

Puremusic Interview with David Grisman
by Frank Goodman (July 2002)

A friend gave me a video recently, of the legendary progressive bluegrass group Muleskinner. It was shot in Southern CA in 1973. It featured Peter Rowan, Bill Keith, Richard Greene, and David Grisman. That's almost three decades ago, and all the players were already in the virtuoso category. This perspective was in play when Rob Bleetstein from Acoustic Disc and I started talking about a cover interview with Grisman to help celebrate the release of *Dawgnation*, the first new album from the David Grisman Quintet in seven years.

Even for a recognized musical personality and virtuoso, it's a tricky business to play and record a handful of styles simultaneously. David's dual brainstorms were to label his mixed bag "Dawg Music," and to start his own label way back in 1990 (with old friends Artie and Harriet Rose, and manager Craig Miller) called Acoustic Disc. In the dozen years to follow, many small companies strove to follow their example, and few have equaled their success. Acoustic Disc recently shipped their fiftieth release, five of which have earned Grammy nominations.

Dawg Music incorporates swing, bluegrass, latin, jazz and gypsy styles. The musicianship of the quintet is such that they move through all these worlds fluently, with grace and humor. Jim Kerwin on string bass, Matt Eakle on flute, Joe Craven on violin and very assorted percussion, Enrique Coria on nylon and steel string guitar, and David Grisman on mandolin are individually and collectively capable of creating all the colors necessary to a group that sounds like they came from many countries and many times. On top of a brilliant collection of ensemble arrangements, *Dawgnation* features duets between David and each of the quintet's members, a very interesting and satisfying touch.

Five of the records in his catalog were done with his old friend Jerry Garcia, some of Jerry's last recordings. (See our review of *Shady Grove*.) There are a lot of precious moments, on many levels. The actual catalog of Acoustic Disc is so deep with mastery, it's almost daunting. But no need—at their website you can listen to two complete tracks from every CD, it makes picking the right selections so easy. There may be many CDs by people with whom you're unfamiliar. Bios of all the artists are a click away. It's all set up in a very user friendly way, a paradigm of independent marketing that feels like a mom and pop record shop.

So bookmark www.acousticdisc.com, and go there to check out a world of excellent and beautifully produced recordings, including the work of the Dawgmeister himself, naturally. What follows is a phone conversation from his home in Northern California.

Puremusic: First of all, I love *Dawgnation*.

David Grisman: Oh, great.

PM: You know, the vibe and the scope of it. That's just such a fine group of players. And what a good bunch of tunes on that record.

DG: Thank you.

PM: So it's been seven years since the last Quintet recording. Excuse the obvious question, but why such a long hiatus? What have you been up to instead?

DG: Well, I've been doing a lot of other recording projects. And with my own music, the only ingredient that seems to work with music is time—enough time to develop, to get through to some new place. I wanted to write a whole new album of tunes.

PM: Yeah.

DG: And my manager, Craig Miller, always told me, “What you need to do is just get a whole entirely new album.” And for quite a few years, I had kind of a writer's block. I felt like I was repeating myself. And once you've written your first hundred tunes...

PM: Right. How can you avoid...?

DG: I mean, you know, there's nothing new under the sun. And I feel a lot of composers get into kind of a thing where they're writing the same tune over and over again.

PM: Even if you're playing six styles, after a hundred tunes you can still repeat yourself easily. [laughs]

DG: Well, yeah. There are only so many notes, only so many approaches. And what makes your style is kind of what limits your style.

DG: Right.

PM: So it was the old psychological thing where I had to come to grips with the fact that I'm not going to reinvent the wheel, that it's okay to just write a tune. I don't have to be that worried about it.

PM: I think that's kind of a deep statement. It sounds casual, but for songwriters everywhere who are going to read this interview, that's deep.

DG: Also there were some circumstances. I set about to make this recording two years ago, and was in the middle of it, and our bass player, Jim Kerwin, his wife got ill. She had a relapse with cancer, and died.

PM: Oh, my Lord.

DG: Over a six-month period. And then he had to leave the band, and he was gone for 13 months. So my attention had to shift to just keeping the band together and having a new bass player. And I certainly didn't feel like I should crank out a new album with a brand new bass player.

