

A Conversation with the Moore Brothers
by Frank Goodman (8/2006, Puremusic.com)

We were so taken back by the recent record by this Bay Area brother duo that we were inclined to have this conversation with them to fill in a few gaps and get to know them a little bit. *Murdered By The Moore Brothers* is a DNA manifesto of unison and harmony singing that equals any of the sibling sounds it calls to mind and the singing duos of history. To be a group or a duo one can say that about takes a keen sense of detail and excellent intonation, attributes these brothers have in spades. Originally from Southern CA, they migrated North in their teens, one brother following the other, as often happens.

Their songs are very whimsical and arty, and this sets them apart from any brother duo I can recall. They come from the pop side of the tracks, but have punk, art and dada rock very audible in their backgrounds, and less of the country, folk or bluegrass orientation that one is infinitely more likely to find.

Murdered is their fourth full-length release together, though each has also released several side projects, annotated in our conversation. Thom and Greg were very engaging and eloquent people. They have a balanced and almost puzzlingly easygoing approach to their very singular music, which is quite unto itself and rather shockingly good.

Although their ability to make immaculately sparse and pristine recordings is truly arresting, their melodic bent also calls for more orchestration (maybe strings, rather than a combo, for instance) to my ear, and we hope to soon hear more fleshed-out arrangements of their music in the future.

This record was made in Grass Valley, CA, with Jhon Renoir, the grandson of the legendary painter. It certainly promises to be one of our favorite records this year.

[When I called, it was Thom that I found at home; Greg was en route.]

Puremusic: Imagine my surprise, if you will, just having gotten a note one day from a publicist friend about the Moore Brothers, which said that it was his favorite release of the year. And knowing this fellow, Howard, to be a real muso and a rather brainy eccentric person, that kind of endorsement I took seriously. I thought, well, I know how evolved his musical taste is, and how many records he deals with every year, and so this must be pretty good. And indeed, I was really stunned by the latest record, *Murdered by the Moore Brothers*.

Thom Moore: All right, thanks.

PM: That's a real piece of work. And then I went back and heard several others--*Now is the Time for Love*, and *Bee*, and a little of the Sandycoates' stuff. [Sandycoates is a nom de plume for Greg's solo work.] It's an amazing body of work for a pair of youngish

brothers who are so good and so artistically full-blown to be as under the radar as the group must be, nationally speaking. Is that not so?

TM: Yeah, we are just about as under the radar as you could be, I suppose. Well, that's good, because it's always good to be underground. And to be the underdog, I should say.

PM: Yeah, you're actually coming from that place, you're not somebody who's underdeveloped and twenty-one, being shoved down the masses' throats by a drowning conglomerate.

TM: Yeah, that wouldn't work.

PM: It's like the opposite of that.

[laughter]

TM: Yeah, the opposite. Which means we'll probably be around for a long time, but maybe won't sell very much.

PM: [laughs] Well, that calls to mind a question. I mean, it's very unusual, certainly in my experience but also stereotypically, for brothers to share a room for 15 years, as the story goes, but beyond that to have survived that and become a duo that seems to be shooting at longevity.

TM: Yeah.

PM: Have you guys little trouble a brothers, for instance?

TM: We have little trouble. We're not really much of fighter types, so we don't really fight each other. The obvious way we keep from having artistic fights is that we just split everything down the middle. So you'll notice that each of us sings the same amount of songs that we've written on each album. And when we play live, we take turns.

PM: Ah, you not only take turns on the records, but even live.

TM: Even live. So it's almost like we have two different acts that we join, when we join up with the Moore Brothers. But it seems to work that way, and then we don't really worry about one of us taking over the project. We don't get too, I don't know, we don't get our egos involved too much.

PM: Right. I think it really does come down to that. So as a big fan of the group, Thom, part of my intention in this conversation is to bring to light as much of the story, and who you guys are, as I can, because I really want our readers to get turned onto your amazing music.

TM: Okay.

PM: Is it in '91, then, that the brothers kind of formed as a duo?

