. But to me, it's a great success. And to them I think it's just like--when it comes down to the time that they've put into it, it is like wow, and the sacrifice of being gone just all that time, jeez. I've only been doing it four years, and it's still overwhelming sometimes.

**PM:** You've been doing that four years already?

**JP:** That's what I'm talking about. It doesn't feel like it. It'll be four years in March.

**PM:** Wow. So that's not as many years as Joe, Marc's Brother, but it's getting close.

**JP:** Yeah, totally. Well, JMD, we were sort of behind the scenes, Mark and I. And we were trying to do it--we started in '93.

**PM:** Right.

**JP:** But yeah, you're right, that was probably seven, eight years.

**PM:** So is it getting to feel like, "Holy shit, I've been in this band half my life"?

**JP:** No. It feels like four months.

**PM:** Ah, it's the other way.

**JP:** It's weird. And when you're on the road on a long tour, yeah, it feels like you've been on tour forever. But in the big picture, you know...

**PM:** Right. Well, that sounds good, that it feels more like four months than fourteen years. That's a mighty good sign.

**JP:** Yeah.

**PM:** Well, if Ryan is like that, what's Brian like?

**JP:** Like I said, when I first met those guys, I was more friendly with Ryan at first. He was the guy that he would call me, or I would call him, or whatever. Brian sort of downplays his role in the band on the outside. He's kind of a comedic genius, like with his road journals and stuff like that. He's got a real funny way of looking at stuff.

**PM:** Right.

**JP:** But he's very, very involved in everything. He's very attentive to all the details. That guy can go into the details like no other.

**PM:** Wow.

**JP:** And from a production standpoint, you know what I mean, like when you're in the studio with that guy, he knows every single thing that's going on. Beyond what you do-- and you're looking at the computer screen, or whatever.

**PM:** Damn!

**JP:** He knows it beyond what you--

**PM:** But he knows about the compressor setting that you're heading toward and stuff.

**JP:** He doesn't know about that stuff, but all the parts and all the timing of all the parts and all the tones.

**PM:** Oh, all the musical parts.

**JP:** Yeah, he knows everything that's going on, and what's going to make it, and what's not, in his mind. And he's very opinionated about that stuff. And almost like where Ryan is the melody scientist, Brian is like an overall--I don't know, it's weird, he's very attentive to all that stuff, and kind of a perfectionist.

**PM:** And as a personality, is he on the serious side, or he's more on the comedic side that you'd see in his road journals?

**JP:** It kind of goes back and forth. He can snap one to the next.

**PM:** Right.

**JP:** Like you'll be joking around, and then all of a sudden the track will run by, and he'll be like, "Right there. We got to work on that." He's always on.

**PM:** So do you feel like you're musically--are you being used in a very full way? Are your vast--what I consider your vast abilities as a musician tested and all that?

**JP:** Yeah, I would say so. In ways that I wouldn't have expected, too. For instance, we sat in a room and wrote these songs together for the *Ganging Up On The Sun*. And really, the biggest thing was that melody thing. So we'd work on the chorus for four days on that song, like every day.

**PM:** Wow!

**JP:** Yeah, just to try and... And then the things that they would end up signing off on would always surprise me, because I would never really know how they arrived at it.

**PM:** Right.

**JP:** You know what I mean? [laughs] It would always be a mystery. Whereas, I would have like maybe five options in my head that would all be worth pursuing, and whatever you chose, if you were feeling it, I would just go with it and make it into something.

**PM:** Yeah.

**JP:** Whereas they would be like--

**PM:** Sure that it was *this*.

**JP:** Yeah, sure that it was *that*. And when it was done I'd be surprised sometimes. *That* was the one that made it? [laughs]

**PM:** "Why was it that?" Yeah, right.

**JP:** Like when you were talking before about the melody science, like they don't talk about it that way. It's more internal where they just have this sense of what they want to hear, and that's it. So my role is really just to keep throwing out ideas. And the good thing about me is I'm just like, "All right. Here's an idea. Here's an idea." Because I always have so many riffs that I'm playing around with, or whatever.

