**A Conversation with David Mead**
**by Frank Goodman (6/2006, Puremusic.com)**

Both as a music writer and a writer of music, nothing blows my mind quite as much as the sheer originality of some artists, in the face of global imitation. It's a real inspiration, and keeps it all interesting.

Whether he's on piano, ukulele, or guitar, the songs of David Mead literally fly off in various directions with so much wind at their back that they arrive in distant and unpredictable corners instantly. It has mostly to do with his singing, which seems to know no bounds. Beyond that, though, his way with arrangement and harmony is very evolved. Add to that the wiles and offbeat wisdom of producer and collaborator Brad Jones, and you apparently get records that stand apart from everything else in the field.

I got to see David play a set in a packed joint upstairs on Sixth Street during SXSW in Austin a few months back. He had that very funky cellist with him, producer David Henry, who is also likely to pick up other instruments as the artist himself moves from one to another. The musical intelligence and the communication that moves between that duo onstage is something to see, and hear.

We hung out a little after the show, each figuring out what we were doing next. The artist is in a new frame of mind, a very entrepreneurial and self-actualizing one. He started out his solo career on a major label, then moved to Nettwerk, and now is creating his own blueprint with Tallulah! Records, as their flagship release. He's got funding, a manager he has worked with for a long time, and is very focused on putting his career on a track that fits his music and his life. Artist and fans alike will find his viewpoint illuminating, in a business that is changing too fast for anybody to have or even get a hold if it. You just have to decide what it is you want, and try to create it. You can't wait for or try to please or anticipate *them* anymore.

This guy is one of the greatest artists we've covered, in my opinion. Get on to him, and turn on your friends who are looking for something new.

**Puremusic:** I haven't seen you since South By Southwest. How was that for you, and how have you been keeping since?

**David Mead:** I've been crazy ever since. That was sort of the official kickoff of *Tangerine* and Tallulah! madness [the new album and label, respectively]. But I've been keeping well. It's a lot of work, but it's invigorating, and it's exciting.

**PM:** How did you like South By Southwest?

**DM:** [laughs] Actually, I had my best one ever, just because it was so busy. And it was also fun to be down there from a somewhat different standpoint. At the end of the day, I think it's probably a festival that's set up more for people who are running labels and

booking agents, and people who are on the business end of it, more than it is for artists. So since I had that motivation to be down there and to be talking to as many people as I could, and to be handing out my record and such, it was lot more enjoyable for me. If you just go down there as an artist, it's such a hotbed of everything that is happening at the moment, and there's always somebody who has more going on than you. It's kind of hard to not look around and feel a little envious, regardless of how big you may be.

**PM:** Sure.

**DM:** But the attitude that has pervaded my entire label-running experience is that I know what I have to do, I know what my goals are and my expectations are, and I'm much less concerned with what else is going on in the music world. So, South By Southwest, just approaching it from that angle, I thought was a lot more enjoyable than just going down there and waiting around to play your showcases, and wondering what all these people are talking about.

[laughter]

**PM:** And it's set up, also, for the people who are just there enjoying the music, because they're having a field day.

**DM:** Definitely.

**PM:** And I certainly enjoyed it from a video aspect and a writer aspect, just being able to see twenty or thirty bands that I knew were good. I didn't care who the hell else was there.

**DM:** Right.

**PM:** But you say that since then you've been caught up in the pre-launch madness of Tallulah!, and of *Tangerine*. Well, speaking of *Tangerine*, of course, and that's why we're on the phone--it's another brilliant record.

**DM:** Thanks, Frank.

**PM:** You are really a wondrous musician.

**DM:** I appreciate that.

**PM:** It's very exciting whenever you hear a great record, and if it's by somebody that you think of as a friend, it's doubly so. But let's talk first about being on your own label now. Really is that what it amounts to, with your own team gathered about you, and feeling more entrepreneurial about your own career?

**DM:** Well--

**PM:** Or, run it down to me how it really lays out.

**DM:** Well, the way it really lays out is like this--I'm sort of the initiator of the ideas and the direction. I work with a company--I mean, obviously, we start with the record, which Brad Jones and I finished last year. And then my manager, Kip Krones, hooked me up with a company called Emergent Music. You've probably crossed paths with them before.

