

A Conversation with Steve Poltz
by Frank Goodman (Puremusic.com, 2/2008)

A couple of minutes into the show at The Basement in Nashville a few months ago where we first experienced Steve Poltz made it clear that we were seeing something wonderful and rare. It was spooky how he seemed to be so peculiarly alive. He was and is a very present person and artist, very in the moment. It's always been inspiring to me to see someone interact with a crowd in a way that's not rehearsed or rehashed, but a real communication. It's an art reserved for smaller venues, of course, and a crowded 100-seater is the place that Steve Poltz most likes to be.

His life reads like the dream script for the gypsy songwriter. Hanging out in Mexico with your beautiful blonde girlfriend, writing songs and traveling. One song, instead of getting the usual treatment of a bizarre left turn or a few too strange words, is left to be just a nice love song, at the girlfriend's request. It blows out the window at one point, and she insists that it be retrieved before it goes into the water, even though he doesn't think it's anything special. Only, in this particular scenario, the girlfriend turns out to become Jewel, and the song that nearly ended up in the drink turns out to be a global smash called "You Were Meant For Me" that changes both of their lives forever.

These days, Steve Poltz and Jewel are just, but still, friends, and when we saw the show that night in Nashville, she actually joined him onstage for that incredible story and a few songs. We'll have some clips of that performance and the duets at the end of the conversation to come.

Although that song made enough dough for Poltz never to have to write a song again, he lives for that process, and doesn't seem to care much about money or the so-called good life at all. He's had the same apartment in the San Diego area for 18 years, has a VW Euro van, and spends all his time writing songs and traveling the world, doing shows in people's living rooms and in clubs. He plays the hell out of the guitar and is that rare beast in acoustic circles called an entertainer. We were remarkably impressed by the man at the show that night, but even more so in the phone conversation a month or so later. It's only February, but he's certainly a strong candidate for our song man of the year. His new record, *Traveling*, needs to be on your player. Get it, it's good for your soul.

Steve Poltz: Sorry about the mixup earlier. I screwed up on my time zone. I thought I was in--no, I'm in Adelaide, Australia right now, and I thought I was going to talk to you tonight before I played a show in Sydney.

Puremusic: Now, so it's early to you, is it not? Like it's only 8:00 or 9:00 o'clock in the morning, right?

SP: Yeah. But I'm in an airport. Welcome to my life.

PM: Exactly.

SP: So I'm up early every morning. We played last night in Adelaide, and I'm headed to Sydney right now. The night before we were in Brisbane. The night before it was Perth.

PM: So tell me, if you would, about Brisbane. I've heard it's such a nice kind of Bay Area type city.

SP: Yeah, I liked it. It's weird. It's really tropical.

PM: Oh, it's tropical.

SP: A lot of birds, parrots and stuff. It's more north in Australia. The further north you go in Australia the less arid it becomes, so it's really green.

PM: Wow.

SP: When you're in Perth in Western Australia, I think that it's really arid and similar to San Diego, where I live. But in Brisbane the air is more wet. You feel more humidity right when you get off, and it seems like there are a lot of nice cars; and it's more of a tourist town, because you're near the Gold Coast. So it brings in a lot of tourist dollars.

PM: Right. How are the Australian shows going?

SP: So good. This is the best one yet. It's just amazing. People are coming out, and they're so into it, and they're so generous and nice. I'll tell you what, though, I've been doing two and a half, three-hour shows every night. They don't let you get off easy. And they know, now with the power of the internet, so many songs that I haven't released, and they're just making all these rare requests.

PM: Really?

SP: So naturally, being Catholic and everything, I don't want to let people down. So I'll easily go for three hours playing. That happened last night. Then I get home and I want to eat, and I'm hungry.

PM: So are you playing solo?

SP: Yeah, it's just me.

PM: Damn! Three hours by yourself!

SP: I kind of make it interesting, though. It's not like some guy just sitting up there.

PM: Oh, no. I saw your show.