TM: '91, no. Let's think. Greg moved up to Berkeley to go to school when he turned of age to go to college.

PM: So you guys are that young.

TM: No, we're not that young at all. I'm thirty-two, Greg is thirty-five.

PM: Okay.

TM: So in 1988, Greg came up to go to Berkeley. I followed him up--1990, that's right, 1990. And I followed him up. I came up a couple years later. So by '95, we were playing in the band together. It was a full-blown electric act.

PM: What was that called?

TM: Thumb of the Maid.

PM: And it comes from a Joni Mitchell lyric, I read.

TM: Right.

PM: What tune is that?

TM: The tune "Trouble Child" on *Court and Spark*.

PM: Okay, thank you. And so that was the first incarnation, was Thumb of the Maid.

TM: Yeah. That was the first incarnation. Although we did stuff separately for many years before that. And there are a couple Sandycoates releases before that. And a Thom Moore solo album, actually.

PM: And what is that called?

TM: *Spitting Songs*.

PM: Oh, it's *Spitting Songs*, not *Spitting Songs*.

TM: Yeah. And then we did Thumb of the Maid, and that didn't work out, because--I don't know why. We went on tour, and nobody came. Why does any band break up? Probably the same reason. Frustration.

PM: Sure. It's very, very hard. Now, did the kind of full band construct serve the brothers' vocal sound well?

TM: I think it did. I think it sounded more like--it was upbeat. Now if I hear it, it might be more like Prog Rock Squeeze, or something. We just had a reunion a couple weeks ago.

PM: Really?

TM: Yeah, the first time we played in eight years, and it was great. It was really fun.

PM: Where did you gig?

TM: The Ivy Room in Albany. That was a lot of fun.

PM: So where did the other guys in Thumb of the Maid end up?

TM: One of them, the bass player, Robert, is a lawyer in L.A. And the drummer is teaching music lessons in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

PM: I see.

TM: Then we were playing a lot of gigs together, like Thom Moore and Sandycoates. That's what Greg calls himself.

PM: Right. So it was each brother's solo show, basically?

TM: Yeah. We'd be on a same bill a lot. And so people would start referring to it as "Are you going to go see the Moore Brothers tonight?"

PM: [laughs]

TM: And one time the *Bay Guardian*--a writer for the *Guardian* was actually a friend of ours. And she was writing up a live show of ours and was going to do a little review. And she needed a name, and that's the first time we really had to decide on the Moore Brothers.

PM: Wow.

TM: That was about 1999, I think.

PM: Interesting, that she helped you make that turn, just needing a name in a big paper. Now, the papers in the Bay Area have been very good to the Moore Brothers, have they not?

TM: Yeah, sure. I definitely feel like we exist.

PM: Yeah. And why shouldn't they be? I mean, the group is damn good. But is it safe to say, then, that in the Bay Area, at least, the group has a profile, that people come to the shows, that it's known by people who like that kind of music, et cetera?

TM: It's hit and miss. But I would say that it keeps improving, and I feel like we do have a name for ourselves in the local music scene, sure.

PM: Do you gig more in the East Bay, or in the city?

TM: Used to be the East Bay, and now it's about half and half, maybe even more the city now.

PM: Where are the cool places for you guys to play in the city these days?

TM: Our favorites are the Make Out Room--

PM: Right. What a fantastic name.

TM: Yeah, right. I've never made out there, but I'm still looking forward to it.

PM: Right.

TM: That's actually our favorite place. We play at Cafe Noir frequently. Now I'm just blanking. Sometimes The Hemlock.

PM: Oh, it's nice to know that some of those clubs are still around. I haven't been out to the Bay Area in some time.

TM: Where are you at?

PM: I live in Nashville.

TM: Oh, cool.

PM: And so we songwriters down here get dreadfully narrative. It's very refreshing to hear a group like the Moore Brothers who--

TM: Stream of consciousness.

PM: Yeah! It's like, wow! I mean, I've listened to the records a number of times now, and it's like, "No, I couldn't tell you what any of those songs are about."

