

[0:00:00]

Interviewer: Cool. Just for the record, can you state your name and the year you were born?

Steve Selvidge: My name's Steve Selvidge, and I was born in 1973.

Interviewer: And first of all, could you talk a little bit about your childhood in Memphis?

Steve Selvidge: Do I look at you? *[laughter]*

Interviewer: Yeah, you can look at me. Could you talk a little bit about your childhood in Memphis, and the music you were exposed to growing up?

Steve Selvidge: Sure. I grew up, my father was Sid Selvidge, Memphis musician, moved to Memphis in 1961 from Greenville, Mississippi. So I grew up in his sort-of world, he was friend and contemporaries with Jim Dickinson, Lee Baker and worked throughout Ardent Studios and stuff like that, so that was kind-of my immediate musical world. And then just kind-of whatever came with Memphis growing up in the 80s and stuff like that, sort-of the hardcore scene that was based around the Antenna Club and stuff like that, and...

[0:01:00]

Just having an awesome childhood *[laughter]*.

Interviewer: Can you talk a little bit more about Lee Baker, and like the influence he had on you?

Steve Selvidge: Absolutely. So Lee Baker was a guitar player, he was in a band called Moloch in the late 60s, which was like the original Memphis hard rock band. But more so he was a great sort-of interpreter of blues music and he just kind-of had his own thing. He studied a lot with Furry Lewis, legendary blues man, and spent a lot of time with him and really kind-of sort-of mashed together his own style based on what he did and what he learned from those guys, Fred McDowell, stuff like that. And he was just a huge presence of a man and just a fantastic guitar player, and kind-of our first – like me and Luther Dickinson, it was like sort-of our first guitar hero. Like, he was right there, and every time Mud Boy would play, we would be just right there in front of him, in awe. I would – well, I started playing guitar once I got halfway decent or whatever –

[0:02:00]

Lee would come over just to hang out, talk with my dad or whatever, and I would just happen to be playing guitar when he came by. And then kind-of – and then walk down, like, I didn't know you were here. Fishing for a compliment, you know. So it was huge influence on me, for sure.

Interviewer: Awesome. So what age were you when you first picked up an instrument?

Steve Selvidge: When I decided the guitar is what I wanted to do, I think I was ten. I'd been playing drums prior to that, taking lessons, and I'd mess around with bass a little bit. But I remember ten years old was, it was like, this is what I want to do, I want to play guitar.

Interviewer: So did your dad immediately start helping you learn guitar or...

Steve Selvidge: Yeah, somewhat. I mean, he kind-of let me find it on my own. He never was like, "Here, do this," but when I wanted to – I think I wanted to learn how to play Ziggy Stardust [*makes guitar sounds*].

[0:03:00]

And he said, "I'll tell you what, I'll teach you three chords: A – E, A and D. And when you can go back and forth between those quickly, come back and I'll teach you something else." So then, there was a book called *The Complete Beatles*, it had like, chord charts, like with the little chord symbols and everything. So I started figuring stuff out from there. Remember F chord, I was like, "I'll never be able to do this." And from then, he showed me things here and there, but mainly he showed me by example of how to kind-of navigate the waters of the music business. That's – I got more of that from him and some inkling of how to sing, as well.

Interviewer: So what age were you when you officially decided like, this is what I want to do for the rest of my life?

Steve Selvidge: Ten, really. Well, I mean even before that. I mean, I used to say – I mean, it's hard to say really. I mean, everybody often wants to emulate their parents to some extent, but I mean, I remember when I was in first grade to kindergarten, saying, "I'm going to be a musician."

[0:04:00]

Because that's what my dad was, and it was never firefighter or whatever else. But ten was when it got a hold of me, and then you have no real concept of what's going to be to make a living or anything like that. I was going to be Kiss or Led Zeppelin or whatever. But then, I guess once I got in a band that started doing well, I was like, "I might, might be able to make a living doing this," so that was some time in the 90s. But it's all I've ever really wanted to do.

Interviewer: So who was your first band and like, how did that –

Steve Selvidge: Well, a lot of different bands, just kind-of coming up. The first real band that did anything, like toured and played shows that were of any decent size in town was a band called Big Ass Truck, and we formed in 1993 and toured –

[0:05:00]

and put out records and was on MTV and all that shenanigans.

Interviewer: So I guess going back a little bit, can you talk about the first time you met Paul Taylor and like, how that relationship formed?