SP: Oh, you did?

PM: I saw your show and met you afterward at The Basement in Nashville, where I shot a bunch of video. Short cat, shaved head.

SP: Yeah, I remember talking with you. You still had the camcorder in your hand.

PM: Right, I shot a lot of footage that I plan to include with the interview so people can get the sense of how awesome Steve Poltz is live.

SP: Oh, cool! Yeah, so these audiences have now seen me like six, seven times, and they're so loyal. And they buy--this girl last night bought everything. She bought the Rugburns *Morning Wood*, the Rugburns *Hitchhiker Joe*, and the Rugburns *Taking the World by Donkey, Mommy, I'm Sorry, One Left Shoe, Answering Machine, Chinese Vacation, Live at The Basement, Sydney, Australia DVD and Traveling*.

PM: She bought nine CDs and a DVD?

SP: Yeah, she bought everything. She just said, "I'll take everything."

PM: Oh, my God.

SP: And that's how they are. Every night when I'm leaving, they just don't want you to quit playing, and they've been buying everything. But it's taken a lot of work. Like when I first came here without Jewel, without being in her band and playing, there was like six people at Brisbane. And now there's over 100. And I love that amount. I think 100 is a perfect size crowd.

PM: 100 is a beautiful number.

SP: I like 100 people jammed into a small room, and they're quiet, and I love to tell stories and just take them on a journey. I never use a set list, so every night it's different. I never even know what I'm going to open with. I just like to go out and feel the energy of the room.

PM: Because I go out to see music all the time, and yours is one of the best solo shows I've ever seen.

SP: Oh, wow, thank you.

PM: I mean, it's up there with--in its own way, of course, and totally differently--it's up there with Richard Thompson--very few guys do a show like you do a show.

SP: Wow. That's heavy praise, because I love Richard Thompson, too. I appreciate that. I remember when I went to see Loudon Wainwright one night. And I was in the Rugburns, and then I was also playing classical guitar. I remember after seeing Loudon, going, "Man, this is what I want to do. I'm going to just do it solo. I'm tired of being in a band."

PM: Yeah. It's very rare, it's so rare to see a solo act that's--I mean, a lot of them are good, but so few of them are entertaining.

SP: Yeah. It can get boring easily. That's my biggest fear. I don't want to be one of those boring guys. I always feel like there's a string between myself and the audience, and I want to keep that string really taut, so I can feel the tension from it.

PM: That's such a good image for the solo show, to keep the string really taut. And I don't think most people pay very much attention to that.

SP: No. And I can do it. If I look out and I'm playing a soft song sometimes I think, okay, I need to do something really funny to get their attention again, or something shocking, or I need to do this or do that because I don't want to lose them. There's nothing worse than--if you lose one, then you start losing a couple more, it can become contagious, and they can turn on you really fast and all be like disinterested and chatting through your set. And I'm not having that. [laughs]

PM: Or if just the people at the front table start to talk among themselves, it's death.

SP: Yeah, exactly.

PM: Even if you gotta go stand on the table, you can't let it happen. [laughs]

SP: No.

PM: The thing that jumps out at me from every corner of your art is that you seem to be really grateful and that you're having a great time. I really respect that approach to living.

SP: Yeah, I am definitely, really grateful. Every time I play--and this is going to sound like a real Country Western artist, but every time I play, before I go on, I just stop wherever I'm at, and like before I go on, "No, give me a minute." It's just like a ritual I do, and I totally say a prayer to whatever God is, whatever that idea is, if it's anything, a Great Spirit, or whatever you want to call it, and I thank that Great Spirit for the opportunity. And I swear, it reminds me of what I'm doing and why I'm there; it keeps me really psyched.

PM: One also gets the impression that you're an unusually well-traveled person. Is that also above and beyond your career, that you're just a world-traveling kind of person?

