

**HYP: Give me a STEVE timeline. Where and when and how did you start? Go from there. Elaborate freely.**

**SK:** December of 1999: We all (minus Nick, who was added to the band during the summer of 2000) got together at Dave's just to hang out, play some music together, and possibly record something. A week later, we met in the WCTV studio to re-record some songs with better sound equipment and to put some stuff down on video (this turned into *Steve: Going Nowhere Fast*). At that point, we in no way considered ourselves a band, but we knew that we were rapidly becoming one. That's when we started making plans for the upcoming summer, and we really started to think of ourselves as a band.

**HYP: Describe the music of STEVE.**

**SK:** It's very hard for me to describe, especially when attempting to place it in a category. Whenever one asks me, I just kind of ramble on for a while before shrugging my shoulders.

**MJ:** Most of it is melodic, acoustic pop. That is except for my songs of course. I don't know what they are; they just don't belong (laughs).

**HYP: Do you feel there's a leader in the band - someone who motivates, guides, keeps STEVE going in the right direction?**

**MJ:** I wouldn't say that there was *leader* per se, as in the sense of some bands that have one person who writes all the lyrics, music, and sings them. Dave is a leader by nature, so he, if anyone, probably takes charge the most and gets everything going, but he is so passive he has hard time enforcing it, and we still don't get anything done. Logan also surprised me at how much he stepped forward. Talk about passive, but he was the one who got us the Sleepwalker gig, and he was crucial in the initiating of the very first recording, on top of everything else from the shirts to the banner. To Logan!

**HYP: I call it the "revolving door" of STEVE, and it's one of the things that makes this band truly unique. Where did the idea of switching roles for each song come from?**

**SK:** It has to do with how we formed. Each of us would just bring certain songs to the table, while the rest would struggle to find accompanying parts. Even after becoming a "band," we never discarded this aspect of our music; I think it's partly a product of our severe time limitations.

**MJ:** When you have four people writing their own songs, singing their own songs, and playing guitar on their own songs, you run into some problems filling in the gaps. But I really think it added to the whole image of "Steve," that once the explosion of utter

chaos and complete lack of order passes and the smoke clears, there's actually something quite pleasing left in its place. Much like the birth of most of our songs. We'd bring the basic, rough outline to the group and everyone just started throwing out a bunch of noise to see if it'd fit, and much of the time it didn't. But with the CD, I think the smoke has cleared, and we finally have a clear vision of what they should sound like. All we have to do now is try and reproduce them as closely as possible in a live situation.

**HYP: Where is the ideal venue for STEVE - where do you want to play?**

**SK:** Any venue is an *ideal* venue.

**MJ:** I don't think we could play anything larger than a coffee shop. They're perfect for us. They usually have some sort of on artsy feeling to them, and are very laid back and relaxed. Anything larger and we'd lose the intimacy we have with the audience.

**HYP: What audience have you targeted?**

**SK:** We don't target any specific audience, except for possibly ourselves.

**MJ:** The great thing about these songs is that they're accessible to anyone.

**HYP: Do you have a favorite song to play?**

**MJ:** Besides "Whammo!" I guess, which I don't really consider a song, I would say "Pilgrimate" There's just so much going on in that song at once, I love it. You go from a low, slow drone to complete insanity, but controlled. It's up and down, back and forth, back and forth so many times with all these great haunting sounds behind it.

**SK:** "Darkest of Days" and "Don't Drink the Water" have to be the most fun to play. On "Don't Drink the Water" (a Dave Matthews Band song), I just play the egg shakers, but this allows me to just have a great time and to fully take in the music.

**HYP: What do you consider to be STEVE's finest performance thus far?**

**SK:** The Sleepwalker Festival was a fun performance. We had several technical and weather problems, but I think we were able to stand above all of the problems and put on a good show (for those who stuck around through the rain).

**MJ:** I loved the Sleepwalker performance too. It was such an odd feeling to be playing at this festival that we had been going to since we were just little kids. Now we were up on stage performing in front of our friends, their parents, and the rest of the people we knew from town. It really was a great experience.

**HYP: In the beginning, what were the cover songs STEVE played?**

**MJ:** The first songs we covered were obviously "Watchtower", the song that defines us, "Knockin on Heaven's Door", "Runaway train", and "Last Kiss".

**SK:** We also played Can't Help Falling in Love (Elvis), Sympathy for the Devil (the Stones), and One (U2).

**HYP: What brought about the turning point where STEVE began writing original music?**

**SK:** I wouldn't say there was exactly a "turning point." "Weird Kid in the Corner" and Jackson's "Man in the Field" both predated Steve by more than a year, and "Whammo!" came about shortly before the band formed. Once we became Steve and went our separate ways, we were each motivated to try to write new songs individually.