PM: Right, in light of that tragedy.

DG: And nobody knew whether Jim would come back or whatever. But 13 months later, he came back.

PM: Who covered the bass in Jim's absence?

DG: Oh, it was a really talented young guy named Sam Bevins—well, actually a guy named Derek Jones played for about nine gigs. I think he plays with Nickel Creek now. But a guy named Sam Bevins played in the band for about a year, and kept things going.

So it kind of went on the back burner. And nothing gets older to me than a tape that I made last week. And once it gets to be two years old, then I'm out there playing some of these tunes. That's another thing, I like to play tunes a lot before I record them. Some of my tunes I've been playing for 30 years, and there's nothing like that to get a tune in shape. [laughs] But, of course, then you'd make an album every 30 years. But I wasn't in a rush, put it that way.

PM: Right.

DG: And I wanted it to show some growth, and I wanted it to be good. When I write a tune, I know if I go out and play it for a few months, it will fall into place, it will become what it needs to become; whereas if I just write a tune and record it the next day, it's like it is still in the incubator. There's one tune on *Dawgnation* that I wrote after we'd started making the record. I put it on there, but I'm questioning whether I should have given it more time.

PM: Which was the tune that had the least incubation?

DG: "Vivacé."

PM: Oh, "Vivacé," yeah. That's a good song, though.

You know, it's unusual to interview somebody who plays so many kinds of music, and has for so much of his life. What are you listening to lately?

DG: Well, that's a good question. I was just listening to Fletcher Henderson and Miles Davis last night. I listen to a lot of jazz. And I listen to a lot of work-related stuff. I'm going to spend the next three days working with Carlo Aonzo, from Italy. He recorded a project last year of the music of Raffaele Calace, who's kind of the Paganini of the mandolin, compositionally, and wrote a lot of difficult and virtuosic solo mandolin music. I did a project with Carlo called *Traversata*, with him and Beppe Gambetta.

PM: Oh, yeah. I've met Beppe in Italy before. He's a great guy.

DG: Are you familiar with the *Traversata* project?

PM: I don't know *Traversata*, but I'm going to look into it.

DG: Oh. Are you familiar with the *Songs of Our Fathers* one?

PM: Yes.

DG: Well, this is kind of like “songs of our Godfathers.”

PM: [laughs]

DG: Yeah. It’s kind of a similar project with Italian music. And it’s a beautiful record. It came out last year. And so I’m working with Carlo on editing this music by this guy Raffaele Calace, who was a very famous Renaissance mandolin man. He built mandolins, he wrote mandolin music, and was a player.

PM: Wow.

DG: And so I’ll be doing a lot of listening. We’re going to be editing that.

PM: Right. So you’ve been listening to that work-related stuff.

DG: Right. And I’ve also been listening to some live Ralph Stanley that somebody donated to me, their archives. There are over 200 reels of tape they had recorded in the 70s of all kinds of bluegrass. I listen to all kinds of music. People send me stuff, you know, ethnic music. I’m mostly listening to older music that I haven’t heard before.

PM: I was surprised to find in your bio that your extensive knowledge of jazz and music theory was partially the result of a failed attempt to learn alto sax.

DG: Well, that might be an oversimplification. [laughs]

PM: I’m sure it was. You’re a musician, and you would have looked into it anyway.

DG: I got into jazz in the mid-60s. And I figured I didn’t really have any jazz mandolin role models—except for Jethro Burns. But I hadn’t met him or ever heard him play, and I wasn’t aware of anybody doing that. So I figured, well, you have to have a jazz instrument. So I went out and bought an alto sax. But I had very little ability in making one note sound good.

PM: What jazz figures would you say have influenced your life most profoundly?

DG: Jazz is kind of an idiom where you pretty much have to be great to play jazz. You have to be a complete musician, or at least you have to be technically accomplished, and you have to understand theory, and know a lot of difficult tunes. So in terms of influences, there are just countless guys: Duke Ellington, Benny Goodman, Ben Webster, Thelonious Monk, Miles Davis, Bill Evans, I mean, the whole—Louis Armstrong. I love Louis Armstrong.

PM: Yeah.

