

A Conversation with Robbie Fulks
By Frank Goodman (Puremusic.com, 7/2005)

When I was getting ready to interview Buddy Miller recently, I was reading through the bio on his site to see if there was new material or something I didn't already know. I found myself getting more and more engrossed in the style and substance of the bio, not something that normally happens. There were quite a few twenty-five-cent words, and a passion in the prose that was undeniable—not a patently journalistic one, one that was more inside than that. I resisted the temptation to scroll to the bottom and identify the author, and waited till I'd read it all the way through. I was very surprised to find it had been written by a fellow artist, Robbie Fulks. I could not recall having read another bio that was written by an artist, nor could I recall a better bio in the many hundreds that I have read. I said to myself that I had to interview this cat, and get into his music.

I'd heard a lot about him, that he was a very opinionated and outspoken artist. I'd heard of action on the Internet between he and Ryan Adams. Remember the incident in 2002, when at a Nashville Ryan Adams show the performer really freaked out on a guy in the audience who requested "Summer of '69"? [A Bryan Adams song.] After that, allegedly Fulks offered free merchandise to concert goers who would heckle Ryan by requesting Bryan Adams songs. Good stuff.

So I got Robbie's new record in the mail, *Georgia Hard*, and hunted up some others: *Country Love Songs* (Bloodshot Records, 1996), *Let's Kill Saturday Night* (Geffen, 1998) and *Couples in Trouble* (Boondoggle, 2001), as well as bought some songs from iTunes from *South Mouth* (1997), *13 Hillbilly Giants* (2000, Bloodshot), and a Live e-town CD. (For the sake of completeness, there are also *The Very Best of* (1999) and a tribute album to Johnny Paycheck that Robbie produced, featuring various huge artists. *Saturday Night* and *Couples* were more pop in material and/or production. As impressive as I found these, I was more impressed by and enamored of the Country records, especially the newest one. *Georgia Hard* is stone Country. He's writing that as well as anybody—as well as Jim Lauderdale, Dallas Wayne, or any traditionalist that would now be called alternative country.

I talked to a few of his good friends in town, he has quite a few for a guy who lives in Chicago. Although he never lived here, he has had writing deals and come here a lot. His frustration with the Music Row ethic and modus operandi was well stated in his notorious Nashville ode "Fuck this Town." He is loved and much respected, and the records quickly taught me why. Robbie is a monster artist, a real individual, a comedian and a character, and a great songwriter of various styles, but especially Country, in my opinion. He is also a great lover of a well-crafted pop song, and in the middle of a country show will bust into a Michael Jackson number without missing a beat.

Please do not fail to check out clips of this incredible dude on the Listen page. Listen to "Wherever There's A Road", "It's Always Raining Somewhere," "Leave It To A Loser," and "Each Night I Try"—if you've got a Country bone in your body, you'll be buying *Georgia Hard* for sure.

Robbie's answering machine: *Hey, you must have called me while I'm off doing something else, driving around or cleaning up dust off the counter, so leave me a message. Make it long, detailed, rambling and pointless. Okay. Bye-bye.*

[Well, it turned out that Robbie was home but was laughing so hard on a call with Danny Barnes that he didn't hear the phone clicking. The genius of Danny Barnes is described in our review of his last Terminus release, *Dirt on the Angel*, and we hope to be covering Danny's new album shortly. Robbie and I started our conversation on the subject of the inimitable Mr. Barnes.]

Robbie Fulks: I think his new CD is the best, including *Blood and Mood*. I think that hip-hop record is a great thing.

Puremusic: Yeah, see, I'm not up on that record.

RF: The last record he did under the name Bad Livers was this hip-hop amalgam with bluegrass. They use it now at CMT for buffers during their promotional shots. All the time on CMT you hear that come up. It was recorded eight years ago, but it's just starting to sound contemporary right now. Just on the edge of the mainstream is how it sounds now. It's cool.

PM: I wonder if he even gets paid when they use it for buffers and stuff.

RF: Yeah, it depends on what his deal is with the label and the publisher and the rest of the cats.

PM: Man, I thought your new CD, *Georgia Hard*, was just unbelievable.

RF: Oh, thanks.

PM: Come on. That's—

RF: Come on! [laughs]

PM: That's not only my favorite record of yours, that's the best country record I've heard in a long time.

RF: Well, thank you. We were really enthused working on it, and we thought we'd have something kind of superior with it. I don't want to blow my own horn too much. But we had a great time making it.