**PM:** Right. And that's how they see you, right, as the idea guy?

**JP:** Yeah, part of my role is that guy. And then it changes as we go through the progression. It changes as we go through the writing and stuff.

**PM:** So are you on all of those tunes with the guys?

**JP:** On the new record?

**PM:** Yeah.

**JP:** Yeah. We just sort of wrote all those together.

**PM:** That's beautiful.

**JP:** Except for there's a few that you could tell where one guy was the main guy. Like on "Lightning Rod," for instance, the opening track, Ryan brought that idea in himself, and it was pretty much done. We just added parts to it, basically. But for the most part,

everything else--and you could tell--you could probably hear the ones that were more like my things, and then--

**PM:** Oh, yeah, I could hear Joe in a number of songs, very perceptibly.

**PM:** And then there were some that Adam brought in that were mostly him. And then Adam, he's a different kind--whereas Ryan and Brian, you'd see them as kind of a team; you know what I mean?

**PM:** Ah.

**JP:** For lack of a better phrase, in this band, they're like the Lennon and McCartney, I would think.

**PM:** Ryan and Brian?

**JP:** Yeah.

**PM:** Ah.

**JP:** In a way. They'll really sort of take that role. You know what I mean? Whereas Adam is sort of more easy-going about stuff. He's got this sort of Zen attitude about things.

**PM:** Yeah.

**JP:** He's more like me. You know?

**PM:** Right.

**JP:** A little more like the way I am. But yet, he'll be like, "You know I'm not like those guys. I don't get into the minutiae"--but he does.

[laughter]

**PM:** And it's interesting that the two Zen guys are the Jersey guys. He's from Jersey, too, right? [Adam and Joe, that is.]

**JP:** That's right. Maybe that's a natural reaction to the environment.

**PM:** [laughs] Yeah, not known as the Zen capital, few people know that a lot of the greatest women and the Zen-filled minds come from Jersey.

**JP:** Because you got to be, if you're going to sit in traffic for hours. And then Adam's big into this nonprofit stuff, the environmental initiative that he and his wife started called

Reverb, which has taken off really great. I mean, he's one of those guys that inspires me, and makes me feel like, "Man, what the hell am I doing for service?" You know?

**PM:** Wow! Really?

**JP:** He's really busting his ass--on tour, for instance, we're trying to green our tour as much as we can.

**PM:** In what ways?

**JP:** Well, we have biodiesel running the buses. And we found a bus company that will allow us to run biodiesel, right here in Nashville. And then he convinced the trucking company, called Janco, which does all this rock 'n' roll and Broadway stuff, to run biodiesel as well.

**PM:** Holy jeez!

**JP:** And then he's got offsets, where we'll do a show--let's say we're playing Starwood Amphitheater or something, all the power that's used from the grid for that one day--which is a surprising amount. I mean, it's like a household for I don't know how many months.

**PM:** Really?

**JP:** Oh, yeah, it's crazy. And Adam will set it up so that that gets replenished to the grid in wind power.

**PM:** How does he do that?

**JP:** There are these things called green tags.

**PM:** Oh, green tags, right.

**JP:** Yeah. And you just basically buy X-amount. You see what the thing is, and you offset it. And he and his wife, she'll communicate with the bus drivers and say, "Here's where you're going to pick up biodiesel tonight, and here's where you're going to"--because they kind of have to go a little bit out of their way sometimes, or schedule--one tour they did where they were delivering it every day.

**PM:** Wow. And the whole band, obviously, is okay with Adam's activities in that direction?

**JP:** Well, I think that everybody sort of gets behind it. And it's great that he takes on the whole burden of it. But he's got all these other bands doing it. Like he got Dave Matthews to write a huge check for his career, basically, to offset his career retroactively.