DG: Of course, all the string jazz pioneers, Eddie Lang and Joe Venuti, and Django Reinhardt and Stephane Grappelli, and Svend Asmussen. I went and visited Svend Asmussen in Denmark last November. And I'm talking to him about doing a project of his older recordings.

PM: Now, Svend, I'm ignorant of that man's work.

DG: He's 85 now. He's one of the original jazz violin players. He started the same time as Stephane Grappelli.

PM: Wow.

DG: He made his first recording in 1935. Are you familiar with Oscar Aleman?

PM: No.

DG: Well, I put out a double CD of Oscar Aleman. He was a black Argentinian guitarist who was in Paris the same time as Django Reinhardt, and played in a very similar style, but, in a way, with more drive. If Django was Duke Ellington, he was Count Basie.

PM: Oh, wow. I got some catching up to do there.

DG: Leonard Feather said, in 1939, that he could out-swing Django.

PM: Wow. [laughs] Leonard Feather said so.

DG: Yeah. Not that that matters, but—

PM: But he was somebody.

DG: He was definitely a key player and widely overlooked because he moved back to Argentina during the war, and stayed there, and made a lot of incredible records in Argentina, swing records, with a similar group to Django's. And Jerry Garcia actually turned me on to him—he's where Jerry learned "Russian Lullaby" from.

PM: Wow. Thanks for the hot tip.

DG: Anyhow, his recordings were mostly available on a bootleg—a few bootlegs existed in the 60s and 70s. And so I put together a double CD compilation of his greatest recordings that I could find copies of. And it's called *Swing Guitar Masterpieces*, on Acoustic Disc.

PM: That's great.

DG: Anyhow, Svend recorded with him in 1935. And also—a similar kind of story—Svend never got too well known, because he never really left Denmark. He toured briefly in the late 50s

with a vocal group called the Swe-Danes, that, you know, was on *The Ed Sullivan Show*. But he was an incredible jazz violin player.

I met him in 1985 and invited him to come to the United States and play some gigs. And we did. We recorded an album together, which is now out of print, but it's called *Swingin' with Svend*. He's also on a few cuts on *DGQ 20*.

There's a record that's long been out of print called *Duke Ellington's Jazz Violin Sessions*. That was with Stephane Grappelli. I think it's Stephane, Svend Asmussen, Ray Mann, and Duke.

PM: That sounds like a real classic. Now, with a record like that that's gone out of print, could an entrepreneur like yourself take it from that status and put it back out?

DG: Probably. But usually licensing is a bad business deal. In other words, they charge you so much. Are you familiar with the Jacob do Bandolim records I put out?

PM: Yes.

DG: That's mandolin music from Brazil, and I made a deal with RCA in Brazil. Everybody said, "Just bootleg it. Just bootleg it." But I don't believe in that. So he's like the highest paid royalty artist on my label.

PM: Really?

DG: Yeah. Because when they license something, they figure, well, you're not investing any money in making it, so they'll gouge you for—well, I mean, all deals are different. But yeah, it is possible, but I've shied away from trying to do that a lot, other than certain instances. It's certainly possible, but I view myself more as a record producer than as a packager of other people's productions.

PM: A creator, not a manufacturer.

DG: Right. In my opinion, one of the pitfalls of having a small independent record label is putting out too many records. Because then nothing gets promoted, and it's expensive. I love all kinds of music, but I have to realize that that doesn't mean that I have to put out everything that comes my way, or that I can think of, because then I'd have hundreds of records in my catalog, but—

PM: Yeah, and it's already really big.

DG: —maybe I wouldn't be doing them a service. Because if I can't do a good job for those records, what would be the point?

PM: Right. I really enjoyed all the work with Jerry Garcia that's recently come to light. As his longtime friend, is there anything you might share with us about the man that only a real pal of his might know?

DG: [laughs] Well, that's a good question. There are so many things. Well, only a pal might know...? [laughs]

PM: How about maybe his personality or his nature.

DG: Well, he was into all kinds of things, movies and, you know, he was a very knowledgeable guy on books and art. I mean, you could talk just about anything. You could talk to him about paintings by Heironymous Bosch or the Three Stooges.

PM: [laughs] Oh, that's great.

DG: [laughs] I mean, he was a multidimensional guy, and a very talented artist himself.

PM: Truly.