TM: We couldn't either.

PM: Yeah. [laughs] And I don't care. You know?

TM: Yeah.

PM: They sound good, and I put them on because I'm looking for this sound that these fellows make. So I think your discs, on the other hand, rather than being dreadfully narrative or to a specific point, are really jewels of originality. Have they, as one might bet, ended up on some top ten lists out there, Bay Area, or otherwise?

TM: Well, the year hasn't ended yet, so I'm hoping it'll end up on some sort of list. *Now is the Time for Love*, I saw on a couple of things. Amoeba Records are nice to us. I used to work there, so they better be.

PM: Yeah, they ought to be.

TM: Occasionally I admit, I Google the album title to see what people are writing. And I saw that we were on one "best of" list, top fifteen of the year.

PM: That's beautiful.

TM: Yeah, I'm hoping.

PM: Yeah. We're certainly going to be talking about it in that light. We are not in the habit of making such lists, but we're going to be talking as if, if we were list makers, it would certainly be there.

TM: Thanks.

PM: So what about gigging, Thom? What is the gigging scene for the brothers like at the moment? Do you get out of town a lot? Do you work straight jobs, or is it music all the time?

TM: Well, my brother has a job as an attendant for a disabled person. And I still have a year left of school. I'm getting my masters in U.S. History at SF State. And right now we're kind of in a transitional stage. I'm spending the summer up in Nevada City, where my girlfriend lives.

PM: What a beautiful town.

TM: And right now I'm house sitting for another day. That's the number you're calling, is the place where I'm house sitting.

PM: Oh, up in Nevada City?

TM: No, we're actually down in Oakland right now. But I've been up in Nevada City. It is a great town. You've been there?

PM: Yeah, sure. Yeah, I lived all the around the Bay Area, for sure, and just loved that. I love that area.

TM: Yeah, it's really nice. This summer is a little different than usual, we're playing less than usual. But we're going to do a West Coast tour the first week of August, and play everywhere from San Diego up to Vancouver.

PM: So who books you when you do that?

TM: We do.

PM: You do it yourselves.

TM: Yeah.

PM: That's hard.

TM: Yeah, it's hard. And we're getting some help from some friends of ours, a three-piece called Dream Date, a female--I don't know what to call it--punk pop group.

PM: You're not going to do dates together though?

TM: We are. We're doing some dates together. So we split up the dates, and each booked four of them, so the load was lightened. But usually I'd say we play two to three times a month. It's just the guitar we bring. It's easy. We don't drive, so we usually take public transportation--

PM: It's amazing, because I've gigged a lot around Europe with my brother. And sometimes it would just be a couple of guitars, and we'd be on the train. It's a gas. So has radio caught onto the Moore Brothers, appreciably, in any format?

TM: This album more than any other. College radio will sometimes play us well. KCRW has played it a bit. KALX, we have so many friends who are DJs there, we can usually get on the top ten there, for the month after the album comes out. And then everybody forgets about it.

PM: Sure.

TM: But yeah, they play us at KALX. Where else? Just all over the country, I'll see playlists. I don't think we have any college radio hits. But they give us some time.

PM: Is the gigging approached more as a pop thing, or belonging to acoustic duo world?

TM: We're more likely to play in between a punk band and a pop band. But sometimes we'll play a night of acoustic music, of course. Often, I think we're in the pop world more than the folk world.

PM: Right. And I think that's a good strategy, for sure.

TM: Yeah.

PM: I loved that film that Greg did with Annie Heringer on the--

TM: Oh, good!

PM: *Biggest Fan*. [laughs] [Check it out in the Audio/Video section of the MB website.]

TM: I'm so jealous that I missed that night. I had a date that night, and I missed that party.

PM: Imagine.

TM: I know, it's turned out to be a historic evening. You ask Greg about that. He probably could tell you more about it. I wasn't there. But I love the movie, too.

PM: But of the two brothers, you're more the Captain Beefheart fan, right?

TM: I'd say, yes, for sure.