PM: With all them ringers at Oceanway, I mean, that's an expensive disc, right?

RF: You know, it surprised me. It wasn't real expensive. I mean, it kind of ended up

being, because I was there for a while, but man, the production!

It's depressing in a way how the production houses in Nashville have got real competitive rates going on now, and there's a lot of places up for sale, and it's kind of a buyers' market, you know?

PM: It is. Yeah, Seventeen Grand is on the block, and a number of places. Yeah. We've got a little Nuendo studio just down the block from Oceanway, and I often wonder what it must cost to cut there. What's it a day there?

RF: I was in the B room, and I think the rate card there is 1,100 or 1,200. I got a better rate through a friend. I don't know, it's probably dumb of me, but I've always been attached to a good room, a big tracking floor. I like a big comfortable tracking room—the romance of it, and everything else.

PM: So what about all the ringers? Everybody comes in for the buddy rate, right?

RF: Oh, the players on the record?

PM: Yeah.

RF: Well, no, not really. I paid people pretty good. I paid my band a little less than the other guys. But it was a union record, so I couldn't really goof around with that stuff too much.

PM: Yeah, yeah, of course.

RF: Yeah.

PM: So it must have been something having some really, really classic guys like Lloyd Green and Hank Singer on the record.

RF: Oh, it's always fun. I can say always because I worked with them—well, I worked with Hank on a couple of things, but Lloyd on the Paycheck record, and Dennis [Crouch] too. That's where I met those two guys.

PM: Ah.

RF: Of course, I've been a fan of both of them, for a long time, so playing with them was like paradise for me.

PM: It's got to be fair or accurate to say that it's kind of a complicated relationship that you have with Nashville, right?

RF: Well, no, not anymore. That's happened so long ago, and a lot of my frustration was really aimed at a place that was representing me as a publisher, API. I worked with them

for about four years, and they just never had any luck getting any of my stuff cut. And even demoing stuff was kind of hard with them. I lived in Chicago, and that was part of the trouble, too, that I wasn't around all the time. I wrote them something like 120 songs and—

PM: In four years?

RF: Yeah, yeah. And I did the co-write dance, and tried to be around a lot. It cost me a lot of money to travel down there. I was down there for maybe a third of the time or something, a week to two weeks out of every month. And I just never got anywhere with it. It was kind of disappointing. But on the other hand, looking back, I didn't write as well as I'm writing now, and the songs I was writing weren't as good as I thought they were, so there was some of that in there. If I were doing it again, I would definitely do it differently. I would be more aware of who was cutting when and what they were cutting, and what kind of stuff the good writers that were getting cut were writing.

PM: Right. The stuff you're writing now, as hyper-intelligent and clever or deep as it may be, it's still cut-able. And it's hard to believe that you couldn't get it in the hoop, if that's what you set your mind do, and if you were in Nashville and up with the guys that are hot at the moment.

RF: Yeah, I think I could definitely do it.

PM: If one is so inclined—I mean, you're really about your own career, I would imagine, and as evidenced by this great record that you just did.

RF: Well, the country market has definitely got like loads of stupidity and incompetence, as in any other field of endeavor. But it's really the closest mass market music to what I just naturally do, so that's why I went down there in the first place. And that's what keeps drawing me to it.

PM: Right. But you never lived in Nashville, did you?

RF: No, I never did. I would just come down there on the bus or the train or the plane or whatever, and sleep on some guy's floor for a week, and did it that way.

PM: I know you have tons of friends in this town. I was on the phone with several of them this morning for different things. Lorne Rall says that he's looking for his share of the publishing.

[laughter]

PM: I couldn't believe that your publishing was called Lorne Rall Music. So I left Lorne a message saying, "Dude, what's up with this?"

RF: [laughs] Yeah, I just named it that.

PM: [laughs] That's really funny. You just named it your buddy's name.

RF: Yeah, why not?

PM: That's great. And another friend of yours asked me to ask you if you knew a good group in the Chicago area called the Rattlers?

RF: Oh, sure. Were you talking to Ollie O'Shea?

PM: Yeah. He's cutting a fiddle track for me tomorrow.

RF: Oh, good.

PM: I'm looking forward to seeing your Opry Plaza gig on the 24th. Yeah, because I'm really late to the Robbie party, but I'm already a deeply avid fan now. I went out and bought everything I could get my hands on.

RF: Well, thanks, man. Yeah, the party is winding down, but you're welcome in it.