SP: Yeah. It's weird. Most people when they come off the road they want to just relax and go home. But me, I'm going to Tahiti after this thing tomorrow, because I haven't been there yet, and I want to see what made Gauguin paint all those paintings, and I want to see the Tahitian Islands. So I always look where I'm at and see what's near there that I haven't seen, and then I have my guitar available in case a song just comes to me.

PM: Wow. Although I didn't know the word before I was getting my questions together, I believe that makes you a xenophile.

SP: A what?

PM: A xenophile. You know the word xenophobia, it means a fear of foreign lands?

SP: Right! I'm a xenophile, yeah. I like that.

PM: I mean, that's a beautiful thing to be. What are a few of your favorite places, especially maybe off-the-beaten track ones?

SP: Oh, this summer it was Croatia and Slovenia and Bosnia.

PM: Wow.

SP: That was great. I wanted to swim in the Adriatic. So that was one of my favorite places. I've always loved Ireland. I still haven't been to India. And after seeing *The Darjeeling Limited*, that even whetted my appetite more. I'm a huge Wes Anderson fan.

PM: That was pretty funny.

SP: Yeah. I love all his films. I have his movies on my iPod, and I just rewatch *The Royal Tenenbaums* over and over. I heard that Gene Hackman didn't want to do that part, originally.

PM: Really?

SP: So I like watching him slowly warm up to the idea of doing it.

PM: [laughs]

SP: I like studying his acting and looking at him. I love films. I'm obsessed with it.

PM: Me too.

SP: Just any time I can when I'm on the road I'll see a movie or I'll see any documentary.

PM: Yeah. I'm absolutely obsessed with it, too. And I'm going to take your lead and go rent *The Royal Tenenbaums* again, maybe do a Wes Anderson marathon.

SP: Oh, my God, he's so good.

PM: Because I didn't know that Hackman took the role reluctantly. Oh, that's funny.

SP: Especially since Wes Anderson wrote that role for Hackman.

PM: I love the new CD, *Traveling*. I'd love to hear from you about the atmosphere and the logistics of where and how that record got cut and, of course, with whom.

SP: I made that record in Austin. I want to get you the companion piece to it, it's called *Unraveling*. [Which, I'm sorry to say, did not arrive till after press time.] Because I'm making that available at my live shows. The way the CD came about is the guy that produced it, Billy Harvey, he did my last CD, *Chinese Vacation*. I met him when I was on tour with Bob Schneider. And Billy and I fell in heavy man-love as two friends can do. We just both really got along and we were instant friends. So when I made the second one, he said, "Why don't you just live at the studio?" They had a futon or something, so I slept in the keyboard room. And I came out with, I don't know, anywhere from 80 to 100 songs to--and I just sat with him. He's really patient when he takes on a project. And we just went over each song painstakingly, and played them again and again. We'd listen to the demo, record it and drive around listening to them, and slowly but surely the songs kind of started talking to us and forming some sort of a whole piece.

PM: Wow.

SP: And my stated goal when I met with him was "I want to take all these songs and whittle it down to 11. I want to do an 11-song record." People think they have to fill these CDs up. But when I was a kid, I liked how short a record was. So Billy said, "That's a great idea." So we had to ruthlessly edit stuff. But then at the end I was like, "These other 11 songs need to get on." And then it was his idea, he goes, "Why don't you record them, and then make the CD jacket big enough so we can fit the other CD in it, so people can buy it at your live shows?" And then instantly--like I just love it when I'm in the throws of the creative process--instantly I was like, "Oh, my God!" I had just finished reading Truman Capote's *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, and I loved how Holly Golightly's business card said, "Holly Golightly, Traveler." And I went, "Oh, man, this is all coming to me. I'm going to call it *Traveling*. And then I thought of Joni Mitchell, *Traveling* and *Unraveling*. And then the next thing I knew, the whole--I love it when a concept comes to me and I know in my mind it's right. Nothing else can get in my way.

So then we got it mixed, and then I wasn't happy with the mixes, so I paid to have it remixed by a different guy. And the whole thing just totally saw the light of day, and then here it is. It's weird how much work goes into something, from writing songs that are

kind of painful, like "Hater's Union," and stuff like that, songs that really hurt to write, like that I cried when I wrote them.