PM: Because I was also that, as well. I mean, a consummate Beefheart fan. And so it's very interesting to me that half a pristine brother duo should be a Beefheart fan. Is there a certain period of his work that you like of his records?

TM: All of it. My favorite record might be *Lick My Decals Off*.

PM: Yeah. Ah, see, that's a real Beefheart fan.

TM: Yeah. But when I was 15, I used to shop at this record store called Poobah's in Pasadena. And the guy who worked there is this guy named Rick Snyder. It turned out he's Richard Midnight Hatsize Snyder from the last album and the last tour of the Magic Band. So he got me into it.

PM: Wow. What did he play?

TM: Bass.

PM: Yeah, because I jumped ship at a certain point. But to me, that golden period is *Lick My Decals Off*, *Spotlight Kid*, *Clear Spot*, right in there.

TM: Me, too.

PM: That's amazing stuff.

TM: I love it. Yeah, especially *Clear Spot* is just so beautiful, isn't it?

PM: Yeah. I mean, did you realize that Eric Bazilian lifted that whole intro off "Clear Spot" on the Joan Osborne record?

TM: I didn't hear it, no.

PM: It's like the beginning, that "dan-dune, dan-dune, dan-dune"--it's the beginning of this Joan Osborne song. And I went, "Oh, my God, he lifted a Beefheart thing." And then right in the songwriting credits it's like, "Oh, but he gave him credit. There it is."

TM: Oh, that's cool. Yeah, also Robyn Hitchcock, I was a big fan of his when I was a kid. And he had said in an interview that he wanted his music to be a hybrid between *Abbey Road* and *Trout Mask Replica*.

PM: Wow!

TM: I didn't know what *Trout Mask Replica* was. And so when I found that, it all hit me at the same time. It was at the record shop, and Rick told me he was in the band. And it kind of was this big--what do you call those moments.

PM: Epiphanic, or epiphanous.

TM: Epiphanic, right. Yeah, I like Beefheart. I think lyrically, occasionally, it might come out--more so, maybe, the Incredible String Band.

PM: I read in your bio somewhere that you had occasion to see them on a regular basis, or at least one of them, in L.A.

TM: Yeah, Robin Williamson, was, I think at the time, living half the time in L.A., and half the time in Scotland.

PM: Now, do you know what's become of those two characters today?

TM: Yeah, Mike Heron, he still tours around as the Incredible String Band, without Robin now.

PM: Ah.

TM: He did a tour with Joanna Newsom.

PM: Oh, the harpist? . [A songwriter harpist connected with what was once called the Freak Folk crowd.]

TM: Yeah, the Nevada City harpist.

PM: So is she a friend?

TM: Yeah, she's becoming a friend, definitely more and more all the time. Yeah, she's really nice.

PM: We've got to cover her. Tell me something, please, about your label, Plain Recordings.

TM: Plain is part of a larger organization called Runt. And Runt is mostly a distribution and a reissue company. They've reissued hundreds of obscure jazz records, folk records, '70s rock records, all sorts of stuff. Now, the guy who's sort of the head of this whole company, Filippo [Salvadori], he has all these little labels--Water, Four Men With Beards--and one of them is Plain. So they're little subsidiary labels, I guess. And Plain has the first Cat Power record, it came out on that. Also some My Bloody Valentine reissues, and us.

PM: Interesting. So how did Plain get on to you guys?

TM: We just noticed two fellows hanging around the back of the--there'd be five people in the audience a couple nights, and they'd always be among them. They were coming around, a couple shows in a row. And they asked us if we wanted to make a record. At the time we were happy with Amazing Grease, Scott Kannberg's label. But Scott had moved out of town, and we were looking for some sort of change. And they offered to actually give us a little money to work, which is something.

PM: Imagine that.

TM: Yeah, right. We'd never heard of that before.

PM: [laughs]

TM: We took the bait.

PM: Definitely. [laughs] Let's see. Oh, let's talk a little about how *Murdered* was made, and where, and with whom, because that's all interesting.