**PM:** Sure. David Macias is a friend of mine. Quite a person.

**DM:** Right. And so from there, we basically--we've been incredibly fortunate. I was sort of approached by a successful businessman who was interested in why I was at the point in my career that I was at. And he wanted to know if there was a way that he could help. So we put together a budget that we thought was healthy but also modest and very focused, and what we thought it would take to work this record effectively. And we did that with Emergent. And then we presented it to him, and he said, "This sounds like a plan. Let's go for it."

So since that point, it's been amazing. Now I understand why my release dates used to always get pushed back. We actually made ours, which I couldn't believe. We set May 16th back in January, and quickly realized how many things we had to get together by that time. [laughs]

**PM:** Yeah.

**DM:** We had a booking agent in place, and obviously, I have a good manager, and we had Emergent. But there was a lot of hiring that had to be done. I was on the phone finding out everything from quotes on posters to manufacturing to--just all the stuff that, when you start out on a major label like I did, you definitely took it for granted.

**PM:** Right.

**DM:** You think, "This just gets done." But what it's created, basically, is kind of a--I won't even call it freedom. In a lot of ways, I think it was a curse when I had the time to sort of sit around and just be an artist--whatever that means. I'm pretty much on it eight hours a day, now.

**PM:** Yeah. At this time in the music business, what's more artistic about having "freedom" when you can get to direct your career instead. Taking the reigns of your own career *is* artistry.

**DM:** Absolutely. And that's a great point. And that's just totally how I've started thinking about it, because there are many aspects to doing the job-- obviously it's very creative. It has to be, if you're going to pull it off at my level and actually get noticed.

**PM:** Who's handling AAA radio in the current scheme of things?

**DM:** His name is Jesse Barnett. He has a company called Right Arm Resources. He's in a suburb of Boston.

**PM:** How did you find him or pick him?

**DM:** Kip, my manager, had heard nothing but good things about him through various sources. And we just wanted someone who was going to focus, who had really strong relations, basically, with NonCom [non-commercial] radio. Because as nice as it is to get on AAA radio, and as big a help as it can be, with the whole Clear Channel/Infinity/Advent situation or monopoly with the larger formats, Triple A is just so jammed now, because that's everybody--that's where they're seeing daylight. So you're competing with almost every major label artist that is not urban.

**PM:** Right.

**DM:** And it's tough to get in there, even when you have the budget that I have. So what I was interested in was more just creating a presence in the NonCom/NPR-affiliated world. It worked out well for this record, anyway. I think *Tangerine* has a couple songs that in a perfect world would be really big hit singles. But in what's currently on big radio, sonically there's no reference point for it. So I just wanted to go that route. I've sort of tried it before, but not as heavily as I'm doing now. And like with so many other things in this whole process, I feel that the good thing about those formats is that once you develop relationships with those stations, they tend to remain very loyal.

And that's the deal, because I do actually know for my next record that I'll have another budget. But maybe the next one down the line, I won't. And you have to be able to have some sort of human connection with these people, to go back and try to service them again, and keep them as a client base, if you will.

**PM:** That's as cogent a rap on radio as I've heard from a person in your position. [laughs]

**DM:** Yeah, well, obviously I've had some time to kind of go through it and see the different ways that it works. If you go up to the NonCom convention in Louisville, which just happened this past week, you see that these people are the remaining super-cool music folks who started out in big radio in the '70s and the '80s, generally got fed up with it, and came here because this is the last bastion of freedom that they have. And they're great people to hang out with it. It's always enjoyable to do in-studio things with them. I look at this as like people that I work with, I look at them as an extension of my company. And so you want people who you enjoy doing business with as well as ones that you're going to have a mutually beneficial relationship with.

**PM:** Right. You're partners, after all.

**DM:** Yeah, totally. Kip seems to like this metaphor that I came up with--at this point I feel I'm kind of like a small antiques store, that it's entirely possible to make your life

work on that level. You don't have to be Castner Knott, but I would think of those people as my buyers, my clients that I have to go out and try to maintain a relationship with and keep feeding them product that they can use.