**MJ:** I had always been writing something, ever since I bought that first Strat. Dave's dad taught me a "blues box" to play lead in which I still swear by today. Ever since then I had been making up my own little riffs. I had collected a bunch of different ones together and made the tentatively titled "Cabin Song" to play at a concert we held way-back-when at The Cabin (a small plywood shack our friends used to camp out at every Friday). From there I started working on "Man in the Field" with a buddy of ours. From there I wrote a couple in the fall before we created Steve. Writing has always been something I was doing, and I think everyone else had that notion too, so it was just natural to play our own songs. There's something about the initial creation of a sound that's never existed before and just clicks somewhere in your head. Whether it be a line of a verse, a chord progression, some sort of a lead, whatever... That's why I personally have so many unfinished songs. I'll have a feeling, so I'll create something to express it. Then, when the initial adrenaline has passed, I go on to a different feeling, leaving me with one verse of a potentially great song. That's plagued me in every aspect of my life to date, and will until I die.

**HYP: Were there collaborations on the songwriting?**

**MJ:** Lyrically, the only collaboration would have been back with "Man in the Field". Ever since then, we've just wrote our own and presented them to the group.

**HYP: Did you all go about the writing process in the same way?**

**MJ:** Hell no, we didn't write the same way. I don't know exactly how they went about writing their songs, but can assure you I doubt we were following the same textbook. Especially with "Pilgrimage". Like I said, I had been listening to a lot of World Music,

and loved the fact that since I didn't know what they were saying, the vocals basically became another instrument. So I came up with the phrase "Mah de setem heh" and set out to recreate that on the guitar. That was the song for awhile until I added the Em and Am riff. From there the lyrics just came. I don't know from where, or why, they just did. I just closed my eyes, and played the riff and tried to visualize what I felt, and it took me out onto an old dirt road. I had been fooling around with the chord progression for "Weakman's Delusion" for some time, trying to figure out what to do. The basic core of the lyrics was pretty much an autobiographical account that I obviously embellished a little with some metaphors, analogies, and exaggerations to spice it up a little.

**HYP: Name some musical influences from early in your lives.**

**MJ:** Early on in my life I was listening to Phil Collins for some reason and, thanks to Dave, a lot of Clapton. From Clapton I was turned onto B.B. King, and then U2 was the first band I really became enthused about. I listened to Clapton, not so much for his guitar work as most people, but just for his songs as a whole. He just had a lot of really great songs. From BB I learned that you don't have to turn your amp all the way and play speed metal to be regarded as a guitar-god. That's something still very evident in my playing today. From U2 I got big, big, songs with a lot of great noise going on.

**SK:** My main musical influence would have to be U2. Though I can't point to any specific influence they've had on my music, U2 has had a major impact on the way I perceive myself and the world around me. Thus, their influence cannot be ignored. Other Influences: Bob Dylan, Rusted Root, Dave Matthews Band, Pearl Jam, and R.E.M.

**HYP: When did you begin playing music?**

**SK:** I took piano lessons for a couple of years when I was little, and played in the band in middle school. I began playing guitar just a couple years ago, when I first went to school in Wyoming.

**MJ:** I began "playing" when I was thirteen I guess, just from watching Dave play, who was already great at the time. All I knew is that I wanted to be able to grab a guitar and strum out a song like he did, and have people go, "Wow." I just barely fooled around with it for a number of years. Until Dylan released "Time out of Mind." -Sigh- Boy, I could go on about that, but I'll save that for the VH-1 Behind the Music. After falling in love with every song (on that album), I knew that I had to learn to play them. I just had to. So I picked up my old Fender and starting learning "Lovesick". This was during the time of The Cabin, so obviously I wanted to be able to play out there. So I decided to sell the Strat and buy an acoustic. This is where Rosalita (my acoustic guitar) comes into play. The whole idea of her was just hilarious at the time. I paid an ungodly amount of money for a used guitar just so I could play "Lovesick" in the woods, and it made perfect sense at the time. But thank God I did. Rosalita just being Rosalita has

shaped everything I've done musically. The fact that for some reason I couldn't play open chords such as A, D, and G very well lead me to really spend a lot of time with the leads. And then the fact that her strings were so high I started using a capo. Had it not been for her, I'd still be playing Oasis' "Wonderwall". God, I love that guitar. -Sniff-

**HYP: Tell me about the music that, for you, inspires the music of STEVE.**

**MJ:** It's hard to say what exactly inspires my songs for Steve, because I never have anyone else musically in mind when I write them. I just write them. "Releasing the music swelling up inside my head" as I call it. When you go back though and listen to them, you can sort of see the inspiration. For "Weakman's" it probably came from Dylan, because of the long drawn out verses that just tell a pretty straightforward story, put to music. Tom Waits probably for the vocals. For "Pilgrimage" who knows? I've been listening to a lot of World Music for the past couple years, so maybe that's where it came from. I really don't know.