[laughter]

PM: On top of your being a great songwriter, what really made me sure that I wanted to do this interview was your prose. I was so impressed—moved, really—by that amazing bio you wrote on Buddy Miller.

RF: Oh, yeah, thanks a lot.

PM: Because as a webzine editor, I mean, I'm seeing bios all the time, and from all levels of the business. And I was in the middle of that one thinking, "Damn, this is the best bio I ever read. Who wrote this?" And I get to the bottom and thought, "Wow, another artist wrote it. Look at that."

RF: I think people who make music should write more about it. And maybe you agree with that notion—

PM: I do, indeed.

RF: I think it makes a big difference being inside it. It's got the inherent problem of using one art form to spread information about another art form. But then with music, it's just so open to nonsensical claims, unverifiable assertions, and so forth. And then when you get somebody who has never really done it and doesn't have any musical knowledge, what results is basically the rewriting of press kits.

PM: Right.

RF: You can do compelling sentences that suck people in and zippy writing and the rest

of it, but I think the accuracy problem is just really deep in music writing.

PM: Yeah, and I think people read through it. I mean, we don't have anyone writing for Puremusic that isn't a really good songwriter or a really good musician. Otherwise, it just seems like, "Well, what are you talking about? You don't understand the subject."

RF: I need to check out this webzine, obviously.

PM: On the cover this month, it's Al Anderson, Buddy Miller, and Lori McKenna.

RF: I'll definitely check that out. Who's Lori McKenna?

PM: She is a great folk artist out of the Boston area who signed a publishing deal with Melanie Howard, who got her a handful of huge cuts.

RF: Wow. I want to go to that publishing house.

[laughter]

PM: She's a mother of five. Her husband is a plumber.

RF: That's who ought to be writing country music, plumber's wives. Terrific.

PM: But I digress. So that bio you wrote on Buddy, like I said, really knocked me out. And then I read another one that you wrote, and couldn't remember later who it was. Have you been doing much of that bio-type writing?

RF: Well, a couple of friends have called me, nobody that I don't know pretty well. But I did Buddy's and Danny Barnes' and Chris Scruggs'. I did those three this year.

PM: Wow. It might have been the Danny Barnes one that I read, because I'm such a fan of his.

RF: Yeah, maybe so. He likes big words and big ideas, and so that was a little bit more idea-centered than some of them that I've written. But I think basically my approach has been the same, just to listen as a fan and try to figure out what makes the music really come together for me, and then express it.

PM: When I was interviewing Buddy, I ran four or five of the twenty-five-cent words you used in his bio by him. And he was just laughing, and he said, "Yeah, he used a lot of words I didn't understand, but I think we knew what he was talking about."

[laughter]

RF: Fantastic.

PM: Oh, he's so funny. So is the bio thing, do you just do it for buddies, or is it like mastering is for Buddy, becoming kind of a decent little sideline?

RF: Well, I'll tell you, if I got a call a month, it would be a decent sideline. But so far it's just kind of picking up the phone, and if it's somebody's music I really dig, then I say yes to it in a heartbeat. It's not tons of money or anything. But I think it's good for me, because I can really sit and listen and think about what makes something good—and it's actually so hard to figure out.

I mean, you look on an Amazon.com page of musical recommendations, "If you like this one, you'll like this." If you were to bring up Buddy Miller on this page, and then look at the other names, I think you would see five names that all had a lot of surface qualities in common, and people that get written up in the same magazines as Buddy. But to me, none of that would exist really in the same category, just because I think people who play music think a lot more in terms of levels of quality. There's good music, and there's bad music, and there's in between music. But the superficial stylistic things, I think those are really overrated.

PM: Yeah, and the sense of history the people incorporate and the depth that they're bringing to the table, these are the things that really tie artists together, not who they, as you say, seem to resemble on the surface.

RF: I think so. And it's really hard to get at that quality of musicality, and figure out why one thing is musical and another one isn't. I mean, there are obviously a lot of technical reasons why Buddy Miller hits the notes right and makes good sounds come out of instruments and microphones. But beyond that, there's just something else. I think it's having something to express, in the first place, so that you're not just making records for the musicians to listen to, and making cool sounds, as in a Jon Brion record, or something. There's an example of a guy who really, really knows what he's doing, but when it comes to his own records, you don't get the sense that there's anything in particular that he's just dying to express. Whereas in Buddy's case, I think there's something really important that he's expressing in his records.

PM: Absolutely, no question about it.

RF: He's making records that nobody else would be making, I think.