**PM:** Very interesting. Well, walking down the street in Soho, I am always struck by the fact that you'll walk by Footlocker and The Gap, or big shoe stores, and then you'll see these other shoe stores [laughs] that seem to have like thirty pairs of shoes, in what must be a very expensive storefront to rent.

**DM:** Totally. How do they do it?

**PM:** And they're obviously staying alive. They must be selling something really good. Or something.

**DM:** Well, they have a high level clientele, which quite frankly, it's kind of how I think of mine. I'd play to fourteen year-olds all day if they'd come and see me, but they're not the people who keep my business alive. They're not the ones who are buying five copies of the records for their cousins and their sons and daughters.

**PM:** Exactly.

**DM:** So it's all about creating a niche. I mean, from a purely business perspective, you have to try to get the highest market share that you can. So for what I do, I feel like my whole approach at this point is trying to create my own. If I may be so bold, I don't think there is anybody else in the David Mead business. But there's not enough awareness around that name at the moment. This is probably getting really creepy, I'm talking about myself in third person!

**PM:** No, no, not to me. To me, in the modern sense of doing business as an artist in this really volatile music business, the most enlightened approach is one that includes art and commerce. I mean, you really have to truly embrace both or you're not going to make it--especially if you are your own business.

**DM:** You're exactly right.

**PM:** And so to me it doesn't sound creepy at all. To me it sounds like a person heading toward a very enlightened perspective about how to make their art work.

**DM:** At the end of the day, it's not nearly as scary or weird or--at one point I even thought it would be humiliating. But it's really, like you said, enlightening. It's invigorating. I feel like I'm living at a much higher octane now, so to speak, than I ever was when I was just kind of sitting around all day drinking a glass of wine waiting for the muse to hit.

**PM:** Right.

**DM:** That's the thing that everybody reads about when they're working really hard and they may think that's the life. But it's kind of tough to stay that self-motivated if your only absolute deadline is just the singer songwriter side of things.

**PM:** Right. It's better to be industrious and busy.

**DM:** Yeah.

**PM:** Now, you've been with your manager, Kip Krones, a long time. I don't usually ask people about their managers. But in your case, I think there's something really chemically important in that relationship. So let's talk about that a little.

**DM:** I think we're probably just kind of like an old married couple at this point.

**PM:** [laughs]

**DM:** I don't think either one of us would say we're like the perfect client or manager to each other. But when you have a relationship that's lasted that long, for whatever reasons--which luckily in my case the vast majority of them are good ones--there's a familiarity that comes with that. There are a lot of questions you don't have to answer anymore. There's a lot of unspoken communication that can go on, and there's a level of trust that's getter more and more rare. I think artists have to take more responsibility for the way their career is going. It is kind of your job in some senses to just communicate what you want. And Kip is--what's the word--

**PM:** He's a facilitator.

**DM:** He's an incredibly proactive person. And when we collaborate on what needs to happen, it happens. He gets results. That's the thing.

**PM:** And that's the job description, right?

**DM:** I think so. I mean, honestly, I think a lot of people want a cheerleader. They want some emotional support. They want probably more than what the job description is.

**PM:** They want a babysitter, half the time.

**DM:** Well, yeah. And if you're one of these nineteen-year-olds who are just starting out, you need a certain amount of that. And I needed a certain amount of that when I started out as well. But I'm 32 years old. I'm a full-grown man. I need people around me who want to work as hard as I do, and Kip is definitely one of those people.

**PM:** Absolutely. Listening to *Tangerine* again this morning--and I've been listening to it a lot this last week--it's amazing how different it is than anybody else you hear. It's really original. In fact, your whole approach to music is different--like there's a different set of values operating. You know what I mean?

**DM:** Yeah, I hope so. That's really good to hear, first off. But it's kind of weird to like see the whippersnappers coming up. And you can just really tell, man, their reference points--probably a lot of the reference points that you and I share just don't exist. I mean, I'm not knocking what's being created, necessarily, but--I guess it happens to everybody the older you get, but I'm shocked that this thing that we all come back to is basically emotion and melody, and a couple of turns of phrase that happen to catch somebody at the right moment.

**PM:** Yeah.

**DM:** And I miss it a lot. And so I don't know, I guess I do have an older standard, in a sense--how am I trying to say this--a more classic standard.