**SK:** I was sitting in Government class at Wayne College, bored out of my mind. I began to write some 'poetry' in my notebook. Sitting in the back corner of most of my classes, I had joked about being "the weird kid in the corner," and that's where the poem and then the song came from. "World Unseen" is about being afraid of the inevitable changes that occur in our lives. Eventually, we realize that we're in a completely different world than the one that we thought we were hanging on to, and that all resistance is utterly useless and wasteful. Sometimes it seems that each day gets longer than the one preceding it, whether it's from being alone, missing someone special, or just being bored at work. Those are the feeling that "The Longest Day" came out of.

**HYP: Is there a conscious message behind the music of STEVE?**

**SK:** I haven't heard one.

**MJ:** There's nothing conscious about Steve. Subconsciously though, is that way at the bottom of every kid's messy toy bin, lies a little music box just waiting to be wound.

**HYP: Where did the name "STEVE" come from? Tell me that story.**

**MJ:** Oh, not this again. I hate these long stories. We named ourselves after Steve Guttenberg, OK? That's all I'm saying.

**SK:** "Steve" had kind of become an inside joke to us. Around the time that we were forming, we would just say the name and laugh. I suggested that it would be a good name for the band, and everyone agreed.

**HÿP: Do you have a favorite role (i.e. vocals, guitar, etc.)?**

**SK:** No, not really. I just don't want to get stuck in any one role too much.

**MJ:** I'd have to say writing.

**HÿP: What makes it possible for you to meet only a few times a year, yet gel musically?**

**SK:** When Steve is able to get together, our creative juices flow in a way to allow maximum input from each member. Moreover, since we've all been friends for so long, we know each other fairly well; this probably has a lot to do with the music we are able to create.

**MJ:** The only thing that can be attributed to the fact that we can just throw it all together a couple times a year is because we're all musical geniuses. You'll *never* find a more talented collection of musicians. And I mean *never*...

**HÿP: What was recording like?**

**MJ:** Recording was pretty laid back and relaxed for me. I, personally, was lucky and didn't run into a whole lot of problems which, by the way, I credit to Brian (Ullman - who produced the CD). We really owe a lot to him. The total sound of the CD is in a very large part because of him. I just sat down, played the guitar, sang the song, and that was it. I've been listening to quite a bit, actually. I really like the songs. It's odd. I get my friend's songs in my head all day. It cracks me up.

**HÿP: Do you prefer the mask of the studio or the thrill of live performance?**

**MJ:** Between studio and playing live, I can't really say which one I liked best. In the studio its great because you get to sit down and write and perfect the song, which you'll eventually be performing live. I love the experimentation of trying different parts here and there in the studio, but you don't get the adrenaline rush of the live shows. I'm a performer at heart so I love working with the crowd.

**SK:** Because we're together so little and have such little time for practice, and because every time we do get together we end up recording something, I've always considered Steve to be a "studio band." However, none of the work in the studio compares to the adrenaline rush of a live performance.

**HÿP: Where will STEVE go from here?**

**MJ:** Exactly like our first tape said: "nowhere fast."

**SK:** I think that Steve will continue on just as it always has. I don't envision Steve ever becoming a "permanent" band, one that exists continuously throughout the year. Hopefully in five years, we can still all stand each other enough to play music together every once and a while. I'm sure we'll record another album, and probably another live video – that's what we do.

**HYP:** **Are there hopes of integrating new instruments and experimenting with new sounds within the band as far as future projects go?**

**SK:** I just picked up the violin. Though I've only been playing a few weeks now, I hope to add it to the "Steve mix" this winter. I'm always anxious to insert new ideas and new instruments all in an effort to avoid becoming artistically and musically stagnant. Any successful band has to be constantly willing to "shake things up."

**MJ:** You're talking to Jackson! Of course I want new instruments and experimentation. That was my plan for the band from the word "go". Why do think I forked over a ton of money for a didgeridoo? But I'm not worried about it. I've come to accept Steve as my acoustic pop band. This other band I'm sort of involve in is my heavy pop band, and my own projects will be my experiments.

**Where do you see STEVE a year from now?**

**MJ:** Who knows? Dave will most likely be in North Carolina next summer, Sean may stay out in Wyoming, it's a good chance I'll still be in Pittsburgh, and who knows what Nick and Logan will be doing. We obviously have our Christmas Tour coming up, but after that? Like every band, I imagine we'll all go off to do our own solo projects for a while. I know Sean and Logan have mentioned it, and Nick already has his own band, and I've been recording new material in hopes to put something out come spring.

**HYP:** **Is there anything else you'd like to add?**

**MJ:** All I have to add is thank God for Steve Guttenberg. I know I do every day. If it wasn't for his remarkable performance in "Three Men and a Baby", there may have never been a *STEVE*. -Sigh- I don't even want to think about it.

**SK:** Thank you.