**PM:** Oh, my God!

**JP:** Yeah. [laughs]

**PM:** What a guy!

**JP:** Yeah. And he's got the Barenaked Ladies doing this Bare Naked Planet thing. And he's got all these bands that are doing this stuff. And now bands are contacting him in England and Europe and going, "We want to do the biodiesel thing over here. We want to do the offsets over here." And he's kind of starting to get into that, like more global stuff.

**PM:** Wow. These are some pretty amazing dudes, Joe, right?

**JP:** They're just really upstanding dudes, you know what I mean?

**PM:** Wow.

**JP:** And that's the thing. You know as well as I, in order to just jump into a thing that's already in progress, and be comfortable--because most of the thing is the hang.

**PM:** Yeah. You only play for an hour or two a night. The rest of it is a hang.

**JP:** Exactly. And they're really just solid dudes. And even the crew and everybody that surrounds the whole thing--it's sort of a great little family environment.

**PM:** How many crew? Like how big a production is that show?

**JP:** We generally--this summer we did a bigger crew because we brought lights and PA.

**PM:** Wow.

**JP:** But generally our crew is--right now we just have six crew.

**PM:** Six crew. Four players, six crew.

**JP:** Yeah.

**PM:** Wow.

**JP:** And then two drivers, because we got a truck and a bus.

**PM:** Heavy duty expenses.

**JP:** Oh, man, I know.

**PM:** Your own bus, too, one bus.

**JP:** One bus.

**PM:** And we all know how expensive they are.

**JP:** This summer we were running two buses and two trucks.

**PM:** Wow. So the show has got to be pretty huge. What's the average audience?

**JP:** I would say probably averages 1,800, maybe 1,500. Some markets are great.

**PM:** And what's the biggest show you've played since you've been with them?

**JP:** Well, the biggest one was sort of a weird anomaly. On the second tour, there was a CD release party in Boston, where everybody got together. And the radio rep up there, who's a huge sort of mover and shaker--old-school guy--you would love this guy--he organized this thing at City Hall Plaza right by Samuel Hall, there. And we played outside. And forty-something-thousand people showed up. It was like a free show.

**PM:** Wow.

**JP:** Yeah. So that was probably the biggest show that we did on our own. And nobody expected that. But it's sort of the thing in Boston--Boston is one of those strange markets for us, because those guys, of course, started there. They met at school. And all the radio stations sort of come together instead of competing. There'd be like five little vans out there, and they're all just hanging out talking to each other, and they're all sponsoring the show.

**PM:** Unbelievable.

**JP:** So it's unusual, you know?

**PM:** I downloaded the music I have, so I lack some details. What's the label, and who's the management?

**JP:** Well, they've been with this guy Dalton Sim from the beginning--well, from the beginning of their management needs, at least. He's their first and only manager.

**PM:** And was he a college buddy, or was he an older guy?

**JP:** He's actually about the same age as everybody. And I don't really know how they met. I think that they were friends with him first. I don't really know how it all came about, to tell you the truth. I've always kind of known him as Dalton the manager. But I know before then I think he was a CPA or something. He was just their friend. They would crash on his floor when they came to whatever town he lived in.

**PM:** Frickin' wild how that stuff develops, yeah.

**JP:** But he's a hell of a manager. I mean, of all the guys I've known, he gets it done, and he's really down to earth and easy to talk to.

**PM:** Wow.

**JP:** He's a no bullshit kind of guy, but without having to say so. [laughs] It makes a big difference.

**PM:** Right. And the label is?

**JP:** The label is Warner Reprise.

**PM:** Wow. So how are you staying in shape, physically, spiritually, on the road? What do you do to take care of yourself?

**JP:** I'm not, really.

[laughter]

**PM:** "I'm going to hell."

**JP:** Exactly. That's a challenge, to stay in shape all those ways on the road. It's hard on the road to maintain that balance and that grounding.