TM: Yeah. Well, Filippo gave us a little budget to work with. And he asked us if we knew anybody we'd like to record with. And we were friends with this guy Jhon Renoir, who's actually the grandson of the filmmaker, and the great grandson of the painter, Renoir. So I had met him through another mutual friend. He's a really fun guy. He lives up there in Grass Valley, which is next door to Nevada City.

PM: Right.

TM: So we asked Filippo if that was okay if we did it there, and we went and did it there.

PM: Wow. So what kind of a guy is Jhon?

TM: He's a very precise sort of analog personality. I don't know how to explain it.

PM: Is he very old-school when it comes to audio?

TM: He is, very much so. He hates Protools and the like.

PM: Big fat tape, like two-inch?

TM: Two-inch, probably, I think. Yeah, we don't know anything about that, so it's good to work with somebody who does care about sound, because we're just completely obsessed with songwriting and melody, and then after that we have no clue.

PM: So do you know at all what he may have been using for microphones? Did he put great care into the placement thereof?

TM: Did he put so much care into the placement that we felt a little worried about what he was doing?

PM: [laughs]

TM: We're so used to recording for free that we do stuff--and "Okay, can I do a harmony of that vocal?" They give us the mic, we do the harmony on the vocal, we hear it and say, "That's good" and go on. But we'd tell him, "We'd like to put a harmony on that vocal." And an hour later, he'd tell us, "We're ready." We were kind of worried. So we spent a lot of time on mic placement. That was the first time someone had done that for us this way.

PM: So when it comes to the old-school approach, I mean, that is exactly what it's all about.

TM: It's all about mic placement, isn't it.

PM: Completely, in that mode.

TM: Well, that makes me feel a lot better, Frank. I know we spent our money wisely, then.

PM: Yeah, he's the guy, if that's where all his time and energy went.

TM: He is the guy. I recommend him highly.

PM: And this facility that you were at, it's his place, his house?

TM: No, it's a friend of his, Brandon's house. And they're sort of a team. Brandon didn't do much work on our thing, so it's all Jhon. But Brandon has a family, and then on the property, Jhon built the studio and bought most of the equipment. Jhon is, I think--I don't know how he finances it, but I think part of life he's poor, and then he goes and sells one of his great grandfather's sketches to a museum and ends up with \$100,000, and lives off that for--and he also makes money, I'm sure, with the studio thing.

PM: But that's an incredible story. [laughs]

I always like to know if my subjects have read anything fun or compelling lately.

TM: Well, let's see, what am I reading? Right now I'm kind of getting interested in California painters of the 19th century and early 20th century. So I'm reading little art books a lot these days.

PM: A true historian.

TM: Yeah. I'm a history nut. I'm actually taking a summer break. I read so much during the year. I'm reading Edgar Allen Poe stories and kicking back. Nothing too difficult.

PM: Right. Are you listening to anything special?

TM: These days, well, the Jackie DeShannon reissues are out. She's one of my favorites. Do you know her?

PM: Oh, sure.

TM: I'm a big fan of her. I've been listening to her. Let's see. No, I can't think of anything that's--all my records are still in storage, so I've pretty much been poor and listening to some of my old things. Greg played me the Scritti Politti. I'm sure he can tell you about that.

PM: Scritti Politti is still around?

TM: Scritti Polliti just made a new CD that Greg played for me. It's really great.

PM: Oh, my God, I haven't heard them in twenty years.

TM: Right. Well, you'll have to ask Greg about that one.

PM: Damn. But yeah, I loved that band.

TM: Let's see, Biff Rose? Do you know Biff Rose?

PM: Yeah. Now, is he really staying...

TM: Yes, he's staying at our old house right now. We just went to the museum with him today.

PM: What kind of a cat is he? I mean, I remember listening to Biff--I don't want to say "in the day," but sometime ago.

TM: Yeah, he's probably just like you'd expect, kind of a beatnik.

PM: Yeah.

TM: Real funny and real loud and real zany, and genius-like.

PM: Yeah. How do you guys happen to know each other?