PM: Yeah. And—well, I also think that a central part of being Buddy Miller is being married to Julie. [See our interview with Buddy and Julie Miller, or our recent conversation with Buddy.]

RF: Yeah, right.

[laughter]

PM: Speaking of bios, I read yours, but I don't get the picture exactly. I understand you grew up in PA, and then some in the South, Virginia and South Carolina; scholarship to Columbia—that's a good trick, by the way.

[laughter]

PM: Did you make friends in the City that you're still close with today?

RF: In New York? Yeah, a few, just at college. I have a buddy that actually moved down to around Raleigh-Durham, where I was the other week. A lot of them are kind of scattered around now. But I keep up with maybe four or five friends from college.

PM: Right. But not people from the music scene, necessarily?

RF: No. The music scene I was in there, it was like Nashville—it was a case of shoehorning myself into the closest available niche. And in those years, the music I was making wasn't nearly as country as it is now, but there was this scene around Gerde's Folk City and the Speakeasy and the Other End—or the Bitter End, whichever it was called then. And the big acts on that scene then were like Suzanne Vega, Lucy Kaplansky, and those kind of folks.

PM: Sure.

RF: So that was where I was working back then. And I really wasn't friends with any of those guys. They were pretty remote figures to me. I would come in the bar after they finished their set and play for whoever would still be sitting around drinking or whatever.

PM: You never dropped into any of those Jack Hardy meetings of the Fast Folk crowd, or any of that?

RF: No, I didn't. But I really hate scenes and groups—I'm not a joiner—and I think that would have turned me off to that, probably.

PM: Right, right. So what brought you, then, to Chicago in the 80s?

RF: Well, I had a kid by a girl whose parents live here. And after she got pregnant, we had to sort of sit down and figure out what to do. We decided the best thing to do would be to come live with her parents. I moved out here from New York. It was in 1983. And then we got our feet planted in an apartment not long after that. Then we broke up, or she left me. And I just kind of stayed here because the kid was here, and because eventually I put down roots here.

PM: Has that been a good scene for you? Isn't there quite a little country scene there, one is led to believe from afar?

RF: Well, I think it's a little bit over-hyped as far as—you mean like the Bloodshot scene and the old sort of country thing?

PM: Kind of, yeah. And Kelly Hogan, and Neko Case, for starters—

RF: Yeah, Kelly is great. We're good friends and gig together a little bit. But I think it's just a pretty small scene. I haven't been anywhere that compares to Nashville. To me, there are more good craftsmen in Nashville—forgetting about styles of music, just *any* style of music—there are more good musicians per square yard in Nashville than anywhere else.

PM: It's just unbelievable, yeah.

RF: It really is. More people are incredibly competent at what they do. You go and play a private party or you go to a club, and the sound is professionally run, and people all know what they're doing.

And there are clubs in Chicago, there are tons of good places to play with potentially good sound situations up here, from House of Blues all the way down to Showbiz Fitzgerald's, and like that, for rock and blues and different kinds of music. They got that thing going on. But being a country player in Chicago, it's a little bit lonely. I think there are a dozen people living here that are good at it. You mentioned Kelly, also Don Stierberg, and Scott Rigon and a couple other players and singers.

PM: Right. And they all turn up on the records, because they're the hot dozen.

RF: I think so, yeah.

And then there's a lot of like fake country here, I think, that I don't really get into very much. But just the whole punk country idea, I think—

PM: You were never a big fan of that, as I understand.

RF: No. I like some punk music, and I have some friends in that world, but I think as a mixture it just doesn't quite come off most of the time. I think it's interesting, but it doesn't really work. For some reason it's a really seductive idea, and people keep trying

and trying and trying. But country, it's about great singing, and punk is not. You know?

[laughter]

RF: So right there, there's a problem.

PM: Well, on or off the record, what's your take on Neko Case?

RF: Well, on the record, totally, I think she's a great singer.

PM: Pretty amazing, right?

RF: Yeah. Yeah. And she's got—I mean, it's probably needless to say to anybody, but she's got a personality and a spirit that totally translate onto record and in performance. She's just so full of nonsense and fire, all that quality comes out in the way she approaches a song, I think.

PM: She opens her mouth and something amazing comes out.

RF: Yeah, I think it's beyond technique. She did a song on that Paycheck tribute I produced. And the guy at Sugar Hill that I was dealing with for the album said that he thought it was brave and individualistic that I would allow like some off-pitch notes to be retained in the ultimate master—

PM: [laughs]

RF: And I was like, “Well, it's not about...” I mean, I never even thought about that, and I don't know if she did, either.