PM: Yep.

SP: And then now here I am on the road selling them. And a song, you can't touch it. You can hear it, but it's this thing that's almost like a piece of alchemy, and it's magic. So here's this song that came out of being in a really bad place, and now it's on a CD for other people to hear. It's really cool. I love it. It's the greatest job in the world.

PM: So when the new guy mixed it, were you in on that process, or you were already touring behind it, and he just mixed it on his own?

SP: I'm really bad at doing that kind of work. I'm not really very detail-oriented, and I don't want to sit there while somebody mixes a record. I like to find somebody I trust and then say, "Email me the mixes as you get them going, and I'll listen to them with headphones on." And so wherever I was--and I remember being in Croatia listening to some final mixes, and then sending notes back like, "Love this, love this, love this, bring the bass down on this, blah, blah, blah." And so you have to find somebody that you really trust. And the guy that mixed it, that did all the final mixes, Lars, he lives in Austin, and I love him. He's got this big Swedish accent. And he is a Beatles freak. Like he can tell you any mic they used on any song. I love Lars. So we would have these long email discussions about the songs and everything. And that's how that all came about.

PM: Now, it's interesting that you've never been to India, because I know you're a lot more than a casual yogi, right?

SP: Yeah. I've been to Morocco, but not India. It's weird. I'm going to get there. And I figured I was waiting for the right time, and I want to go on a yoga journey over there. A lot of my traveling when I first started traveling I was busking through Europe, and it was more about partying. And now as I get older I love going and learning stuff. Like I went to Thailand and took cooking classes. So I'll just find something weird or interesting to do.

PM: Now, if you, by any chance, go to Goa [India], I have an old friend who is at the front of that whole dance trance movement, a guy named Goa Gil. And if you go, you've got to call me and I'll tie you up with him, because he has got the place wired.

SP: Wow.

PM: I mean, he's a world famous dance trance guy. He used to come to our gigs in Marin County in the '70s, and he's an old friend of mine.

SP: Did you always live in Marin County?

PM: Well, I did for many years, but now I've been in Nashville for a dozen years. But yeah, I lived there for maybe a dozen years before that.

SP: Did you live there when Shel Silverstein lived there?

PM: I don't know. But I never met him, so I'm not sure if I did or not. But I knew some of the guys in Dr. Hook.

SP: He spent a lot of time there on a houseboat, and then in Nashville he spent a lot of time.

PM: Wow, so I've lived both places where he was, but I never had the pleasure.

SP: Yeah, he had a house in Key West, a house in Chicago, a house in Sausalito and a place in Nashville. And wherever his whimsy and mood took him he would get a ticket that day. He probably died with 20 million dollars in the bank, and just had these little cracker box houses filled with old books. He loved to collect old books. And he was just really interested in the type of paper they used. He was such an artisan and such a perfectionist for how his books were going to come out. And then all the plays he wrote, and all the songs he wrote, and he just constantly worked and remained single his whole life. He was like a ladies man. He started at Playboy doing those cartoons. That guy is really fascinating with the amount of creativity he put forth into the world.

PM: Are there good books about him?

SP: Yeah, there's one out right now call *The Boy Named Shel*. It just came out by this woman named Lisa Rogak. And it's really good.

PM: I got to get that. [And there happened to be one at ebay for .01 and 17 hours to go...]

SP: I love Shel Silverstein--all those songs he wrote. I mean, he wrote everything for Dr. Hook.

PM: Yeah.

SP: All those great songs--like "Sylvia's Mother" to this day still holds up. That's just a great song, when he says, "And the operator says 40 cents more for the next three minutes."

PM: [laughs] So many great songs.

SP: Yeah. And then all the people he hung out with in Nashville, Bobby Bare did a bunch of albums of his songs. He was like an Uncle to Bobby Bear Jr. once he was born. He had such deep Nashville ties, Shel did, for a Jewish guy from Chicago.