DG: The cover artwork that he did for *Not For Kids Only*, are you familiar with that?

PM: Yes.

DG: He did that in three minutes. I said, "Jerry, we're out of time. You've got to do this," you know? "Okay." He goes out to his car and gets his paint supplies. He always kept his paintbrushes and pens and stuff with him, and paper. And he just drew that. He didn't draw one and then rip it up and draw the next. He just drew it. Then he got out his little watercolors and just dabbed some color on there, and there it was. And if you look at his picture in there, he really nailed himself. I don't look anything like that, what he drew of me, but he captured one of his expressions.

PM: That's amazing.

DG: He was a very in-the-moment guy, and the most down-to-earth. He really—he couldn't stand his own celebrity, you know. He just didn't feel comfortable with that at all. And I think that was kind of an albatross around his neck. But he didn't let it get in the way. He was just a regular guy. When we were hanging out, I mean, he didn't come over with a chauffeur or anything. Around a Grateful Dead gig, it was a different story.

PM: Sure. I'd see him around Marin County.

DG: He just wanted to be a normal guy. He didn't think he was anything special. He didn't want to be treated special. He would go out of his way to make anybody around feel comfortable. He was very sensitive to other people.

PM: While we're on the subject, are there going to be more CDs, video or film footage of you and Jerry?

DG: Well, there's probably another good album's worth.

PM: Great.

DG: And then there may be one—I always figured the last one would be called *The Bottom of the Barrel*. And we'll have a picture of the bottom of a barrel with a bunch of tape.

PM: [laughs] He'd like that.

DG: [laughs] It wouldn't be bad, but it would be probably alternate versions, because some of these things we recorded we have many versions of. And it amazes me how most of everything we did is pretty usable. At the time, you know, we weren't really thinking about that. We'd usually do more than one take, but sometimes not.

PM: And it probably was in the domain of just having fun and rolling tape.

DG: Right, yeah. And it was only the first record and *Not For Kids Only* that were completed while Jerry was alive. And for those, we definitely drew a line of demarcation and said, "This is a record now." But all the other stuff was just a continuing process of getting together and playing. We didn't really want to put a time frame on it, you know, because it was just something we did. It wasn't like any other recording session. It wasn't like business or anything—not like you have to get in there at 10:00 and the session will be over at 1:00.

PM: Yeah, it's like, "I'm in the neighborhood. I'm coming over."

DG: He would literally call up and say, "Well, I'm around the corner. What are you doing?" That's how I tricked him into that kids' album, because he didn't like that idea at all.

PM: He didn't?

DG: No. He said, "Nah, I can't do that!"

PM: [laughs]

DG: But I thought it was a good idea. And one day he called me and said, "I want to get together." It was just going to be the two of us. So I asked this friend of mine to run out to a music store and find a book of children's songs. And he came back with a *huge* book, with, like, 5,000 songs. Then it was "Oh, wow. Why don't we try this? Why don't we try that?" They were, you know, "Freight Train" and "A Horse Named Bill"—

PM: Yeah, good songs.

DG: —and "Jenny Jenkins." A few things like that. "Oh, yeah, I remember that." And we just did them, and they went down real easy, because that's one thing about kids' songs: they're easy.

PM: Yeah. And it's pretty amazing—I mean, sure, a number of our friends might sit down and play "Freight Train," but it's not everybody that knows "Jenny Jenkins."

DG: But we both knew that song. I had a record of a guy named Frank Luther doing that song, who made records when we were kids. I mean, Jerry and I had similar childhoods.

PM: Right, on opposite coasts.

DG: Yeah. We both had fathers that were musicians who died when we were young.

PM: Oh! Where in Jersey did you grow up?

DG: Well, I was born in Hackensack. I only was born there, I never lived there. I mostly lived in Bergenfield, until I was 10, and then I moved to Passaic and I lived there. My father owned Tenafly Paint and Hardware.

PM: Get out of here! I lived in Oakland a bunch of years, just a few towns away from you—

DG: Oh, yeah? I was just back there. I just played a gig in Englewood.

PM: Really?

DG: Yeah.

PM: Yeah, my music background is very similar, too. All those songs on the *Shady Grove* record, it was like, wow, all these tunes that we played growing up. That was a wonderful record. I loved that.