PM: [laughs]

RF: It never really occurred to me. I went back and listened to it, and said, “Well, yeah, that note is a little sharp, or this one, but...”

PM: So?

RF: But I don't hear that at all when I listen to it. I just hear her singing really naturally and being really deep into to the song that she picked. So anyway—

PM: Yeah, I have a brother who's always saying, “Well, isn't that flat? Isn't that sharp?” I say, “Hey, there's more to life and more to music than simply being in tune.”

RF: As [legendary songwriter and producer] Dan Penn said, “You're just singing the sad side of that note, that's all.”

PM: Right.

RF: With some singers, though, I think you really are kind of attuned to that way of listening to it. But with a really good singer, it's an irrelevant and counter productive way to listen. You don't listen to Ray Charles that way. And I don't listen to many other really good singers that way, because they've got an ability that transcends pitch. Or a machine idea of pitch.

PM: Yeah. I thought "Countryer Than Thou" was super funny. Are you catching any flak or kudos on that one in the press, or those fan list things?

RF: No—you mean from the "Boston Jew" line?

PM: Yeah, for instance.

[laughter]

RF: Well, people love it when you cut up on Christians. So that hasn't gotten me any flak at all. But the "Boston Jew" line, surprisingly, no. And we've been sort of playing on that in the stage presentation. The song interrupts in the middle, and the drummer calls me from his cell phone as a character from the anti-defamation league, and he takes offense at the song.

PM: [laughs]

RF: It's a shtick built on that. But that's kind of a parody of nothing, I guess, because nobody has objected to it.

PM: Unbelievable.

[laughter]

PM: I mean, that one really stuck out like, "I can't believe he said that!"

RF: Yeah. I love the way it just kind of happened, and it's kind of bold, and then all of sudden it's bluegrass right at the next line, and the fiddle starts playing like nothing's happened.

[laughter]

PM: Yeah, that's a real work of genius, that tune.

Maybe you'd share something for the readers about your co-writer on a pair of tunes, Dallas Wayne.

RF: Well, Dallas is an old friend. So right there, that's more important to me. To sit down to write a song with somebody that you know, and with whom you have a history

in common, not just an opinion of how good they are as a writer—not that Dallas isn't very good as a writer. But we've written probably a half a dozen, maybe ten songs over the years, at his place outside of Chicago, just killing an afternoon and drinking a beer, and trying to keep his dog off my lap.

PM: [laughs]

RF: And that kind of writing, for me, it's a lot more fruitful than trying to be set up with some guy that I don't know, and sit in a conference room.

PM: Personally, I only write with my friends, because nothing else is really comfortable for me. I just figure you get a much better song.

RF: Yeah, it's the same for me. I'm kind of a shy guy, and I don't like to open up and share a lot with somebody that I just met.

PM: Sure. You want to be able to say, "Nah, let's go over here. Let's not do that. How about this?" And you want the other guy to be able to say, "Nah, not that. How about this?"

RF: Exactly. There's got to be a level of trust in each other. It's tough with me, because I'm saying, "Nah" all the time—

PM: [laughs]

RF: —to my own lines or anybody else's lines, I don't care. The first time I wrote with Al Anderson, for instance, in a way I was scared to walk into the room and just meet him because I'd been an NRBQ fan for so long.

PM: Me too, yeah.

RF: But once we actually got to the business of writing, I just forgot, and I was like, "Nah, I don't like that line." I just forgot about who I was talking to.

PM: Really? Because some people find him so intimidating.

RF: He is. He's a very intimidating personality. But what you throw out is just so important to writing—you've really got to have a self-censoring attitude when you're writing.

PM: Yeah. And yet when Al came down to the studio recently to do an interview with me, he was just sweetness itself. And he'd pull an old jazz guitar off the wall to illustrate a point and say, "I learned all my chords from Ray Charles," and then play a Ray Charles tune and at every pass at the chorus he'd play different voicings just like on the record. And I was saying, "Oh, jeez, Al, I wish I had a video camera." He was unbelievable.

So on the shows lately, and maybe on the show at the Opry, are you still doing crazy stuff like busting out a Michael Jackson song if it suits you, or?

RF: Yeah, well we did the Opry Plaza two years ago. They let people on the Opry at a certain hour, like 10:00 o'clock. You're facing 3,000 people who are just kind of passing by your little stage there. And the moment that happened, we were doing "Black or White" by Michael. And the people who booked the Opry were so pleased with that—I think the reason they rebooked me there was because they just enjoyed watching the car wreck expressions of people as they passed by and stared at me doing a Michael Jackson song.