Steve Selvidge: Yeah, I want to say it was around sixth grade. I could have my numbers wrong, but I feel like it was around the time I was in sixth grade, and literally it was – my dad knew Pat Taylor, and they didn't really run quite in the same circles, but he was – he admired him, he was a talented dude. So basically just a play date. He was like, "I think Paul is talented and kind-of showing some progress," and he was like, "You two should hang out," so I came over. And by that point, I was getting some stuff together, and he was like, playing drums and like, I've written these songs, was pretty impressed. But we just hung out. Then like, a year later I guess, couple years later, he got to Snowden. He was at Idlewild Elementary, that was a Snowden junior high, and we both skated and were into the same stuff –

[0:06:00] CUT 1 --BEGIN SEGMENT 2

so got to hang out then. And then he came over to Central after I got there, and we were in jazz band, and then we formed – we actually had a band in high school called Oversoul. And then somebody would – we'd write our name on the wall and then

somebody would put an O at the end of it, says Oversoulo, because we were teenagers and we just – the whole band was just about everybody soloing as much as possible. But sixth grade was when we were first kind-of introduced.

Interviewer: How old were you when you met the Dickinsons for the first time?

Steve Selvidge: Well, I mean, Luther's six months older than me, so within days of being born I probably met Luther somehow. Cody came along in '76. I mean, literally we've known each other all our lives. I don't – there's no memory of them – a before. We just kind-of all came into the world and there we were.

Interviewer: So did y'all all feel like y'all had a special bond, being second-generation musicians?

Steve Selvidge: Yeah. I mean, we –

[0:07:00]

we were kids at like, birthday parties and stuff like that. It was us, like Luther and Cody, me, Baker's kids and Winston Eggleston were all kind-of all at the same birthday parties. Baker's kids, a little bit younger than us, but so we kind-of hung out here and there, but it wasn't until like, high school. It was actually an Earth Day in 1989 that we all kind-of showed up, and here we were, all scraggly, skinny, long-haired, degenerate little kids, like, "Man, let's go to my house," because I lived right by The Shell. It was Earth Day at The Shell and it's like, "Let's go to my house, like, let's play guitar," or whatever. So got there and I plugged into my PV and was – Luther was impressed because I was playing out side of the pentatonic box, with like, one fret. And then it was like, boom, it was on from there. It was shortly thereafter that Luther got DDT –

[0:08:00]

together with Paul. So that's when it really kind-of took hold.

Interviewer: So when did y'all decide to form Sons of Mud Boy?

Steve Selvidge: Well, it really coalesced this year, when my dad got sick. But we'd been talking about doing it for a while. The first thing that we really did as Sons of Mud Boy, quote-unquote, was in 2005. Jim was still alive, Cody was out of town, I think he was on tour

with Hill Country Revue, but we went down to the Zebra Ranch and with Paul on drums, Luther and I on guitars, going back and forth, singing different songs, Jim on piano, and we cut some stuff. Just kind-of like, let's just do it. And that was the first time that we kind-of got – we'd always played together, Luther and I especially, we had always sort-of – we called it three-legged puppy or whatever else, had these attempts to kind-of get up –

[0:09:00]

and play all the stuff that we – stuff that I'd learned from my dad and stuff that he'd learned from his dad, stuff that we knew together. But this was the first time that it was really starting to kind-of come together. And then, when Jim passed and then when my dad passed, it was just – that's when it kind-of came into focus as sort-of a continuation of this sort of stuff, because both Jim and my dad had said to Luther and I, respectively, "Somebody's got to keep singing these songs, these Furry Lewis tunes and whatever else, Casey Jones, Brownsville," and all the other stuff that Mud Boy did. So really, it's kind-of always been in this sort-of nebulous thing, and up until this past year, is when it's really kind-of coalesced, so to speak.

Interviewer:

Cool. I know you mentioned it a little bit earlier, but can you talk a little bit more about Big Ass Truck, and like the formation of that group?

Steve Selvidge:

So that was the early 90s and a buddy of mine – so –

[0:10:00]

Robby Grant and I were in a band together called Thrill of Confusion. That morphed into a band called Fester. It's a terrible name. I take responsibility for that. So that band broke up, and we kind-of just devolved into this noisemaking and everybody – like me and Robbie were kind-of over here, and the other guys were over here and nobody liked each other very much. And so the band just kind-of dissolved, but then Jared, who was in The Simple Tones, who now owns Shangri-La Records, called, said, "Hey, we've got a CD – I mean, a seven-inch release party." We had done a gig with him prior and he liked it. This was Fester. Will you – do you want to play this show? And I was – he called me and I was like, "You know what, that band's not together anymore. I'll get something together and we'll open the show for you." So I'd been hanging out with Colin Butler, who was a DJ, and I had

gone to school with him. He was four years – three or four years ahead of me at Central. So we'd been hanging –