PM: Wow. Yeah, he was like the Jewish Roger Miller or something.

SP: He was! Another guy I'm obsessed with, I love Roger Miller. I've got to find a book on him. Did you know him?

PM: No, I never had the pleasure. [Check out the book *Ain't Got No Cigarettes: Memories of Music Legend Roger Miller.*] I've met his son, but he's nothing like him, of course.

SP: Of course.

PM: Is it still true that the career launching single you wrote with Jewel, "You Were Meant For Me," is the longest running song on the Billboard 100? Is that still true?

SP: It was for a long time. I don't know if it still is. I don't even pay attention to any of that. But people told me it is, and it was for a long time, so I tend to believe them. Would you mind if I put you on an x-ray belt? Because I'm going through security right now?

PM: Yeah, let's--

SP: And it'll only take a second. I'll do it at the last moment.

PM: Okay.

SP: But yeah, it was on the charts for a long time.

PM: Does that still make a bunch of money every year, between all of us?

SP: Yeah, it does.

PM: That's beautiful.

SP: It's like having an annuity. When we made up that song, I was just like, "Ah, you can have it, whatever. I don't know what a hit song is. I just like making up songs." And she was my girlfriend, and so why not go songwriting with her. So the fact that it ended up that popular--it's crazy because you never know what's going to happen to you. So I just was lucky to be involved in it. I remember when we made it up, it blew out of the window on the cocktail napkin we'd written it on. And I was going to leave it. I said, "Just leave it."

PM: [laughs]

SP: We wrote "Food Stamp Love" and "Daddy, She's a Goddess," these other songs that I thought were funny. And she said, "No, we're not going to poltzerize this one"--meaning have somebody get killed in it, or put some weird word in it. She goes, "Let's just make this a straight-ahead love song." I was like, "All right."

Then it blew out of the window. And I remember it was next to the water. I went, "Just leave it." And she said, "No, we got to get it. Let's just get it." So we got it. Little did I know that was like the winning lottery ticket blowing off.

PM: Oh, my God. Now, although more people know about that Jewel smash, did you also write "Waterfalls," which was a huge hit for TLC?

SP: No, I didn't. I wish I did.

PM: Who wrote that?

SP: I just covered that. Okay, I'm putting you down on this belt right now. I'll talk to you in a minute.

PM: That's great. I've done hundreds of interviews, but that's the first time I ever did that...

SP: Did you hear the security girl say hi?

PM: Yeah. [laughs] That was fantastic.

SP: She's cute.

PM: So you didn't write "Waterfalls," you just covered it?

SP: Yeah, I just covered it. Boy, I wish I wrote it. That's a great song. That is such a good song. I always had a crush on Lisa Lopes from TLC.

PM: [laughs] So have other artists covered your songs after Jewel had that huge smash with one of them?

SP: I'm not sure who did what. People have done my songs, but I'm really weird, I don't even know why I don't know. I know other people have covered that song, too.

PM: But yeah, you don't pay much attention to it.

SP: No, I like to look ahead. I just like to create it. It's the creative process that gets me off.

PM: Yep.

SP: I'm more excited about the fact that I just made up a song called "Dreams" that I'm really into right now.

PM: "Dreams."

SP: They're like gifts, so I like to be wherever my head is at. Like the night I played in Nashville when you saw me I was mostly excited about this new song I'd written from a point of view of the guy that gets shot in Johnny Cash's "Folsom Prison Blues."

PM: [laughs]

SP: So it's from the point of view after Johnny Cash says, "I shot a man in Reno just to watch him die."

PM: And you want to be the man in Reno.

SP: Yeah. And I made the guy a transvestite having drinks in the bar.

PM: "I shot a tranny in Reno."

SP: [laughs] Yeah.

PM: "Just to watch him die."

SP: Johnny Cash says, "I'm going to shoot you"--because Johnny Cash goes outside to a park with him, and they're getting together. I'll probably get shot by somebody for writing this song. But it's creativity.