DG: Oh, thank you.

PM: I have a question about the so-called Pizza Tapes. Did that having anything to do with what used to be called Brother's Pizza on the Miracle Mile? The owner was a friend of ours, and I know that Jerry used to get a lot of pizza from him, he was an East Coast guy. Did—

DG: I don't know. See, that's just one story I heard. I wasn't there. And Jerry and I never really talked about it. I also heard that he gave the tape to a scuba diving instructor in Hawaii. But, you know, this just lent itself to some more clever marketing. You wouldn't want to call it *The Scuba Tapes*.

PM: [laughs]

DG: Well, you know, maybe. Some people were trading the tape as *Pizza Boy*, it was being called that by some people.

For three years, I was just pissed about that tape. People would come up with this tape, and I would get mad. And then Rob Bleetstein went to work for us, and he said, "Man, you need to put that out. It's all over the place." And I said, "Well, people got it already, you know?" But he said, "Yeah, but it sounds so bad, with all these degenerated copies." And finally I said, "All

right.” And it’s actually sonically one of the best recordings. And in the end all that bootlegging and having it out actually helped. I mean, it just took off as soon as we put it out, because people wanted it. Everybody that had it wanted the good version of it.

PM: That’s funny.

DG: And I made sure there were some things in there that weren’t on the bootlegs. There were three songs that ran off the master reel, but there were backup digital tapes made. And so I was able to reconstruct three tunes. What got out was longer than what I put out, because there were some multiple takes on there. And I was thinking at one point of putting the whole thing out, that’s the only way to have it be more than what people already have. But then I decided, nah, that’s too much. It’s going to have to be two CDs.

PM: Right. Just make it sound good.

DG: And just make one really good record.

PM: Yeah. So on top of being a musical inspiration to a whole generation of musicians, as the co-founder of Acoustic Disc, you also helped pave the way for small companies and musicians actually marketing themselves. As such, do you have any advice or observations to share in that domain?

DG: Find a Jerry. [laughs]

PM: [laughs]

DG: No, I don’t know. It wasn’t like a big plan of mine. It really was, believe it or not, happenstance, more than anything else. Two friends of mine, Artie and Harriet Rose—

PM: Himself a great mandolinist, right, Artie Rose?

DG: Yeah, he is.

PM: Sure. I had the Even Dozen Jug Band album—

DG: Yeah, the Even Dozen, and he was in Dave Van Ronk’s group—

PM: Right. The Ragtime Jug Stompers.

DG: Right. In fact, I go back to the day I met Artie Rose, I was like 15 or 16, in the basement of Gertie’s Folk City. And I asked him—he had a fancy Gibson mandolin, and I asked him if I could play it, and he said no.

PM: [laughs]

DG: So now I tell everybody, “Now he’s working in the stockroom.”

PM: [laughs]

DG: Anyhow, he and his wife Harriet were looking to relocate to the Bay Area from New York, and they wanted to start a business. And they were first thinking about opening a little CD store. And I was kind of helping them research that. We soon discovered there was no way to compete with Tower Records. It was right when CDs were taking over, just a big transition.

And at the same time, I was building a studio in my house. That was not my idea, either. It was instigated by an engineer who worked for me. This equipment from the studio I had been using in Berkeley, California, a place called 1750 Arch Street, they had closed that studio down, and this equipment was all sitting in storage. And the engineer, Bob Schumaker, just said, “You know, you should have that. You should build a studio here.” And I said, “Ahh, I don’t know.” But he arranged it so I could get the stuff so inexpensively that there was no way I couldn’t build a studio. So I was building a studio. And then I was ready to make a record. And I’d just been dumped by MCA—or given an ultimatum, which I turned down.

PM: What kind of an ultimatum?

DG: Well, I had a contract for, I think, two records with them. And I had done an outside record, this *Swingin’ with Svend* record, that was largely a live record. And I had sold that to them as an extra record. And they put a clause in the contract that if it didn’t sell 25,000 copies in nine months that they could get out of my regular deal. Nice guys, you know.

PM: Wow, nice guys.