TM: I recognized him in a crowd in New Orleans when I was visiting. He said I'm one of the only people who's ever done that.

PM: Wow!

TM: I said, "I'm a huge fan." And we became pen pals over the computer. I convinced Runt, our label, to reissue his first two.

PM: Amazing, what a cool thing to have done.

TM: Yeah. And then I got to write the liner notes, so I started talking to him. And then Katrina came, and he moved out here.

PM: Wow.

TM: So yeah, it's been really fun.

PM: So is he still gigging?

TM: He gigs. He's played two gigs with us and another two or three around California within the last year. And he's done one in New York. He plays if someone sets up a show. He doesn't bother trying to book anything.

PM: Yeah, a great artist, Biff Rose.

TM: Oh, yeah, I love him.

PM: So are you--or if you'll speak for Greg--are either of the brothers spiritually inclined in any way?

TM: I would say no, on the spiritually. We grew up Episcopalian, but we both wandered from the fold.

PM: Yeah, right, as we do. But not into any other fold?

TM: No. No, just rock 'n' roll.

PM: [laughs] And are you both still single?

TM: Both have girlfriends.

PM: Well, cool. Well, I think I'm running out of the questions that I had, Thom. It's always interesting when someone sounds and kind of feels just like you thought they would, and that's the experience I'm having here.

TM: Thanks, Frank. Well, I hope we get to meet sometime.

[During the conversation, Greg arrived, so we spoke a little with him.]

Puremusic: I love that film with Annie Heringer on your website.

Greg Moore: Oh, yeah. Isn't that thing funny?

PM: How did that take place? Was it well planned?

GM: Kind of. Actually it wasn't that well planned. The guy who stars in the movie, Ben Davis, now, that guy had made another movie that Annie directed. It was a just a short film. And she showed it to me, and I thought it was hilarious. It was about--okay, Annie is filming her friends in the park. And then you see Ben like popping out from behind a tree, in the background.

And then all of a sudden he has stolen the camera, and he's running, so you just see the camera shaking. And then Ben gets into his car and puts the camera down into the passenger seat, but it's pointed right towards him. And he's like checking it out, and he's like, "Yeah! This thing is awesome," and stuff like that. And then he's just driving. It is just really funny.

So I'm asking her, "Who is this guy? Is he a professional actor?" And she's like, "No. I think he's done a little bit of stuff. But he's just this guy I know who's really funny." And then she told the story, or then Thom told the story, but that situation actually happened in real life.

PM: Oh, the biggest fan situation?

GM: The biggest fan situation, yeah. And Ben Davis was doing that at one of Thom's concerts. It happened to Thom, in reality, but we kind of said, "Well, let's get Ben to

make this movie where I'm playing a concert, and he does that." So then the whole party thing was just kind of like everyone got together to film it, and I don't think there was a script. We'd plan it out a little bit, like "Okay, you're going to come bursting out the door. You're really mad." It took me a long time because I kept on laughing.

PM: [laughs] But in real life, Ben Davis was doing that at a Thom show?

GM: Yeah, he was.

PM: [laughs] Well, that really makes it crazy. So what about Annie Heringer?

GM: So what about her?

PM: How do you know her, and what do you know about her?

GM: She's a really dear old friend that we grew up with. I think we went to youth group together, and we sang in choir together, or something like that. Then we also went to high school together. And we both went to Germany and spent time over in Germany, so we both have that connection, too. She's one of the few people from my childhood that I still feel pretty close with.

PM: Now, what is the record you did with Lois Maffeo, *Owl and the Pussycat*?

GM: I would say it's pretty similar to--at least my songs are pretty similar to my songs on *Murdered by the Moore Brothers*. And I think it's a really stripped-down recording. Lois' songs--have you ever heard her music?

PM: I don't know her music yet. I've heard now a lot of the Brothers and Sandycoates, but I don't know Lois' music yet.

GM: She was a big inspiration when I was first starting to write songs and play out in front of people. She was part of the Olympia punk rock thing. She did it all with an acoustic guitar. And she's got a really commanding presence, and told really witty stories when she broke strings. And I really looked up to her.