[0:11:00]

out, and the whole idea of a DJ turntablist with band had just kind-of really starting to kind-of come up, and Check Your Head had come out, and we were inspired by that. So it's like, yeah, let's do something. We didn't really know what, so then that gig kind-of happened and I was like – I called Robbie, because we were still cool working together, Robert Barnett was friends with my brother, he lived down the street from me, he was a great drummer. I had done some stuff with Joe Boone here and there, who played bass, Alex Greene played keyboards and I'd worked with him at Squash Possum, which was a health food restaurant back in the day, and so I just kind-of randomly called people and we got together. And we kind-of started writing stuff kind-of fast. It was like there was a pretty palpable energy, like this is cool, and the turntable thing was new. So played the show, it went well, and Andrea Lisle and Gina Barker were like, "Hey, we've got this little label, Sugar Ditch, you want to put out a seven inch?" it's like, "Yeah." So we would go – went to Stan Philips, we got together in like, basically January of 93, and then by –

[0:12:00]

May, we were at Sam Philips for Roland James – the genius Roland James recording.

0:12:04 -- CUT 2 – BEGIN SEGMENT 3

And so with that show at the Antenna Club with The Simple Tones, somebody from the paper called me, and they were like, "We need a name for your band for the listing," and I was – happened to be driving back from Memphis State on the interstate, and this semi passed me and I was just like, "I don't know, man. Name it Big Ass Truck, whatever," *[laughter]* because we thought it was temporary anyway, or a temporary name. We actually had discussions about, we've got to change our name now, and then somebody was like, "You might think about that," so that happened. And started playing in town and we were inspired by The Grifters, in that we heard that they had this book of contacts. This is before the internet, like they had this book of contacts, people out of town, clubs, promoters, and they toured. We're like, "We've got to do that," so that was kind-of our main goal. So then –

[0:13:00]

we started moving out of town and then one thing led to another and we kind-of went, shhewww, like that.

Interviewer: So what was your mindset kind-of when the band ended, like what was your plan after that?

Steve Selvidge: I don't know. It was one of those things where things had happened kind-of fast, and we got on the road pretty quickly and we got records out, and we kind-of had the trajectory. And then it got kind-of weird and then it got kind-of not fun anymore, and we decided to stop. And then, I don't know, that was 2001, I was 20s, late 20s. I was just trying to figure out how to continue working, and I was kind-of hesitant to like, put it all into another band again at that point. Plus, I didn't have much in the way of songs at the moment, but that's kind-of when my session career picked up. I mean, I was in town.

[0:14:00]

The funny thing is, is when Big Ass Truck was doing – being pretty successful, I thought, “Well, this is it. I've made it. I'm - I know – I'll probably learn something else, but I'm in a popular band, so I must know all there is to know about playing guitar [laughter],” but really all I could do was play guitar for Big Ass Truck. So I got home and I had to work, so I started playing with anybody really, and then I started getting these kind-of regular gigs at The Blue Monkey and stuff, and I started playing with Susan Marshall and Ross Rice, who I'd played with previous, and David Kowser and playing all this music that I never would've really played on my own, or even thought to maybe listen to sometimes. And in trying to figure out how I could fit myself into that, I just started to learn exponentially. And then, I was able to get in a couple of sessions at Ardent here and there, and that led to another one and then people started calling, and that led to a whole different kind of chapter, I guess.

Interviewer: Can you talk a little bit about some of the projects you got to work on when you were a session player artist?

[0:15:00]

What's some notable ones? Stuff with Rob Jungklas, a lot of just kind-of singer-songwriters who'd come in with no band, and – which was always fun, because they sort-of come in with a song and like, you get together with the other musicians and you chart it

out and you do the – very Memphis thing. There's no like, chart charts, like go from here to there to there, it's just you sort-of, you do this and I'll do that and boom, it's done. So that was always really exciting, and being able to like – all the sudden, I'm in a room with Steve Potts, Dave Smith, these people with – I mean, these were first call guys when I was a kid, I'd heard about them. So to be – that was just amazing. It's just a lot of records, a lot of sessions. From everything from like, the biggest super, high-dollar, major label, union-scale kind of stuff to total vanity session, where you're just – you're doing the best you can for what they got.

[0:16:00]

Interviewer: Cool. Did you miss being part of a band at any point?

Steve Selvidge: I did, yeah, absolutely. There's a camaraderie if it's right, and you're lucky to get it once. You seldom get it twice. When a band is a true band and like, they enjoy being with each other, even if they get on each other's nerves, but there's kind-of a gang mentality and a camaraderie, it's pretty – it's hard to replace, and it's a really fantastic feeling. So, I mean, I'd been in a couple of different bands. Played with Lucero for a bit, toured with a couple other people, played with Amy LeVere, which was great, I learned a lot on that gig, but I missed the kind-of like, we're all in this together and just the fun, the jokes, everything. Which is fortunate that I have that now with the band that I'm in, that we'll get to eventually.