PM: Tell us something about living in San Diego and the music scene there. Is that a good place to be?

SP: A creative place?

PM: Yeah. Is it a nice place to live? You've been there a long time, right?

SP: I love it, yeah, really love it.

PM: Wow. Is there much of a music scene going on there?

SP: In San Diego?

PM: Yeah.

SP: Mmm, a little bit. But what I love, I can love anywhere. It's really weird. Like that's why I like to travel. I can have fun in Toledo, Ohio.

PM: I'll bet.

SP: So it doesn't matter to me. Like I'll go see a Toledo Mud Hens game, or see whatever Triple A team or go to some pawnshop or thrift store. I like going into little diners and just talking to the waitresses, and hearing their regional accents that they use.

PM: [laughs]

SP: And I'm just really happy observing, and if I have a good book... San Diego is sort of where I ended up because it was like the movie *Almost Famous*, the Cameron Crowe film where the sister leaves her little brother all the records, that's what happened to me. But she went and got a job as a DJ at a college radio station. And I idolized my sister. So I said, "I'm going to go to San Diego." So that's how I ended up there. I think musically it's pretty good, but it's not like Austin or Nashville where they live for music. And politically it's kind of conservative. It's sort of mayonnaise-y in a lot of ways. But there's great Mexican food. Northern California is definitely more liberal and artsy. But San Diego is my home. I've lived there so long. I've stayed in the same apartment 18 years. It's just a tiny apartment on the beach. And I have a VW Euro van, and I don't really care about cars or material things.

PM: Right.

SP: And I said, "I have too many cars, and I want to get rid of them." I'm totally downsizing. I feel like the less keys you have on your key ring, then your headaches will go down in equal amounts as you're getting rid of your keys. So I've slowly gotten rid of a lot of my possessions, and I just want to travel. When I'm with somebody that has a nice car, I know that they get into cars and everything, it's like a foreign language to me.

PM: Yeah, cars don't mean much to me.

SP: Or a really nice house--none of that stuff matters. I have the same little apartment I've had for I think going on 19 years. And I won't move out until they make me move, because it's a safe haven to come home to. I'm really at home in airports and in hotels. I'm happy in airports. I can get my shoes shined, pick up a book, a magazine. I like watching people traveling going places, and just looking at them. And I love the excitement of where I'm going to land.

PM: That's unbelievable.

SP: Even just buying a magazine, talking to whoever is working behind the counter.

PM: I'd love to hear about what you wrote with Mojo Nixon. Do you remember?

SP: Yes. We wrote one for my answering machine message called "Steve Ain't Home, But He's All Alone." It's on a CD that I made that has 56 songs. And then he covered one of my songs that I wrote with a guy in Dash Riprock named Bill Davis. And the song that he covered was "I'm Going to UPS My Heart Next Day to You."

PM: [laughs] Ahh. You seem like the kind of guy who really has a lot of good friends. Is there anybody you'd like to tell us about today, or give a shout out to while we're on the phone?

SP: Yeah, Billy Harvey, the guy that produced my record. Go to his website, <http://billyharveymusic.com>.

PM: Great.

SP: He is amazing. His songs are so good and he's such a good person. And I love him. He's like a brother.

PM: And does he put out records?

SP: Yeah, he's got a bunch of records out. He produces all the time. But the songs he writes and sings are just so funky and weird and left of center, I love him.

PM: I like that management outfit you're with, Blind Ambition, that also handles Pieta Brown. Do you have a good thing going with them?

SP: Oh, yeah. They saw me play at South By Southwest two years ago, and I wanted them to manage me. They're really good, and they're not too big and not too small. And Charles [Driebe] is also an attorney--

PM: Oh, really?

SP: --and really, really looks out for me.

PM: Yeah. I met him at The Basement. He seemed like a really good dude.

SP: Oh, he is. And the team of people he has, I mean, he surrounds himself with really good people.