**PM:** And you're drawing from a deeper well.

**DM:** Well, let's hope so. I mean, the great thing about still being around is that gets more and more unique. I mean, a lot of my peers from the Class of '98, or whenever it was I got signed, have gone different ways, or whatever. I can't even really think of any offhand. But I'm only good at so many things. I don't really have a choice. So I've got to continue to figure out ways to make this work.

**PM:** But you're damn good at what you're doing, I'll say that. And with somebody as original as I've always considered you to be, it's interesting to know who you may be drawing any inspiration from. What you're listening to?

**DM:** I have been listening to a lot of--let's see--let me look at the old iTunes--a lot of Brazilian music, a lot of gospel. I'm still sort of mining the Harry Nilsson catalog a little bit. Because I really--

**PM:** I really resonate with a lot of that, the Nilsson and the Brazilian stuff, especially, yeah.

**DM:** Sure, sure. My wife likes a lot of indie rock, and I still hear things every once in a while that really catch my attention. I loved that last Spoon record, I just thought that was a masterpiece. What else? I think the Dresden Dolls are actually pretty cool. They sort of wear me out a little bit.

**PM:** I don't know them. The Dresden Dolls?

**DM:** Yeah, the Dresden Dolls. It's this guy and this girl. It's essentially just a drum and piano combo. I don't know--her perspective is unique--she's actually really a songwriter. Like you may or may not like the aesthetic of it, because it's got sort of like a little bit teenage angst darkness to it. But she's a really talented songwriter, and she's definitely got her on take on it. So that's been kind of inspiring. I actually really like that new Paul Simon.

**PM:** Ah, yeah. I hear it's really good. [see the review in this issue]

**DM:** Yeah, it's really interesting. Give it three to four listens. I'm sure you would if you were ever a Paul Simon fan.

**PM:** So how have you been touring these days behind *Tangerine*? Solo, duo, or otherwise?

**DM:** Well, I'm sort of developing this thing of satellite bands. I figured out there's no way I can make any money on the road.

**PM:** Yeah, like Richard Julian. That's a really smart way to do it.

**DM:** Well, yeah. And so for one like me, who spends so much time on the road by themselves and playing solo, to kind of mix it up is actually a lot more interesting at this point. Because there's a part of me--as much as I'd like to be on a bus with a band, again, going back to being 32 years old, I'm somewhat particular about who I want to travel with. It's pretty difficult to find three or four guys you want to spend that much time around for that long a period of time.

**PM:** Bloody unlikely.

**DM:** Yeah. I'm a lot more accustomed to just showing up in different towns and having friends there, and then hanging out that night, and then moving on. So I basically have been kind of starting a satellite band out of Chicago. I have one in Nashville, and one in New York. And so--

**PM:** Who are the guys in New York?

**DM:** The guys in New York are Ethan Eubanks and Jeff Hill. Jeff plays with Rufus Wainwright usually. And he's played with me on a couple other tours. He was also the drummer on *Wherever You Are*.

**PM:** Right. And is there a band in L.A. yet?

**DM:** No, not yet. L.A. is a tricky one. I mean, it always is in my world, because I don't have enough connecting gigs between like Omaha and L.A. or San Francisco to really--

**PM:** To really make it pay.

**DM:** Yeah, so I always got to fly out there--

**PM:** So you're already losing ground--

**DM:** Kind of the same deal.

**PM:** Yeah. Tell me about your ukulele, what spot it fills in your life, and how it affects your composing and your performance.

**DM:** It simplifies things remarkably. There's only so much sonic spectrum that you can achieve with that thing, so it's really made me economize the way that I play songs. I try to play as many songs as I can on it--not every night, but I try to run through different songs on the ukulele, because it shows you so much about what's necessary and what's not. Like that song on the record, "Hallelujah, I Was Wrong," I've been playing that on ukulele. If you hear it on the record you might say, "Why are you doing that?"

**PM:** [laughs]

**DM:** But it actually works great. And it's an interesting thing, because I find people hear it happen on the ukulele, and they know it's supposed to be a high energy thing, and they're almost drawn into this more because they want to provide that energy. It's amazing how, when you play that song on the ukulele, many people start clapping or tapping their foot. It's almost hilarious. But it's so enjoyable to watch that I can't laugh.