Interviewer: Can you talk a little bit about your time with The Secret Service, and that band?

[0:17:00]

Steve Selvidge: Yeah. So Justus had been doing this sort-of singer-songwriter thing, and he'd asked me to help him. He was trying to record a record and he was doing it at some, like, some live sound company had like, a studio set up in their warehouse and it was just terrible and they guy that was engineering, he had no idea what he was doing whatsoever, and he asked me to come play guitar on some stuff he was recording. And it was like, I had run down like, a performance, I played something, and literally the guy was like, "Cool, that sounded good. Do you want to record it?" and I was like, "Ha-ha," he's like, "No, I didn't record that." So anyway, it was a long night and he – Justus asked me how it was – what do you think? I was like, "You're wasting your money and your time here. I could do a record on you a lot better than this." So we got some money together, and I took him over to Memphis

Soundworks, which is Posey Hedges' place, and we cut like, kind-of a singer-songwriter, more Americana kind of record, which I'm really proud of. It's a really great record. I produced it.

[0:18:00] CUT 3—BEGIN SEGMENT 4

And then he was kind-of doing some more shows and he was starting to write stuff that was a little more aggressive, and so he wanted to do some shows doing his solo thing or whatever, and we just kept finding ourselves going in this other direction, and so it just sort-of morphed into The Secret Service. And I thought, "Wow, this is great, this is – I can write for this." It was just really simple, it wasn't like, well, if you like this and it's this and it's this hyphen and that hyphen and dash this, it's just kind-of straightforward rock and it was so much fun. The shows were so much fun, so I just – I kind-of ponied up the dough and said, "Let's make a record," and took to down to the Zebra Ranch to cut basic tracks, did vocals and minor overdubs with Pete Matthews in his little room, and then mixed it with Jeff Powell at Ardent. And for a minute there, it kind-of – it bubbled up –

[0:19:00]

came out well. Just we weren't really able to get it off the ground in terms of touring. By that point, everybody was in their 30s, and it was just kind-of – more people had day jobs and it was harder to get them out on tour. So I could foot the bill for the record, but I couldn't keep going with that. And then concurrently, it was just like I would kind-of dip out and play with The Bloodthirsty Lovers, and then play with Amy, so things – I had to work. So it's like, if there's a tour and a chance to make records and release them, I'm going to do that. So they just kind-of got caught on the wayside, but it was fun. It's a fun band.

Interviewer: Can you talk a little bit more about how you got involved with The Bloodthirsty Lovers and what that was like?

Steve Selvidge: Yeah, that was intense. Again, always been a fan of The Grifters, admirer Dave Shouse. So Paul Taylor was playing with The Bloodthirsty Lover, and their third guy, kind-of keyboard player, utility dude, he went on and he just didn't want to be in a band anymore, so they approached me.

[0:20:00]

This must've been like, 2003. And hey, we're kind-of doing – we've got some shows lined up, do you want to do this? And initially, I was just sort-of playing keyboards, which I'm all right at, but not that great, and some bass. So I was like, "Yeah, let's do it." So I learned the stuff, and it was like, we've got a tour with Modest Mouse. I'm like, "Great." So my first show with them was in front of like, I don't know how many thousand people at the House of Blues or whatever with Modest Mouse. And I'm like, we're first, so you're having to get on stage real fast, and I'm having to set up all this MIDI equipment and it was kind-of nerve-racking, but that went on for a while, and then we were looking to do another record. And then eventually, it got to where it was just me and Dave, and that's where we did *The Delicate Seam*. The first record was just all Dave, and then the second record was – we had Kevin March, who had played –

[0:21:00]

with Dave's previous band, Those Bastard Souls. He was in town for a day, and we went to Easley's and just said, "Okay, we're just going to throw these songs at you." I mean, he hadn't heard anything, we just played them down and he just kind-of reacted to them, and those were our drum tracks. Kevin's great, played with The Dam Builders, really fantastic drummer, great musician. So from there, we just sort-of took it to our houses and kind-of home recorded it, and then we'd take it and mix it somewhere else. Kevin Houston mixed it at Sounds and Reel. Put it out, toured it, toured it, toured it some more, and then it kind-of ran its course. I think Dave was just – Dave tends to move on, and when he's done, he's done, so we were just kind-of done. But that record, *The Delicate Seam*, is the only record that I've been a part of that I listened to as a fan. I think it has a lot to do with Dave's voice, but I just – I love everything about it. I love the way the record sounds, I loved making it, and so like, it's often played at the house.

[0:22:00]

It's fun.

Interviewer:

So can you talk a little bit more about Amy LaVere and how that experience was and how you ended up doing that, what you learned from it?