PM: [laughs] Your performing persona is so eclectic, are your listening habits even more far flung?

RF: I guess so, yeah. I like everything, really. If I don't understand it, then I really try to.

PM: Wow. Anybody good on the box lately that comes to mind?

RF: Well, I've been listening to Sarah Borges and enjoying her record a lot.

PM: Is that how she says her name?

RF: I think so, yeah, like gorgeous. I've also been enjoying this guy Keith Gattis—you probably know Keith, right?

PM: No. Who's he?

RF: He plays with Dwight Yoakam. He's another one of these sort of all-around musical guys—a great singer, great player, and real good writer. He did a major label record in the mid-90s in Nashville that was produced by Norro Wilson. It has a real Buck Owens/George Jones vibe to it, like that era when guys like George Ducas would cut a cool record but it would be recorded by Richard Bennett and played by all these guys. So anyway, it's a record that's really got that vibe. And then the new record that he's got out is totally unlike that. It's much more like Waylon Payne—he produced Waylon's records, so it's got a lot of the same kind of sounds on it.

PM: Ah, yeah. Okay. We're going to get on to him right away.

Read anything lately that turned you on?

RF: Oh, well, I just finished that Ruth Reichl memoir—she was the *New York Times* restaurant critic—about growing up with a mom who cooked a lot of food with mold on it—

PM: Oh, my God.

RF: That was a pretty quick read. I wouldn't say it was super deep, but it was fun.

PM: And what's the author's name?

RF: Her last name is R-e-i-c-h-l, her first name is Ruth.

PM: Right. And she's the food writer. Okay.

I thought your wife Donna was really hot on the duet of "Gonna Take You Home and Make You Like Me."

RF: [laughs]

PM: I'm told that she's got a voice-over career where you are. Is that so? Can you tell me about that?

RF: Yeah, that's what she does. And she just does great in it. She's been doing it about, let's see, close to ten years now. If you ever hear a J. C. Penny's commercial, she's the female voice for them, and she does—

PM: Unbelievable.

RF: Yeah. That's probably around a third of her work right there, because they cut a lot of commercials. They've got a lot of sales and stuff.

PM: Damn! That's a good career, if you're the voice of J. C. Penny.

RF: And especially because it's gone on so long. She had Sears Kenmore before that, so that was another big one. But then, when that ended, J. C. Penny's came along—because you can't do them both.

PM: Oh, right, of course.

RF: So she picked that up maybe seven or eight years ago, and you hardly ever see any commercials where you get the same voice going to seven or eight years. It's been a real good account to have, and it allows me to be on the road a little longer than another guy like me would be on the road.

PM: [laughs] So you have kids together, right?

RF: Yeah, we have two kids, and then I've got that one from earlier.

PM: And how are all the kids doing? What are they up to?

RF: Well, the old guy has done really well. He's a pilot now. He graduates from flight school this year, and he's doing flight instruction and some other stuff, flying a little

Albia, worked for ATA for a while this year. And the two younger guys are eight and five, so they don't really have careers yet, but—

PM: [laughs]

RF: —they're smart little cats.

PM: Oh, that's funny. So lastly: what about religion or spirituality? Any affiliations or inclinations in that domain?

RF: No. I went to church when I was a kid, I was a Christian when I was a kid, and not exactly brought up that way, but I was pretty religious when I was a kid. Then I veered away from it, and right now I'm just a practical atheist, but not really a committed logical atheist, if you know what I mean.

PM: Yeah.

RF: I'm really utterly skeptical about those claims, and so I'm not a church-goer, and I'm not really a believer. I think human beings are really our highest value, and I operate day-to-day life that way. That tends to lead me to live without a lot of precepts that are basically Christian. But, I mean, the Ten Commandments—at least seven of them are just kind of the way I live anyway, so I don't think it's really a lot different than a Christian life except that I don't believe in the afterlife, or in Jesus as the embodiment of God.

PM: You're not oriented toward the payoff, just the process.

RF: Yeah.

PM: Right. Well, I'm looking forward to the show on the 24th, and to meeting you. And I just really enjoy the new record, I'm loving it. We look forward to having you on the cover. And thank you for your time today, Robbie.

RF: Well, thank you very much for writing about me. I look forward to meeting you, too.

PM: Okay, catch you soon.

RF: Thanks, Frank. Bye-bye.