DG: And so I kept telling my manager, “I’m ready to make my next record, and I have the material.” But somehow it wasn’t moving forward. So finally they sent me a letter and said, “Well, this record only sold 19,000 copies, and we’re ready to exercise this option. But we’ll give you an extra six weeks if you send us a tape of the tunes you’re planning to record.” In other words, they wanted me to audition.

PM: [laughs]

DG: So I just told them—well, I didn’t tell them anything, but I had Craig tell them.

PM: “Go exercise your option.”

DG: Yeah. “Go ahead. I don’t care.” So they dropped me. Then I was ready to make a record, but didn’t have a label. And here were my two friends looking to start a business, and it just sort of happened. One day we said, “Well, why don’t we start a CD company?” And it was the perfect time to just start making CDs, because every other company was in the throws of dumping vinyl and changing over. We knew we weren’t even going to bother with vinyl. We just did it, you know. And that was *Dawg ’90*, that record.

PM: What do you think about satellite radio or internet radio? You think that either of those are going to play any significant role in the next decade? Any sense of that?

DG: Well, I don't even know what satellite radio is, but—

PM: It's a pay radio thing.

DG: Oh, really? Well, I'm a guy that—you know, I don't rely on radio. I practice my own music. I mean, I just went and bought four CDs yesterday, so I don't know—

PM: Right. When you're in the car, you're listening to what you intend to listen to.

DG: Yeah. So I don't really listen to radio. I pulled the plug on TV almost three years ago, too.

PM: Really?

DG: Yeah.

PM: Completely?

DG: Completely.

PM: For the kids, too, or just for yourself?

DG: Well, no, I have a TV, but I don't have cable. My twelve-year-old, he's a big sports fan, so he would prefer it, but he's not here all that much. Somebody did give me a satellite dish, and I may have it hooked up, but I'm really not—you know, TV gives me the creeps.

PM: Yeah.

DG: [sighs]

PM: [laughs] I hear ya.

DG: I mean, it's just so much everything that's bad with culture, right there for you.

PM: Yeah, you'll find it all there.

DG: Yeah, that's where it is, that's at home. So I don't know. Plus the news is depressing. And it's just insidious, the way they deal with things. They'll take some big story, like some kid shoots 12 people in a high school, and you'll just see that plastered over everything for three days.

PM: Right. Yeah, let's talk about it, let's think about it.

DG: Or the O.J. Simpson thing, the Bill Clinton thing. They just take this basically innocuous terrible stuff—or it could be a war or anything—and basically they're trying to get you glued to the TV set, so they can show their million-dollar commercials to you and get you buying whatever they're selling.

PM: That's a fact.

DG: And most often, it's the next show they're selling. I think TV is such a blatant advertisement for itself. It's self-perpetuating bullshit in its highest form.

PM: It would be as bad as if musicians were singing songs about music all the time. That would be boring as hell.

DG: Yeah, right, right. I don't know, it's just that I found myself—you know, I'd be watching it all the time [laughs], and I just don't have time for that anyway. I don't miss it at all. I never miss it. I mean, if I want to see a movie, I'll just rent a DVD. Or I have a large collection of DVDs. I maybe watch movies once a week. I just don't have time. And I don't feel like it's doing me that much good to be that connected with what's going on in the world. [laughs]

PM: Right, the baseness of culture.

DG: It's so terrible most of the time, that it's just hard to process. How do you deal with all the horrible stuff that's happening every day, you know?

PM: Yeah. I mean, now, you can have the pain of the whole world in your face 24 hours a day. [laughs]

DG: And I mean, hey, enough of it filters through. I mean, I look at headlines at the [laughs] boxes with newspaper in it. And you know, when I go on the road, I'll turn on the TV sometimes. If I'm in a hotel, I'll watch a little TV. But basically... Plus it's real expensive. And they'd always be shutting off my cable because I was forgetting to pay the bill.

PM: [laughs] The mandolin as an instrument, it has enjoyed some pretty serious ebbs and flows in popularity in the country, right? Wasn't there a time there where, you know, mandolin orchestras were kind of big?

DG: Yeah. The first 20 years of the last century.

PM: But mandolin seems to be on the rise again, doesn't it?

DG: It seems to be really going full-blast big-time right now. There are so many mandolin manufacturers now, it's mind boggling.

PM: Yeah, who woulda thunk it?