Steve Selvidge:

So once again, Paul Taylor was playing with Amy LaVere, and she had a couple different guitar players. One of them lived in

Nashville, it was just always hard to get people to stick. She'd been playing with Jason Freeman, but he was kind-of doing his own thing. Once again, they had a tour coming up opening up for somebody, this time it was Glen Hansard from The Frames, who was just – the movie *Once* had just come out, and he was touring that. So we got this opening tour, can you do it? I was like, "Yeah, sure." So learned a bunch of songs, practiced a bunch, went out on tour. But immediately it kind-of was obvious that first of all, from Paul and I have been playing together for so long, we immediately just kind-of had a common vernacular with each other. We worked really well with Amy, and it just kind-of coalesced into a really tight –

[0:23:00]

really good three piece, and for me, I had pretty much always played in bands with another guitar player, or some kind of crazy keyboard or something else making some kind of racket. So this was upright bass, which is not quite as – it's just not as loud as an electric bass, and drums and guitar. I was the only kind-of like, multi-tempered melodic information coming out of that band. I mean, there's bass and voice, but like, the guitar was all me, and it was like, a lot of space. Which was great, because you could really – I mean, I got – I could play all the guitar I wanted to, and learning how to fill the right spaces and what to play, and also the fact that, if there's a hideous guitar playing, there's no hiding it. It's like, "That was me." So that really kept me on my toes, and –

[0:24:00]

just that amount of space, especially in her music, the way she puts things together.

CUT 4 [0:24:04] -- BEGIN SEGMENT 5

It was really rewarding and it really taught me a lot, it's sort-of a different style of guitar playing, and so we toured and we toured and we toured some more, and with that, we worked her record, *Anchors and Anvils* kind-of a little longer than we probably should've. We just sort-of toured and toured and toured. We did cut an EP of the three of us, there is document of it's like, I don't know, I can't remember how many songs, but sort-of a document. We just went in the studio and cut it all live. It's kind-of what we were – where we were at, at that point. And then she was just starting to work on a new record that I actually co-wrote a tune with her for that record, *Stranger*

Me, and it was sort-of – things were in flux again and Paul was kind-of out, and –

[0:25:00]

then I joined The Hold Steady, so I – it was sort-of a jumping off point. I was like, “I’ve got to – I have to go.” So away I went.

Interviewer: I guess going back a little bit, can you talk about Antenna Shoes and that band?

Steve Selvidge: Yes. Antenna Shoes is largely Tim Regan’s project, it’s his songs, kind-of where he went solo after being in Snowglobe. And it’s basically just The Pirates, which is sort-of our cover band, like a living – we’re like a living iPod, sort-of. We play Band tunes and Doug Sahm and David Bowie and John Cale and whatever else. So this was the band Tim had put together to do that, and it only really happened for a brief moment, because Tim’s such a hustler, he was off doing other things and moved to Austin and stuff like that, but.

[0:26:00]

I love that record, I like playing those songs, Tim’s great. But we only – we played shows here and there and just a couple of shows out of town, when it was more sort-of – it’s the band that plays every Christmas at the Hi Tone. So I don’t know what we’ll do this year.

Interviewer: Can you talk about how you ended up being a part of The Hold Steady and how that you ended up switching over?

Steve Selvidge: Sure. So The Bloodthirsty Lovers were in French Kiss with The Hold Steady. And this was like their – in between their first and second record, we were touring together, so I got to know those guys. We were in Birmingham the first day of a tour, kind-of getting to know each other and me and Ted, the other guitar player in The Hold Steady, who at that point was the only guitar player in The Hold Steady, we were kind-of sniffing around each other like guitar players do, like checking out, let’s see what you’ve got there, that’s a cool amp, I don’t know.

[0:27:00]

Mine’s older. But and we got to talking, and just kind-of contacts came up, just like all leading to kind-of how old are you or

whatever. It's like, well, such-and-such, when's your birthday, it's in June, really, my birthday's in June, too. What's your birthday? June 29th. No way, like. So we get our driver's license out, because we're both sort-of incredulous about this, it's like – and so I happened to have a pint of Jack Daniels in my back pocket. And I was like, "Let's have a drink to that," well he happened to have a pint of Jim Beam in his pocket. So we both – oh my goodness, you know. So lots of heavy bro down sessions kind-of happened after that, and we had some more shows here and there with the Lovers, and then just after that, just sort-of kept in touch. We'd just texts or phone calls on birthdays and just kind-of just random other stuff. And then –

[0:28:00]

in 2010, when their record *Heaven is Whenever* came out, their keyboard player left, Franz Nicolay, their original keyboard player, so they were kind-of faced with like, we've never really had a – we've added a member early on, but we've never had to change members. And they were really a tight-knit unit, so it's like, what are we going to do? Like, side men? Like, do we really roll like that? I don't know. So they hired a guy in New York who played keyboard, but Tad was like, "I think we should add another guitar player." So they got in touch with a couple people and he got in touch with me. Just like, "Hey, what do you think about doing this?" I was like, "Absolutely, man." So basically learned, I don't know, 14, 15 songs, went to New York in March of 2010, played those songs, seemed to go well, so they said, "All right, go home, two weeks, learn everything else."

