

**[TRACK 1]**

TONY WRIGHT:

*Right this is Tony Wright, it's the 23<sup>rd</sup> of August 2012 and I'm talking to Steve Tilson. So can you tell me your full name and where and when you were born?*

STEVE TILSON:

Steven Thomas Gregory Tilston and I was born in Liverpool on.....26<sup>th</sup> of March 1950. I lived in Liverpool for a very short period of time; I think I was taken as a toddler down to.....Leicestershire where I was brought up.

TW:

*Right. And how long did you stay there?*

ST:

.....until I was twenty, and then I moved down to London.....to be a professional musician.

TW:

*Right. So while you were in Leicester then, your interest in music; that's where it all began?*

ST:

Yes, yes; obviously because I spent most of my formative years there and....I had a long sort of interest in music.....

TW:

*Was it in the family?*

ST:

Yes it was yeah, my.....maternal grandmother was one of these.....she was a very good pianist but in a kind of vamping sort of style; she could play and pick out any tune and sort of with accompaniment, the whole lot, just.....she wasn't a classical pianist; she was one of these people

TW:

*She had an ear*

ST:

Yeah that's right, it's kind of... so.....in fact the whole family to a certain degree has got a bit of musicality in them, it's just that some of them it's.....it's kind of subsumed; they've not kind of...decided they've not kind of run with it you know, like I did, you know.

TW:

*Right. Well what made you decide then to go with it, if they just kind of did it as hobbies or entertainment?*

ST:

Well.....when I first.....it didn't really occur to me.....initially I was earning my living....as I always thought I was gonna be doing something in the visual arts and I started earning my living as.....the first job I had was....the first proper job I had was in a design studio in an advertising agency in Leicester, and.....so.....but by that time I'd already started being involved in the folk scene and it then became apparent that through the folk scene there was a way of....I could see these visiting professional musicians and so all of a sudden a way was presented, and this was a way in of becoming a professional musician; otherwise I wouldn't have had an inkling about how to do it, because I wasn't a kind of like.....driven to go.....you know, sort of stand up and show off really, but I was very affected by the music; it just seemed to have a very kind of.....well it became all important, all important; it's a hard kind of.....because it's so ingrained in me and I've been doing it for so long, it's kind of when I look back and like the effect it had on me when I was a kid and it was such a.....such a hold...

TW:

*Well you would have been a teenager and going up to twenty in the sixties with all the sort of.....the massive music scene.....why did you go to the folk side rather than the pop side?*

ST:

Well initially.....initially I didn't. I mean I was kind of caught up in the.....all *The Beatles* and the fact that I had sort of come from Liverpool; I had a lot of relatives in Liverpool and I'd go back there and....so when *The Beatles* or the Mersey Sound happened, of course I was you know, caught up into that, but I'd sort of started.....prior to that I'd.....there was a kind of wave.....the Cliff Richard wave and I realised...I thought 'uh, this is not right' and then I saw Elvis Presley and I realised that this was the real deal in comparison [laughing].....so I was kind of like.....and.....so I was drawn to that and then Buddy Holly because he wasn't sort of like.....you know, a sort of.....didn't have the matinee idol looks but yet he was playing his own guitar and he was doing it....you know, some really good lead breaks and then there was Chuck Berry; all these hits, so I was fascinated by that, so about these people who were really proficient musicians but yet were still able to.....you know, sing and perform

TW:

*So were you in.....from the start then were you a solo performer or were you in a band or*

ST:

I did have.....did have a band, but I mean most of it....learning an instrument is a.....is a kind of solitary.....well it was for me; I didn't have any.....any lessons because I mean it was just....swapping a few ideas on the school bus and we used to take our guitars on the school bus, it was great, and see who was first to do a bar chord and things like this [laughing].....and.....but it was....I had no inkling about having to, you know, getting lessons or how to....who could teach me. I knew there was a shop in Leicester but Leicester was about, you know, ten miles away so....going there and having lessons was a bit you know, it wasn't.....didn't know how to do that, so it was all learning in a vacuum and watching people and....on television, and then when I started going to the folk club....by that time I was....I was taken to a folk club when I was fifteen; by that time I was....I'd already pretty well worked out a lot of.....Buddy Holly and Chuck Berry solos, so I was quite proficient you know, and I was regarded as like the.....best guitarist in school, you