PM: I've been an email friend of Sue Schrader for some time. She seems like she's really got it together.

SP: Oh, she's the greatest. Talk about a Midwest girl.

PM: [laughs]

SP: She grew up in the music industry, worked for a bunch of different labels. Isn't she great?

PM: Yeah, she's really hot.

SP: Have you ever met her in person?

PM: No, never had the pleasure.

SP: She's blonde and she calls her other company Blonde Ambition, instead of Blind Ambition. She's just really sweet. I love her.

PM: Wow. And you definitely got a good thing going with Conqueroo [an L.A. publicity firm]. Cary Baker is definitely a man on the case.

SP: Oh! I'm so lucky that he's working my record, because he's really choosy. And he's really smart and funny.

PM: So how do you see the movie proceeding, Steve? I mean, script changes on the hour and just following your nose? Or is there a master plan?

SP: Charlie has got it organized as a master plan. I think that's why I instinctually went towards Blind Ambition Management so that they could maybe help lead me in the right direction without being too forceful, because I only do what I want to do, and I want it to have integrity. So we'll see what happens. But I love playing in people's living rooms, I love playing their houses, and I love playing clubs. I just want to travel and let it--I like the fact that it's all happening organically, and the people coming out in Australia are coming because they've seen me, or they're telling friends. I don't like to be forced upon the public.

And I think in today's day and age, more and more that's how it's being done. People are sick of stuff being shoved down their throat. And it doesn't matter if it is shoved down their throat, they're not going to buy it. Their bullshit detectors are popping up. And I think that we're returning back to real songs and real music. It's an exciting time to be an independent artist. I love what's happened in the music industry with the internet and everything. You just got to go with it, and not fight it. It's on a big wave, ride that thing and look for new and exciting ways to do things. Because anything can happen; but you've got to go out there and work. And a lot of people don't want to do that. They come up and they want to be stars overnight on *American Idol* or something. But me, I like earning it, because I don't want to have people come in just because of hype. I want them to see it and then go, "Oh, my God!" You'll always believe your friends. You know what I mean? People that you trust musically, saying, "Oh, you got to see this guy!" I love it. People always bring people in, and I've seen it build really organically.

PM: Wow.

SP: Because that's the way to build it. If you're in it for those reasons, to enjoy the ride and the journey, then all the rest is just window dressing. Whatever you get, accolades or money, none of that matters. I'm always going to be taken care of by the universe, because I've already been, right? Whatever that song I made up, that helped take care of me, but I don't even need it, because I play every night. And when I play, these songs that people hear, afterwards--some guy who's a club manager, he comes up and hands me a wad of cash for doing something I would do for free. And it's awesome. And I meet people. And then I wake up in the morning, I feel totally sated, because out of these songs that are created, somehow sent down to me, I'm getting paid to do it. Who could ask for

more than that? It's like I get to do my life's work, and what else is there? What else am I going to do? So the rest of it, any rewards or anything that may happen, or fame, really, none of that matters. All I care about is I get to keep moving in constant motion and songs keep coming to me. Every night I have something new to play, that's what excites me. Like I did a song last night that was even newer than "Dreams" called, "These are Some Things You Should Fucking Know About Me."

PM: [laughs]

SP: And the audience was cracking up. And the song is really funny and really sad, which are my favorite kind of songs.

PM: Wow. Well, you are one unbelievable dude. And you're really our kind of guy. And you're the latest version of how the singer/songwriter should really be done. You've really got it together. Somebody ought to make a movie about you, Steve Poltz.

SP: [laughs] Maybe one day. You never know.

PM: I'm going to put that out into the universe. Somebody has got to make a fucking movie about Steve Poltz. The cat's unbelievable.

SP: Thank you, Frank. It was awesome talking to you. And tell Cary Baker that we connected so he knows.

PM: Absolutely. And Steve, I loved talking to you. You're really something.

SP: Ah, Frank, I can't wait to see you when I come to Nashville. We'll go get a burger at Rotier's.