[0:29:00]

So I learned everything else, and then March 28, I believe it was, there – I'll tell you the reason I know this, I went to what was basically the start of five months out with them doing promo for the record and stuff like that, and that just kind-of started it out. The reason I know it's March 28th is because my wife and I had been trying for some time to get pregnant. And so I was – that morning, I was about to leave and was just all out of sorts because leaving. I don't mind being out of town, but leaving town, I just get kind-of fried. And so – and also, I knew I was going to be gone for five months. And then, she kind-of came out of the bathroom, she's like, "Well, I'm pregnant." I was like, "Awesome. Just about ready to go to the airport then, I'll see you in five months." Did see her off and on in between those five months. But that's – anyway. That's basically how it went down.

Interviewer: Cool. So what's that experience like, being with a band that doesn't really identify with Memphis? Like, is it different?

[0:30:00] CUT 5 – BEGIN SEGMENT 6

Yeah, little bit. Not detrimentally so, it's just – it – the whole thing is different because the band's just sort-of on a different level than I've been used to. I mean, it's just – it's a little more of a national thing. Certainly I've brought in a Memphis influence, just in the way I play, and now that we're writing together, I mean, it's not like we're going to be writing like a – Hold Steady does Stax or anything like that, but there's a – just a feel that'll work its way in there somehow. But I mean, it's just sort-of – it's just my band, and it's kind-of – I got to New York to be with them and it's not really tied to anything. It's not that I'm getting away from it at all, because I'm obviously first and foremost a Memphian, and Memphis musician, but it's just sort-of – it's a whole different thing.

Interviewer: So do you think this band, out of all the bands you've been in, is the one you identify with the most –

[0:31:00]

like when you look back on your career? Is this going to be the one that stands out?

Steve Selvidge: It'll definitely be one that stands out, just because of the work we've done together and the places we've gone, and the friendships that I've made, deep, deep friendships. I mean, I've – I'm always going to reference Big Ass Truck. Maybe less so as years go by, but it's just – I mean, when I tell stories – it's kind-of getting complicated now, because I've been in so many bands, because I've been around for so long, but I used to just say, when talking about the past experiences of touring, I would just say, "When we did this, when we did that," I was always talking about Big Ass Truck. It was my starting point, it was my benchmark, it was the first kind-of professional, successful band that I'd been in, and it was just the first. I spent my 20s touring in that band, and there's a big difference between touring in your 20s and touring in your late 30s, early 40s.

[0:32:00]

So I'll – that'll probably always be sort-of the touchstone, but certainly, again, when I said earlier about you're lucky to get a band once, I was extremely lucky to hook up with these guys and recreate the friendships, musically and otherwise, that I have, because I never thought I'd get that again. Honestly, I thought I'll just bounce around from band to band, and who knows how long I'll be in this band. One thing about music is it's anything can happen at any time, so. But we're about to start making a record right now, so hopefully we'll be around for a little bit longer. But anyway, I just thought that I was just going to kind-of play with people and it would never have that kind-of feeling of being in a band like I did with Big Ass Truck, and now that I do with that band, so I feel very fortunate about that. I mean, when my dad passed and we had a memorial show for him, two of the guys came down on their own accord just to be here.

[0:33:00]

From New York, so I thought that was huge. And so I put them to work and they played a song, it was great. It was fun. It was so much fun.

Interviewer:

So do you prefer being part of a band, or do you ever think like, maybe you just want to be a solo artist one day?

Steve Selvidge:

I don't know. I mean, I like a band dynamic. I understand the ease of sometimes just sort-of being able to be like, this is what's happening, just sort-of telling people what to do and just not have to worry about it. But I don't really like that vibe, anyway. I mean, I could see at some point doing something where I'm singing, certainly that's a thought and kind-of hopefully in the cards. Whatever being the main focal point of something I guess, sure. It's been fun to – with Sons of Mud Boy I've been doing a lot of singing and it's been really great.

[0:34:00]

So I'm looking forward to kind-of pursuing that some more. But I'll just kind-of take whatever comes, I mean, anything that's musically fulfilling and successful to some extent, I'm happy with.