PM: She was an acoustic figure in the Olympia scene.

GM: Yeah. So she'd been playing shows with Fugazi and Nirvana and stuff, playing acoustic. And she was kind of looked up to as a starter of the whole Riot Girl thing. [aka Riot Grrl]

PM: Right.

GM: So that was kind of her scene, and she's still involved with that. Well, she doesn't do so much music anymore. But she goes to the Ladyfest thing and stuff like that, and she's like the goddess, basically.

PM: Wow.

GM: She does more freelance writing now, that's her main outlet now.

PM: Freelance writing of a fictional nature, or what?

GM: I think some music reviews.

PM: A journalist.

GM: Yeah. All kinds of stuff. She reads a lot. She probably writes book reviews--I wouldn't be surprised. You really should check her stuff out. She's great. So for me it was really a dream come true to make a record with her, because I really was into her stuff.

PM: So if she was from the Olympia scene, and you were either from southern or northern California, how did you tie up with her?

GM: Well, just at her shows, and then I gave her tapes. I'd come with a tape of some of my songs.

PM: Did she get it right away, where you coming from, musically?

GM: Well, she's so organized that she actually wrote me back a postcard, and it was like, "Hey, I enjoyed it." And that was really cool.

PM: That's so rare.

GM: Yeah, so rare, and so nice. Then I'd just keep on going to see her, and I'd give her a tape of the newest things I was working on. Or maybe even by then I had a CD together, or a single or something. And she wrote me back again, and she was like, "Wow, I really like this." And then I think I didn't see her for a couple years, and then when I did, I was in L.A. And she was like, "Hey, I was looking for you in San Francisco." And I was like, "Wow, she remembered me." She was all, "Hang out for a second and talk." And eventually she wrote me this letter and was like, "What do you think--let's make a record."

PM: Wow!

GM: It was really strange. So she came down to Oakland, and I picked her up from the bus station. It was just this surreal experience. I took her back to my apartment, and we just played each other some of the songs that we'd been working on, and had dinner, and just hit it off. So we've been really good friends since then.

PM: Picked her up at the bus station and brought her back to the apartment and started playing songs.

GM: Yeah.

PM: That's like a frickin' movie. That's unbelievable.

GM: Yeah, unbelievable. It was like a dream.

PM: Damn! And you still are good friends.

GM: Uh-huh. She always sets up a show in her backyard, and so we play in her backyard.

PM: Wow! [laughs] It's a cool scene.

GM: Yeah, totally.

PM: And I love the look of the scene of the friends that you'd gathered for that movie.

GM: Oh, yeah. [laughs]

PM: It was like, "Wow, this is a neat bunch of people."

GM: Yeah, I don't even know a lot of those people, but I do know some of them.

[laughter]

GM: Just the random L.A. crew.

PM: Oh, so that's where that was shot?

GM: Yeah, that was shot in L.A.

PM: So yeah, I found out a lot from Thom about the Moore Brothers gigging scene and the recording scene. So tell me your version of who you may be either reading or listening to at the moment.

GM: Well, that Scritti Politti record.

PM: Oh, yeah. Now, I thought that they were done so long ago.

GM: Yeah.

PM: I mean, when was their heyday? I remember loving that band.

GM: Yeah, their heyday was probably like that *Cupid and Psyche* '85.

PM: Yeah, right.

GM: And since then they've done one thing around 1999 or 2000, which was totally different. "No synthesizers" was the rule. And they got Mos Def, and he assembled the band, and a couple rappers.

PM: Wow!

GM: Kind of like this weird grunge hip-hop thing. He wasn't really singing as much as he did on the more poppy stuff. So that was strange, but it was really good. But this one was even better than that, and I think it's probably the best thing he's ever done.

PM: Well, I don't even know who the people in Scritti Politti are. They were just like a big synthesizer band, to me, that I loved.