know, so there was kind of like all of a sudden there was a certain cachet and there was kind of a.....a certain kudos of doing that, and then when I.....started going to folk clubs and I started seeing some of these people.....finger picking and I thought 'oh that's really' .....and they were doing just.....and it seemed this full sound; they didn't have to contend with bass players and drummers, you know right from the word 'go' I had this band called *The Heartbeats* we called ourselves and.....we were called *Fred and The Heartbeats* because Fred was the drummer, and he was atrocious and he was.....even then he was a pain in the neck, and [laughing] ... and I realised drummers very dodgy people, drummers [laughing].....anyway.....so.....yeah I was taken to a folk club, I mean.....I didn't particularly wanna go, but this friend said, 'oh you'll' ... that's right, I started to get into a bit of blues, country blues, and somebody had a.....an older friend had a record of Josh White called the *The Empty Bed Blues* – the main reason I was attracted to that was because there was this empty unmade bed, a naked light bulb and then there was a naked woman, who, her back...sitting on the bed you see, and I remember taking this home and you know, because I wanted my dad to see this [laughing]....he looked at it and sort of said something about.....dismissive you know, but it was the wrong....I was expecting him to say 'stay out of the house' but he didn't; he was.....[laughing].....but that was....I kind of used to take this album everywhere just because *Empty Bed Blues* was this.....and so I started picking....I could see there was a correlation between some of the.....or hear rather.....the correlation between some of the stuff that I'd been playing, well the Chuck Berry and Buddy Holly stuff, and some of the same licks, or similar licks, were being played by Josh White. I thought 'well this is strange; Josh White is obviously earlier than these people so this is coming' .....so I was getting interested and so it was kind of a.....I was being set up for this .... this move into kind of folk....in inverted commas.....music when, because at that time a lot of.....there were a lot of people playing blues over here and.....and.....so....and certainly in folk clubs, so I remember seeing some of these.....there was this blind guy who was....I suppose he'd only be in his twenties but of course when I was fifteen he would seem like a really old wizened fellow and he was....but you know somebody would put this guitar on his lap, and he would just.....play this most beautiful, well it sounded to me like the most beautiful stuff and it was great, and I was just so.....I found that being able to see the process, see this music happening and being....because the guitar's a very visual instrument, the way it's presented, with the

finger board there, I could see the stuff he was doing so I was able to go back home and.....and try it out myself, so it was....

TW:

*Well when you got to London to be professional you said, how.....what did you start doing there as a professional musician?*

ST:

Well what happened was I'd.....I started to get bookings and I was starting....it became a position where I was earning more doing bookings than I was working as a graphic designer; I was still training then so I was not on like full wages, so.....and so I started, you know, doing lots of gigs and falling asleep on the desk, and so it was kind of...I knew that I was on borrowed time and I knew I'd get the old heave-ho very quickly and.....so I jacked it in before they gave me my cards and I started then to meet.....some professional musicians and one in particular, a fella called Wizz - Jones, who.....was around in the.....in the fifties and sixties and really....he's still going; he's seventy-three and he's still playing beautifully and.....and he....I was playing in part of a kind of....a folk day in the Nottingham Playhouse and this guy came up and introduced himself and said how much he enjoyed it; he said 'oh my name's Wizz Jones' and I'd already....he was already a living legend then, and we worked out he would have been thirty then which seemed like a really kind of [laughing] grizzled old.....anyway he said 'oh' he said 'you must come down to.... *Cousins* in London some time' and he made the mistake of giving me his telephone number and address.....so the look of abject terror on his face when I pitched up on his door step the following weekend! [laughing]....but true to his word he took me round.....*Cousins* which was then *Les Cousins*, the club *Les Cousins* which is what it was originally called; I thought it was called Les Cousins; I thought it was a bloke, and.....he took me there and gave me an introduction to the fella who was running it....this Greek guy - he was actually only a couple of years older than me – but a big fella called Andy....Andy Matthews and....who booked me there and then on the strength of Wizz's recommendation, so I was in; all of a sudden you know, this kind of.....and that was amazing, being able to....to go and get a booking, I mean I wasn't paid; I got a kebab because his dad used to run the Cypriot restaurant upstairs you see, so I got...I remember the first time I had this proper kebab I thought 'wow, what is

this?' I was given this thing and you know, in pitta bread, and I kind of turned it upside down and it kind of all fell out you know [laughing].....but.....yeah, but it was great, so then I started meeting these.....people who were.....previously had been heroes of mine and.....and moving in those circles and so it just.....it was great you know, I started getting.....more work myself and there was a bit of a buzz around and I got offered a record deal and.....

TW:

*Right, well you never looked back really*

ST:

Well you know, it's been....it's been, you know, feast or famine; I wouldn't say it's sort of.....it's a kind of precarious way of earning a living, but so many are these days, but you see at that particular time it was not a question of whether you get a job or not, it was whether you know, it was gonna be a good job you know, and.....so there was no question about that. I mean now the whole thing's changed so much hasn't it and it's kind of like.....ironically it seems that, you know, choosing to be a musician in a way, I've found more job security than.....than the people who seemingly have gone through

TW:

The graphics?