DG: Well, I probably would have—I probably did for many years, you know.

PM: [laughs]

DG: Sorry, I did. It's a great thing, but it's hard to even know—I mean, I can't know—the tree in the forest, it's hard for me to know how big this thing is.

PM: Yeah, right, a tall tree in the forest to boot.

DG: But there seems to really be a kind of a renaissance going on now.

PM: Yeah. It's a beautiful thing. And I like to see the whole mandolin family growing. I mean, there's so many mandolas out there now, so many octave mandolins, everything.

DG: That's the truth. That's great. Mandocellos, the whole nine yards.

PM: Yeah. Whose mandolins are you playing?

DG: Well, I still use an old Gibson F-5. In fact, I just acquired the second one made.

PM: You're kidding!

DG: No.

PM: Where did you get it?

DG: I got it from a friend of mine who had it. And I actually turned him on to it when it was on the block a few years ago.

PM: Wow! Need the friend remain anonymous or—

DG: He's actually my agent, Dexter Johnson, who is also a Luthier, and he represented Steve Gilchrist for many years, a great Australian mandolin builder. And he's a vintage instrument guy.

PM: That's got to be worth an incredible amount of money, does it not?

DG: Well, yeah. It's got one thing—somebody painted a parrot on the back of it, a rather nice parrot, actually.

PM: Oh, at least that.

DG: An oil painting of a parrot on the back, which to some people would devalue it. But the people who were selling it didn't notice that it was the first one in the first batch. There's only one accounted for that's earlier than that, and that's the prototype.

PM: Holy shit!

DG: Yeah.

PM: And the painter of the parrot is unknown?

DG: Unknown, yeah.

PM: Wow. [laughs] Some more good mandolin myth.

DG: Yeah. But I play another old one, what they called the Lloyd Loar Gibson.

PM: L-o-h-r?

DG: L-o-a-r. L-o-h-r is the wine.

PM: Oh, thank you. [laughs]

DG: Yeah. I like that, too.

PM: [laughs]

DG: But, you know, I have Gilchrist mandolins and mandocellos. I'm a mandolin collector.

PM: No doubt.

DG: But you can only play one at a time.

PM: Have you been a fiddler in your time, too?

DG: Never.

PM: Never.

DG: I picked up a fiddle, and I inherited a fiddle. My Uncle was a classical violin player, and I inherited his violin. But I gave it to Darol Anger a few years ago. I would go up to the attic and take it out and try to play it, but the sound that I made was so ugly that I didn't have the perseverance to go beyond that. But I like telling fiddle players exactly what to play—good fiddle players.

PM: [laughs] You know, David, you've accomplished so much in your lifetime. Are there goals that still lie ahead that we should talk about on the way out?

DG: Well, just kind of more of the same. I mean, I'm a grandpa now—I have twin grandkids. And, you know, I'd just like to keep going. People are always asking me, "Is there anybody left you want to play with?" And I say, "By now, it's like: who wants to play with me?"

PM: [laughs]

DG: I used to have a file in my filing cabinet—and it's probably still there—it says "Concepts." And I used to dream up these concepts. Of course, now, I've just shipped ACD #50. I've gotten to really execute a lot of those concepts. And I've learned that, you know, a concept, sometimes in reality it's great and sometimes it isn't. On paper you could say, "Oh, I'd like to play with these guys." But maybe the chemistry wouldn't be there, you never know.

PM: Right.

DG: I'm real grateful. I've gotten to play with so many great people and meet so many great people, and lost so many great people and found so many great people. I'd just like to stay healthy, and have my family healthy. I don't really have any big goals right now, other than to keep going on the path that I'm on. I'm already working on the next three CDs always. I think you'll be interested in this: we just recorded *Old And In The Grey*.

PM: Oh, that's great.

DG: Pete Rowan, Vassar Clements, myself, Herb Peterson, and a young female bass player named Bryn Bright. We did 14 new tunes. And I think anybody that liked *Old And In The Way* will like this. It's definitely in the spirit of the original band.

PM: I sure look forward to it. I was a big fan. Well, you're kind to give us so much time today, David.

DG: Sure. You kept me interested.

PM: Thanks, brother. Take good care of yourself.

DG: Well, good luck, man.