[laughter]

**PM:** It's amazing, how the ukulele puts people at ease.

**DM:** It does. It's such a non-threatening thing. And it's a really nice. It's not annoying. It's not so quirky that it drives you nuts.

**PM:** Yeah. And it pre-empts the feeling of "I may not be able to get into this thing," or "Maybe this is over my head"--like a sitar or an oud, or something.

**DM:** I never thought of it that way. That's really good to hear. I'm embarking on my tour tomorrow, so thank you for the encouragement.

[laughter]

**PM:** In fact, I was at the Living Room in New York a week or so ago, and I heard a guy who--unfortunately I do not know his name--was playing a very classic Muddy Waters song from the '50s. And he sang it note for note like Muddy did, and he played it on the ukulele, and it was awesome.

**DM:** Cool.

**PM:** And it really turned my mind around. It really put the attention--and I think this happens with you, as well--on the vocal.

**DM:** Yeah.

**PM:** There was music going on, but you were focused on the vocal, because otherwise it was just this little tinka, tinka, tinka, tink going on in the background.

**DM:** Yep. If that plays to your strength--and I would definitely say that my voice is probably the best thing that I have to offer--then it works out great.

**PM:** Yeah, it's an astounding set of pipes that you've been blessed with, and so, yeah, I agree. So how's the love and marriage side of life?

**DM:** It's rockin'. I'm about to go out on the road for a month and a half, so it will invariably grow and toughen as it always does. I'm not going to say it's easy, but there's that ecstatic part of it, and then there's that other part, that unspoken kind of sniffing each other out--you're not even aware you're doing it.

**PM:** Yeah.

**DM:** But then those two things kind of come together. And I don't know, I'm in. I'm really in all the way.

**PM:** Again, I thought Natalie did a lovely job on the illustrations for the CD. And Heather Dryden, on the layout--it's beautiful.

**DM:** It's great. They actually share a studio space, so it was really fun kind of keeping it in the family that way. I love having Natalie do the artwork, obviously. And then Heather doing the layout was like, oh, cool, we got like a real pro this time doing the layout. It makes a big difference.

[Artwork by Natalie Cox Mead has graced the packaging for three of David's CD so far. You can check out her work at nataliecoxmead.com, and find out more about Heather Dryden's work at studioplush.net (though Heather's site is apparently under construction as this issue is going up).]

**PM:** So how about that [producer] Brad Jones?

**DM:** Man, where to start?

**PM:** Holy Christmas! He's so incredible on this record.

**DM:** He totally rocked my world.

**PM:** He seems to get more musical with every month that passes.

**DM:** I know. It's just insane. I mean, the record he did right before my record--I think it was that Thad Cockerel record. Thad Cockerel and Caitlin Cary. Yeah, because we started *Tangerine* in March of last year.

**PM:** Right.

**DM:** And if you listen to that record and you listen to my record, it's like--I mean, you can definitely see a shared sensibility. But that's like George Jones and Tammy Wynette.

**PM:** Oh, yeah, it's a totally different sonic universe. [See our interviews with Thad and Caitlin, and hear some clips from that CD here.]

**DM:** I know. But I mean, he's really on it. He seems to have emerged into a new level. I just like the way his mind works. He's really fearless about everything.

**PM:** He's a fantastically awake character.

**DM:** Very well put. He's very awake. He's very aware. I don't know if I know anybody who seems to get more out of every moment of his life. I mean, whether I'd made a record with him or not, just being able to hang out with him for a month was pretty damn cool.

**PM:** His theremin stuff on "Suddenly a Summer Night"--I mean, it sounds like the conversations of ghosts. It was unbelievable! [laughs]

**DM:** Yeah, I know, I know. And man, my favorite--well, I love how Brad--he is very natural on one level, and sort of very organic in his approach to recording. But if he gets an idea, he will hunt it down. I probably shouldn't reveal this--I'm sure he doesn't care--I don't really care, either. But I actually credit him with playing the calliope on "Hard To Remember," which he should have, for all purposes, but we couldn't really find a calliope and we couldn't find my samples that were worth a damn. So Brad found a recording of a guy playing a patriotic song I can't name on the calliope and--