Interviewer:

So now since you've been a part of the Memphis music scene for so long, do you think you're a part of the Memphis music tradition or like, the story of Memphis music, do you see yourself as being part of that?

Steve Selvidge: I hope so. I mean, that's really for the future generations of Memphians to say, I mean, I have recorded records. I mean, none of them have my name on them per se, yet, but yes, I mean, I've been around, so. I mean, there's a lot of people that have been around longer than me that some people know and some people don't. Just depends. But I mean –

[0:35:00]

certainly due to my father, I mean, the name rings out, I guess. And I'm just trying to do my best to kind-of honor that and support it. Hopefully there'll be more, hopefully more time to do more stuff.

Male 1: It – the question you were just talking about, the sort-of placing yourself in Memphis music history, and you told the story at the memorial concert about – and I wonder if you could share that and talk a little bit more about you deciding to start playing *Lazarus* and like, is it something that you've tried to stay away from, distance yourself from your father's legacy, and like, now adopting it? I mean, just talk about that.

Steve Selvidge: No, I was never trying to distance myself from it, it was just that when he was around and performing, there was no need for me to really do any of that, because – I was glad to play guitar with him and sing harmony and stuff like that.

[0:36:00] – CUT 6 – BEGIN SEGMENT 7

And sing a song. I mean, it took me a long time to get up to feeling comfortable really singing some of the stuff, learning – I had – I would get hung up in like, having – if it didn't – I had heard it so much that if it – when I sang it, if it didn't sound exactly what I had heard, it seemed wrong. So it took me a while to kind-of figure out, well, just sing it some way and then you'll kind-of figure it out. And *Lazarus* was very – that kind-of really crystallized that whole thing, because I was on tour with Amy, and we were playing in St. Louis, and my parents had lived in St. Louis in 66, when my dad was doing graduate work for anthropology at Wash. U. Anyway, this woman Mary Jane was there, that they were friends with back in the day, and she wanted to hear me sing. And so Amy was always really gracious, she was like, "Play. I don't want to carry the whole set, you play a song, play as many as you want." So out of nowhere, I was like –

[0:37:00]

“Look, this song, *Lazarus*, it’s easy, we’ll just work it up,” and so I played it that night in St. Louis and it went really well and I felt this resonance when I was singing it. And it just seemed natural, and we’d – and then we started playing it every night, and then when you tour something and it really comes into sharp focus and then we recorded it, and so my dad was really into it. One, because there’s a line where the line is, Lazarus gasped up to his sister, “Go and get my mama,” but on his version, it sounded to me like he had said, “Lazarus gazed up to his mama,” so I sang gazed. So for him, that was a total gas, because it was the folk tradition. I mean, you could call it mishearing lyrics, but still, it’s the carrying on. Like, this is my version with – even one word, it’s like, this is how I took it and made it my own or did my own thing.

[0:38:00]

And just the instrumentation and everything else, so that was really kind-of the – that unlocked a lot of stuff for me, in terms of being able to approach this material. And then, with having to memorialize him, that really – it was just kind-of everything came down at that point. Like, I was like, I’ll try whatever. There’s some stuff I won’t get near, just like the really pretty, high tenor crooning stuff, that’s just like, I’ll do a song but I just can’t – I’m not going to do it that way. I just physically can’t sing that way. But there’s some stuff that I can get near, and it feels good to me to get near it, because it kind-of puts me back with him. And it seems to work physiologically with me, like just my diaphragm, my chest cavity, how – what the physical things that happen when you’re singing.

[0:39:00]

So that’s kind-of the journey I’m on right now, it’s just sort-of going from there and figuring out how to sing these songs and then take that into other songs, and then writing songs and – because I’ve always been a guitar player and that was my voice. And – but I was never like, “Well, this is what I do,” in terms of a singer. I just sing whatever. But it’s gotten me closer to kind-of I guess finding a voice, really. But prior to, again, when he was healthy and singing, there was just – I wasn’t intimidated per se, but there was just no real need for it, and now I feel I guess like there is a need, so. And that’s definitely continuing it on. Because I think there’ll be, here and there, there’s going to be somebody who –

[0:40:00]

had a rad night at The North End in 86 or whatever, and – or multiple rad nights and just wants to hear that stuff, and if I can kind-of give it to them, I – a different version, but maybe some similarities, and if that makes them happy, then I'm glad to do that. And it makes me happy, so we'll see where it goes. And I mean, that's kind-of the – like with Sons of Mud Boy now, we're – our plan now is to record a record. We've been doing these weeklies, like again, like I said, Sons of Mud Boy is this nebulous thing that like, really coalesced on these Wednesday night shows at Minglewood that started right before my dad died, and then carried through after he died. So there was some nights that were like, literally like, I was playing a show – playing a Sons of Mud Boy show at Minglewood the day I found out that it was about to be over. And then I had to play a show the week after he died.