**PM:** Do you find, for instance, time to read? Do you make yourself read, is that part of life?

**JP:** I do. A lot of times, just to go to bed, or whatever.

**PM:** Right.

**JP:** And then I have my bike out there, which--

**PM:** Oh, well, that helps.

**JP:** Yeah, that's good. So I try to get on that, and walk. I usually have a little time in the afternoon to walk and explore the city or whatever. I make it a point to do that.

**PM:** You know what I'm reading is, *Here, There and Everywhere: My Life Recording the Music of Beatles*. Have you seen that?

**JP:** That's the engineer's book, right? I heard about that.

**PM:** Yeah, Geoff Emerick.

**JP:** I want to get that. I think I might get that for this next trip.

**PM:** Yeah, it's really good. It really gets you all the way inside.

**JP:** Well, he really goes into detail, doesn't he?

**PM:** Oh, big time. And not the electronic minutiae, either, more the emotional stuff, and who's getting on whose nerves and why, and who's taking the piss, and who's the great guy, and when, and why. I mean, he's a real McCartney guy. And he's not a very pro-Harrison guy in the beginning, but becomes one.

**JP:** Wow.

**PM:** I mean, his account of how Harrison was basically screwing up all the way right up until like *Abbey Road* is unbelievable. It's like, yeah, he's out there trying to take that solo for four hours until Paul finally says, "Give me that guitar." Goes out there, slams it in two takes, and says, "Okay, next song."

**JP:** Wow. That's weird, because Brad Jones was telling me about when they did *All Things Must Pass*, his confidence was so shattered by the Beatles that he had Pete Drake do all the all the slide parts on the pedal steel for "My Sweet Lord."

**PM:** Are you kidding me?

**JP:** No.

**PM:** Oh, my God!

**JP:** I didn't even know that that was a steel guitar.

**PM:** Oh, because my buddy who's a Harrison freak is always telling me how *All Things Must Pass* is the greatest album ever made. Wait'll I tell him that Pete Drake cut all those slide solos.

[laughter]

**PM:** I just love what a great gig this has turned into for you, and no doubt, what an incredible fourth member you ended up to be for them.

**JP:** Yeah, I hope so. I always tell the story of how, with JMB, one of the things that we wanted to do to move forward was we just wished we knew a guy who could sort of play a bunch of stuff, and maybe not even be part of our core band, but just sort of be that guy that would be the go-to guy for anything. And so when I first went out with those guys, that's the role I tried to play, because I felt, you know what? I know exactly what they want, because this is what I always wanted.

**PM:** Right.

**JP:** Just the guy to be like, "I'll try that. And I'll put this little thing in here so you guys don't have to work so hard, it kind of fleshes this part out, so you don't have to hit five pedals and have three vocals."

**PM:** "Here's the riff that's missing, let me drop it in."

**JP:** Yeah. And then after while it just--you sit there and listen to records together, you're talking about songs you like, whatever, and then you start writing together. And then the next thing you know, I'm kind of in the whole thing.

**PM:** Right.

**JP:** But yeah, it's been great, Frank, I mean, as far as putting my life on track--and it's helped me to put together my environment here, and my studio stuff, and just sort of be able to try a lot of things there. It's a blessing, in many ways.

**PM:** Hey, have you seen this DVD that's really rocked my world lately called *B4MD, Before the Music Dies?*

**JP:** No, what's that?

**PM:** Oh, these two guys just cruise the country looking for answers to like, "What the hell has happened to music and the music business?"

**JP:** Wow.

**PM:** And both of the filmmakers had siblings die who were musicians, and one of them in his last conversation with his brother, the brother had expressed dismay at how the music business had left the fans and the musicians behind. And they just set off on all these answers, and talked with all these famous musicians. How long are you home? I've got to lend you this before you leave.

**JP:** I'm home until Saturday. But I'm coming back in two weeks.

**PM:** Okay. Let's hook up. I want you to see this thing. Thanks for taking the time today to do this interview.

**JP:** Okay, my brother. It's my pleasure, let's be in touch.

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