**PM:** [laughs] Yeah, yeah. We could have a copyright issue there, so let's protect the innocent. But what's the story?

**DM:** The story, though--he found this--I think he found it online. It was in a completely different key. He cut all of the notes up individually, and--

**PM:** Get the hell out of here.

**DM:** And he rearranged the key, and then put it all back together for that song.

**PM:** [laughs] Oh, that's insane!

**DM:** I mean, who would even think to do that?

**PM:** That's funny. I can't wait to spread that story among my studio buddies.

**DM:** Please do.

**PM:** That's messed up. That's the ultimate cut and paste.

**DM:** It was serious cut and paste. And the funny thing--I mean, even though he placed it in, it was kind of behind the beat and a little like cricket-y, like it would be if you were actually playing it, because that's such a--I've only seen one in person once, but it's such a singular sound.

**PM:** Unbelievable. So what bass, or basses was Brad playing on this record? Do you remember?

**DM:** I know he played a Mustang on a track. I mean, he kind of has a go-to bass. It's either just a Fender Jazz or a Fender P. Bass, and I don't know the year. He played a little bit of upright, and he played a little--I think he had an Explorer Bass, too.

**PM:** You don't see those every day. [laughs] Would he add touches when you weren't there, and then surprise you the next day, or--

**DM:** He would add like mixing touches, and he did that calliope thing. The calliope thing was actually the one thing he did completely on his own, that I wasn't even aware of. And he said, "What do you think about this?" I was like, "What, did you go find a carnie somewhere and get a field recording of this while I was gone?

**PM:** [laughs] That's really a good story.

**DM:** He's always moving. The thing is, too, he basically mixed that record as we recorded it. There wasn't like a two-week mixing process. I would say all the songs were about 90% there. From the best of my recollection, about 90% there before he actually went back and really sat down and started the mixing.

**PM:** Yeah. And everybody ought to hear that, because, for those who are trying to keep the budget down, that is the way it's done.

**DM:** Totally. And that record was recorded completely digitally and mixed in Protools and everything, but the way he does it, sonically it's my favorite record. I mean, we recorded my first two records to tape. But this record, to me, almost has more of a nice analog curve to it than those records do, because--I mean, that was kind of the '90s, too. You sort of got a certain amount of gloss and over-compression on everything.

**PM:** So while we're on the subject of our talented friends, we ought to say--I want to say something about the amazing David Henry.

**DM:** Well, he never blinks.

[laughter]

**DM:** He's like the bravest cellist I've ever met. It was funny, actually, because he came in about three quarters of the way through the tracking of this record. And the last thing he'd heard of mine was *Indiana*. And I could kind of see him sitting there for a second--I think the first thing he played on was probably "Tangerine Overture." And he was like--I could see him kind of looking at me like, "What are you doing?

[laughter]

**PM:** "Am I in a musical, or"--

**DM:** I know, yeah. I know. And then he nailed it, as usual.

**PM:** So what inspired you to do an overture?--which I thought was really super, and it'll be one of the audio clips for sure.

**DM:** Oh, great. Thanks.

**PM:** What inspired that? Was it your idea or the producer's?

**DM:** It was my idea. I'm just trying to remember, though, why I had the idea. Well, we kind of went about it backwards when we decided that the end of "Making It Up Again" needed this kind of go riding off into the sunset end coda to it that had nothing to do with the rest of the song.

**PM:** Right.

**DM:** So we just created this cycle of chords, a circle of fifths that just goes back on itself so nicely. At some point it just hit me like, could I take that and fit in a lot of the themes into that context, and see if we could do it.

There's another thing for which I have to thank Brad Jones. There was actually a narrative attached to this record at one point, that was kind of a half-hearted and ill-advised--a self-ill-advised attempt on my part to make the album into some kind of weird musical. So anyway, I got into that part of it and realized that I had no idea how to really pull that off. The problem was that it wasn't a narrative that really stood on its own.

The idea came to me because of the way we had this lack of traditional song structure that lent the music to being a lot more expository, and it seemed to flow more like a conversation. Whereas verse, chorus, verse, chorus, bridge, verse, chorus is less so. Anyway, I started this story that was working backwards, and trying to make the different song themes interact. There's sort of a theme about marriage throughout the record, so I thought I could kind of take that and run with it. But it wasn't really working.