[0:41:00]

And I thought, “Man, how I'm going to be able to get through these?” But it was like, it was just all right there, it just – it clicked and it was – I was – it got me through all that. So – and we didn't really realize it, but those shows were all kind-of leading up to the memorial concert and having it at The Shell. Like, we played one more after that, and I think everybody was pretty exhausted, the crowd and – because we – not everyone showed up and it really seemed like kind-of a – kind-of the calm after the storm or what – it just was sort-of – so we decided like, let's just stop doing those and let's think about recording. So that's where we're at now, and for me, a lot of that is going to be singing, figuring out what songs to do and singing these songs, and how we're going to deliver, how we're going to approach the record. Because there was talk about like, let's just go in and bang it out, like super live, and – but I don't think we're going to do that. I think we want to really look at it as a – produced piece of something.

[0:42:00] CUT 7 BEGIN SEGMENT 8

Because there's a generation of stuff between our dads and us, that influence us. All the music, all the Black Flag, Beastie Boys, whatever, all the stuff that's come since, and that's – it's going to come through us, as well, so you don't want to be this sort-of crushed velvet jewel box of a museum piece of something. Because we're not – well never be Mud Boy. Our lives are so different. We're not near as – our lives are not near as insane as our parents' were when we were – when they were in their 20s and 30s, it was insane. I mean, it's a different time. I never had people coming to my house the way

they [laughter] some of the people that showed up. But, so that's where we're at right now, with plans. I mean, I have to go and make a new Hold Steady record, and I'm excited about that, and then at some point, when –

[0:43:00]

everybody kind-of gets a moment, we're going to figure out what kind of record we want to make and do that, and that's really where I'm at in terms of how I'm going to be singing, what I'm going to be doing, getting me closer towards some sort of a voice and a direction for a project. I don't know if any of that makes any sense, I'm just kind-of off in the ether now.

Interviewer:

No, it makes perfect sense. So now that you've been like, a very important part of the Memphis music scene, and now that you're like, on the national music scene, what do you think it is that Memphis is missing to be like, a respected music city again?

Steve Selvidge:

What is it missing, that's a hard question. I mean, it's missing the ability to not worry about what it takes to be on a national level. There's so many variables, like you can point it back to Stax or Sun.

[0:44:00]

But the world was different then. I mean, the music industry is so different now. You can't compare it. Whatever conditions created Stax don't exist today, on a variety of levels. So you can't look back to – as that as a model. I mean, there's some people that say that the music industry as we know it, if you look at a long line of things, like say from Caruso, who was the opera singer, who was arguably one of the first kind-of recording stars, to the 80s and the big budgets and the 90s and all that, that it was just this one little blip that was kind-of an aberration, and that all that income and all that media presence was kind-of a fluke. And who knows where it will go from now, but like, it's just – it's very different. So the question of why –

[0:45:00]

and worth and how much – how come this and that, I just – I don't know how constructive it is. There's a lot of people making a lot of great music, and what it takes to get that heard these days is a completely different thing, and it's just – I mean, Nashville has

more of an industry for sure, it always has, but that's Nashville, and I don't really have an answer, honestly. I think – I don't think there is an answer, and if there is, I don't have it *[laughter]*.

Interviewer: Cool. Do you have any more questions?

Male 1: Just future of like, Memphis music, just an answer: is it bright, is it bleak?

Steve Selvidge: I think it's bright, absolutely. The people that I know, I mean, look, when I'm in New York –

[0:46:00]

well, I'm in Brooklyn, I'll often run into Andrew VanWyngarden, who was a big fan of Big Ass Truck when he was a kid, and I mean, there's no better – I mean, I'd say Memphis is doing all right in the hands of him. I mean, he's not putting out his own line of this or that or whatever, but I mean, he's being creative and he's – and a lot of that – very – a whole lot of that was responsible, has come from what he got from being here. And who knows how it'll come out – and he's young. So who knows how it'll come out in the years to come throughout his music. He's really creative, he's really talented, there's plenty of – so that's on the high level of success, quote-unquote measureable success. There's – I mean, there's a ton of people making a ton of great music. There always will be. There will always be somebody complaining about something else, too, there always will be that.

[0:47:00]

But I think the future of Memphis music is incredibly bright. There's a lot of people that are just able to get their ideas on some sort of format and share it, so I think as long as people are creative and enthusiastic about what they're doing, I think there's still a certain intangible to this city that's – it is not time related, it's just is what it is, it is Memphis, and sometimes it gets up and bites you in the ass, but sometimes it really propels you forward, so that – I don't think that'll ever go away.

[End of Audio]