GM: Well, before that there was a couple different versions of Scritti Politti, and it was kind of like a gospel R&B-tinged kind of like real band before they got famous. And then he was on Rough Trade, now he's back on Rough Trade. So then the whole slick synthesizer era was when he moved to New York, and was like really into hip-hop and R&B, like all these really expensive guys. So now this new one is all just him in his home studio.

PM: Now, who is him?

GM: Him is this guy, Green Gartside. He's a really interesting character. If you check him out on the internet, he's a really funny, eccentric guy, very smart.
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scritti_Politti]

PM: And he's American, he's English?

GM: No. I think he's Welsh. When they started out in London, they were really kind of indiscernible and weird. I mean, it's still interesting for me and a lot of people who like weird post-punk, anti-music kind of thing, or something.

PM: Right. Singing the way you guys do, and composing the way you do, there are some unusual influences.

GM: Yeah.

PM: Do you have any truck with the rap scene or the hip-hop scene, or do you listen to any such thing?

GM: I wish I listened to more. I mean, I enjoy it. I don't really know too much about it. I can only listen to it in small doses, but I do like it, yeah. But definitely I mean, yes, for sure--but probably more like the R&B end, like Marvin Gaye kind of stuff. I was into Run-DMC when that came out. And I think that still sounds pretty much fresh.

PM: Right. What about reading? Do you find time or make time?

GM: Yeah, I do. I mean, gosh, I can't even think of what I've read. It's embarrassing. I read just kind of fluffy stuff.

PM: [laughs]

GM: But I just read this Beatles bio.

PM: Which one, the book by their engineer?

GM: No. It's a new one that came out from a New York Times writer named Spitz, maybe? [*The Beatles: The Biography*, nearly 1,000 pages by Bob Spitz]

PM: Uh-huh. [laughs]

So what is the plan, now? I mean, *Murdered*--you didn't get to hear me rave on about it, but I'm just crazy about this record.

GM: Oh, thank you so much.

PM: The singularity of its originality, it's mind blowing to me.

GM: Really? Thank you.

PM: So you, I know, have a job as an attendant for a disabled person. And Thom is finishing his last year in school. But now with the timing of this release and you've got to play, how will you work that all out?

GM: Well, I would probably prioritize music. I would love to do that full time and make money, if I could, doing it. This guy I'm working for now, I gave him a year commitment, but I told him I'd be doing a little touring. So I think I'm actually thinking about going to grad school, but I haven't made any concrete plans, or haven't applied yet, but I'm kind of considering going somewhere around here for an MFA.

PM: What would it be in?

GM: Painting.

PM: Painting, wow.

GM: So that would be a nice way to have fun for two years and make some art.

PM: Right. So that's something that you do seriously is paint?

GM: Yeah.

PM: So did you get to see many Renoir sketches in the course of the recording?

GM: I don't think I saw any. I think I saw a picture of one. It wasn't that impressive.

PM: It wasn't.

GM: Yeah, and I think it was just a flower, like a watercolor of a flower, or something like that.

PM: Wow, I hope that sometime you'll put up some work of an artistic nature on the site.

GM: Oh, yeah.

PM: I like when artists do that. I've been meaning to do a feature in Puremusic about the artwork of musical artists.

GM: That would be interesting. I mean, it's really interconnected. A lot of the ideas and a lot of the kind of moods I'm going for, there's crossover, for sure. But it's funny, I've always in my mind been reluctant to do that thing. I guess because when I was doing my undergrad degree and I was in art school, and the Moore Brothers were gigging around a lot, I just didn't want to be that guy, the guy who was like having his band come play all the time. I wanted people to take my paintings separately. So people wouldn't have that background information or something.

PM: Right. And now, in your thirties, it may matter less. I don't know.

GM: Yeah. I don't know.

PM: Well, jeez, Greg, I really don't have more questions, because I plumbed many depths with brother Thom there. I hope you haven't come too far to get my few questions.

GM: No, no, not at all. That was great. I hope I meet you in person next time.

PM: Absolutely. When I get out to the Bay Area, which I'm soon to do, I will try to get in touch and see if we can have coffee sometime.