**PM:** Well, that's very inspired then to say, "Hey, we don't really need this, do we?"

**DM:** Yeah, I have to give Brad credit for advising me off that before I got too deep into it. [laughs]

**PM:** Wow. So what does the very interesting "Scene" in the liner notes have to do with that original narrative? I think that was really cool. I mean, when I first read it I went, "Oh, that's too much for me," and I went right to the song credits. But then this morning I went back and read that, and went, "Wow, that's really cool, actually." [laughs]

**DM:** Yeah, well, that guy in it was one of the characters. And it was basically that three different people were going after that piece of art, but the piece of art, essentially, was the same realization that they were pursuing from three different angles--or that's what it was intended to be.

**PM:** Holy Grail-ish, really.

So are you reading anything good lately?

**DM:** In the past three months I haven't read anything but *The New Yorker*. I started getting into *The New Yorker* again.

**PM:** People always have such interesting answers to that question.

**DM:** [laughs] I mean, I'm trying to think of the last novel I read--God, where is it? What was it? I'm just trying to look around and see if it's on the shelf somewhere...

**PM:** But it's *The New Yorker* that's sustained you these last months?

**DM:** Well, as you know, *The New Yorker* is a pretty thick read, and I don't exactly have a whole lot of time, other than, really, when I go to bed, that's usually when I read. So I don't have a ton of time to read, anyway. But keeping up with my subscription is my--I haven't subscribed to anything for so long, because things would inevitably just get unread and pile up, and end up in the recycle bin. But I'm really dedicated to reading my *New Yorker,* so that's kind of been it. But it's a great little spread--you get a little bit of culture, you get some current events, you get some fiction in there, and you get these kind of oddball takes on someone's life. It's pretty great.

**PM:** Oh, it's the best. I don't think I got to ask you this last question in our previous interview: Do you consider yourself a spiritual person?

**DM:** I would be far from calling myself a Buddhist by any stretch of the imagination, though it's interesting to me. So I'm going to get kind of vague here, but basically what's really rocking my world at the moment is nature, and the energy of people, and the inner connectivity of the two. And I've found that that's kind of what's getting me through this in a way. I was just talking about this with my buddy, Ethan, actually, before you called--how especially if you're an only child, I think you're sort of predisposed--it kind of works both ways, like you might get a slightly inflated sense of ego out of it, because you're

trained from a very early age to have a much higher perception of your place in the world than--

**PM:** You're automatically special, yeah.

**DM:** Yeah, right. You're the center of the universe.

**PM:** Yep.

**DM:** So that's a good and a bad thing in adult life, just because there's one side of it where you can kind of draw on this fortitude that you've built up your entire life, and you've spent a lot of time alone, naturally, which plays very well for my job, since I spend an extraordinary amount of time alone. [laughs] But at the same time, you're not as predisposed to be able to communicate with people as maybe someone who came up in a two or three sibling family. So my go-to thing is to probably to isolate more than it is to reach out and connect with people.

And I've found that a real natural remedy for a lot of my funks that I might get into, besides this basic diet and exercise, is to just kind of make myself do that. Like scenario one, there's always this dead time between sound check and gig time, right, when you're stuck at this club, which is not in any particularly interesting part of town, it's too far away from the hotel, or maybe you don't have a hotel. There are not a lot of options except to sit there. And my challenge now is to figure out the way to make that two or three hours interesting. So I have to communicate with people, which is not natural to me, but it's my new method. And I'm trying that out--it sounds so basic, but--

**PM:** Well, I think that spiritual answers are basic.

**DM:** Well, that's a very good point. They are, aren't they?

**PM:** So, yeah, I love everybody's answers to those--to a couple questions that I like to do at the end, about reading and spiritual life.

I'm very grateful for your time today. And I love the new record. I look forward to seeing how it does in the NPR world that you're focusing on. I think that it's going to do very well.

**DM:** Well, man, I hope you're right. And I've enjoyed it as well. I read the last piece you did on *Indiana*, so I'm really looking forward to this one. I appreciate the support.

**PM:** It's always my pleasure, David. And I hope to see you soon.

●