ST:

Yeah absolutely , absolutely

TW:

*That's changed into computers and this that and the other*

ST:

Of course it has yeah, I mean I was still around when it was cow gum and letraset you know, so it's changed drastically.

TW:

*How did you come up to this area then, around Hebden Bridge?*

ST:

Well after London I moved to....to Bristol and I loved Bristol as a city, I thought it was.....it was great; there was.....a lot happening there and....but I was kind of drawn.....I think in the late eighties I had another go at then moving back to London and then I moved back to Bristol again, and I had a kind of very young family and.....we were living in inner-city Bristol and I thought.....the kids.....I realised they'd have to kind of get street-wise very quickly and I wanted them to have as long a childhood as possible, and.....plus I felt drawn to.....to the north.....so I'd come up here to play for a club in Keighley .....and an old friend of mine who I'd not seen for years, who was very well known on the folk scene, a man called Peter Bellamy, had moved from Norwich to Keighley so it rekindled our....our friendship and I started.....discovering the.....the area and.....the countryside, and I just felt this connection with the countryside up here, with the hills and.....etcetera, and the moors and.....so....and also, make no bones about it, the property was a lot cheaper up here, you know, that was also.....and so I was able to move from an inner-city.....house to getting something you know, quite....quite nice up here really you know, so I moved initially up to Oakworth and.....I couldn't believe that we were able to afford it, I mean it was a little house but it was...it was very close to where the....that film *The Railway Children* was filmed, and I remember seeing that when I was, you know, nineteen, and thinking 'oh fantastic, that looks great – what a lovely part of the world' and.....so it was great for the kind of....the kids to grow up in that atmosphere, but I'd always been.....attracted to Hebden Bridge and.....initially when we moved up, we wanted to move to Hebden Bridge but that was.....it coincided with the period when Hebden Bridge had been like really discovered and house property shot up here, and it was just very hard to get in; we kind of looked at a couple of places but they were.....seemed like vastly inflated prices and beyond our reach, so.....that's why we ended up in....Oakworth near Haworth, yeah.

TW:

*Yeah, right. So when was that, in the late eighties?*

ST:

Yeah that would be.....eighty-nine.....eighty-nine when we moved up, yeah.

TW:

*Oh right, okay.*

ST:

So I've been up twenty.....twenty-three years now, and.....oh I managed.....I've lived over in Hebden, it will be....eight years this December.....and I love it, it's great!

TW:

*So, when you moved up here, was it a different sort of music scene than you'd had in Bristol or in London?*

ST:

Yeah, but in some ways it was kind of.....the folk scene is....was stronger up here; it was more kind of.....well I'd started to kind of like really get into traditional music and.....I was still writing but I was writing in a kind of, you know, when music was very informed by traditional sounds, traditional music, so....and this was....the north was very.....at that particular time, it seemed to me, it was the place where it....was.....more relevant, more honest, kind of, that's probably the wrong word, but it seemed as if it was a bit more solid up here....the bedrock of....traditional folk music, but that could be totally spurious, an observation really.

TW:

*So were there other influences in your music besides this like traditional side of things?*

ST:

Yeah, yeah I mean prior to moving up I'd been.....working as a guitarist with a ballet company called Ballet Rambert, which were a kind of quite well known ballet company, and.....at one time there were three guitarists working for them at one given time, and that was a great sort of....I had to learn a bit of.....flamenco,

some Irish folk and....yeah a bit of flamenco and things so it was.....it was great, you know, it was good

TW:

*And you brought that into your own music?*

ST:

Well it kind of, yes it kind of percolated through whether I liked it or not, you know, in fact on my last album there's a piece.....a Spanish piece that's got, you know, that's.....so a lot of that stuff that has filtered through I wouldn't have been able to write it had I not actually.....had to knuckle under and learn some of this flamenco stuff for this ballet

TW:

*So how have you.....I mean you sing as well obviously, so I mean how did you come about.....I mean, you talk about your kind of guitar music influences, but from your singing side was there anybody that you tried to emulate to being with, or has it just developed on its own?*

ST:

Well I think you know getting back to....I mean initially it was kind of....I just thought Elvis Presley had such an amazing voice, I really did [laughing]

TW:

*For Sundays*

ST:

Yeah, oh yeah that's right yeah, but.....but I even love some of his.....I mean I recorded It's Now or Never when I did this live album and with *Fairport Convention* we did It's Now or Never [laughing] so you know, it used to bring the place down, so.....I loved a lot of these crooners, I mean Dean Martin, all these people, but then there was sort of.....I also liked the hard, you know, the growly bluesy singers you know, I loved Big Bill Broonsy and Howlin' Wolf, all these people, so.....a whole

range of people, but you know, and also a bit of classical stuff you know and that kind; I'm not a classical buff but I do kind of appreciate it, and.....so that all.....it's all crept in really.....yeah Van Morrison, I liked some Van Morrison stuff, I thought he was brilliant.....yeah a lot of.....yeah

TW:

*Now I know that you.....well I'm not sure if you're still doing it, but you have been for the last few years, and I presume that's because when you moved to Hebden, you'd been running like a folk club yourself down at The Trades Club*

ST:

Well it's a kind of.....it was a monthly presentation where I would.....book a guest, usually somebody I....you know, was a friend and so they would come down at a fairly reasonable.....you know, guarantee against a percentage and then what I would do is I would present them; we'd get up and I would do.....four or five numbers myself to start, get the show going, and then introduce them and then maybe sometimes do a couple of numbers at the end with them as well, you know, so it was kind of a nice little thing; it was almost, I kind of took the blueprint from.....some of these old jazz, American jazz players who would like tour...tour Europe and they would go back, and they always seemed to have like a.....a residency somewhere in the village you know, and.....and they would do.....do that, so that was the kind of basic.....basic idea.....I'm still kind of doing it on a more ad hoc basis you know, just kind of.....not monthly but it's.....it's when.....when I feel like doing it

TW:

*Why did you decide to do that? Was it because you wanted to promote younger people or was it just for yourself, or was it just fun?*

ST:

Well all those things really.....plus the fact I just loved the idea of *The Trades Club*; I think it's such a great resource there and.....and.....yeah, all those reasons really and also kind of.....I suppose you know, I'd moved into.....into a new area and I was.....it's something I'd had in my mind to do for a long time; I mean when I lived in Bristol I.....I was involved in running a club there.....taking it wasy

back.....to Loughborough when I was....before I'd even turned professional, I mean I'm talking when I was nineteen....twenty I was.....helping running a club there and so, you know, but I remember, you know, we booked John Martyn for fifteen pounds you know, and so I mean it's just.....so, and all these people you know, sort of.....yes.....the idea of nurturing younger talent was.....you know, was certainly....you know, in.....my.....line of thinking but that.....proved a problem because getting people, at the end of the day you've got to get people in; bums on seats, people who have paid money and I have booked a few people who I thought were, you know, really up and coming and showing really great promise but trying to get people out to see them.....and it's just.....obviously it's coincided with the.....you know, the financial climate at the moment so people are less.....which is a shame because unless, you know, there is a new....new wave of people being nurtured, then the scene will get, you know, pretty moribund, but it is.....it is happening; there is, you know, a lot, certainly in the folk scene, but there's also great swath of singer/songwriters who had nothing really to do with the folk scene at all, they just.....and it's the fact that they play acoustic guitars is the.....the only real kind of connection, and it wasn't really a folk club I was running anyway; it was just you know, I mean for instance we had.....one night we had.....Andy Sheppard the sax player came round and played, you know, because, so.....so it wasn't just.....like I say, I wasn't running a folk club, it was just good rootsy music; we did an album of live.....of live recordings and it was....the idea was to.....hopefully sell loads and so we could buy some new seats for The Trades Club, but.....it didn't quite work out [laughing]

TW:

*I'm just wondering.....like the history of pop music, like from rock 'n' roll and....to The Beatles and Stones and then rock.....heavy rock and punk and then this that and the other up till now, it kind of changes quite regularly every.....you know, decade let's say. Does that folk scene do that as well or is it, I mean, because it has a lot longer.....and I mean you could say that rock 'n' roll goes back through the blues and the jazz and all that, but is the folk thing, does it change? Does it have things like that?*

ST:

Well it's kind of....the folk scene certainly.....the folk club scene in, which I suppose is the kind of bedrock of the folk scene, and that.....that's kind of.....over the years I've been doing it, has been pronounced dead various times but it's kind of bounced.....a very tenacious thing, the British folk scene and it's still kind of quite healthy; it's not, I mean, there was.....in the sixties and when I first started going out in the early seventies there was something like, you know, nearly a thousand clubs in the country, you know, some towns would have two or three, and that's kind of gone - that's gone - you're now down to.....I don't know, probably about a hundred or so, so it's.....but there are.....yes, sometimes it's.....I mean when I first started going there was, obviously the traditional music was there with people like Martin Carthy.....Cyril Tawney, all these people who you'd go and see who were kind of like staunch traditionalists, but yet there were kind of.....younger people like Bert Jansch, Renbourne, Davy Graham, who were doing different.....slightly different things, so it was a very exciting time and there was a lot of stuff happening there. In the late seventies it got sort of polarised, so the scene was.....there was.....at that time there were a lot of comedians; a lot of these very well know comedians came up through the folk scene, like Billy Connolly, Jasper Carrott, you know, obviously Mike Harding, all these people, and.....it was polarised in that there were some clubs who just liked comedians, booking comedians every week; there were people who liked traditional, and there were very few.....it started.....it was getting kind of.....telescoped inwards, this.....squeezed in....this, you know, contemporary....people who were into the contemporary singer/songwriter things, so I left the scene for a while; I didn't go into a folk club for about five or so years and I'd....it coincided when I moved from Bristol back to London and I got this publishing deal, whereby I was writing; I had to write fourteen songs a year and I was being paid a retainer to do that, and.....that lasted for about four or five years, yeah.....and then I kind of....in that time I'd really gone into traditional.....traditional music and.....as I say it was really informing the stuff I was writing, and I was doing arrangements of traditional music so it kind of.....yes, so I changed but it was.....it was just something I.....that I found myself being drawn to; it wasn't a kind of forcing myself to do that, I mean while I was in London writing these songs I actually had a rock 'n' roll band called *Loose Shoes* and we were doing a lot of clubs round London and.....but it was just....and I was playing, you know, electric guitar, a Telecaster, and kind of revisiting some old....you know,

fantasies [laughing]....but it was just....getting back to drummers again, this drummer we had was Leo Sayer's ex drummer and he prided himself on being one of the loudest drummers on the planet, and I remember playing....we were playing one Friday night and one Sunday my ears were still ringing from the sound, you know, and I thought 'no that's it, that's it....I'm not gonna make myself deaf'

[laughing]

TW:

*So....well a double question really; one is, like the new technologies that you've got with, you know, you can....basically, by yourself in your bedroom, you can make music.*

ST:

Yeah

TW:

*Do you think that has any big sort of impact on....like....younger people shall we say, not exploring either musicianship or traditional sort of....you know, types of music. Do you think that's taken away from that, or is it just*

ST:

That's interesting; it's something I've not really thought of. I suppose.....because I didn't have that resource, it just wasn't around when I was.....cassettes had not even been invented so it like reel to reel tape recorders so you didn't have that, so in a way you had to develop your.....your musical analytical skills really, you just had to look and learn; look at things, and so and try and kind of.....develop your memory, you know, this is obviously what you were doing because you didn't have.....you didn't have any.....equipment, any mechanical means or electrical means to help you, so.....and in some ways that....it helped develop my ear, so.....and personally speaking, to this day I still don't.....use recording equipment until....quite a way down the process because I.....when I'm writing, when I first have an idea, I've always worked on the principal if I can't remember it then the idea wasn't particularly brilliant anyway, and sometimes.....sometimes that's kind of

caught me out because, you know, when I first.....first started I would get this what I would think a great idea and I would be playing and playing and I'd think 'oh yeah, no problem, I'll remember that' and the next day you go back to it and you didn't quite get it right, you know, but in that.....kind of trying to tease that initial idea out, you would probably get something else that was every bit as good, you know, so it's kind of.....so it's kind of.....I don't really fully understand the process but it didn't really let me down you know.....and I think it developed my memory and other skills.....but.....you know I think there's.....I think there's no.....I don't think there's any problem with people who decide to.....well clearly there's not, but who decide to.....write something with the tape machine running, you know, all the while, so it's there documented.....if that's how they wanna work then fine you know, but I think the other part of your question was whether it's actually affected what.....was it going out and

TW:

*Well younger people.....more being focused on technology rather than.....exploring different styles*

ST:

Well I think that.....that seems to be the case; obviously I don't know because I certainly see that a lot of people, they don't go any further back, I mean Bob Dylan is like ancient music to them but you know, I mean, Dylan had all this kind of, ....read all his biographies and he had all this kind of amazing music that he went out and.....studied, and the same as I did, you know, my generation, that's what we did; we wanted to go back to source and find out where these.....these things were and you know you kind of like, once you do that you're aware of this amazing kind of river of music where all these rivulets kind of go off, and how.....one bit will influence another bit, run to another bit and all this kind of.....but it's all part of this big whole kind of.....

TW:

*You said earlier about when you.....came up to this part of the country, you really loved the landscape and I'm just wondering, has that affected your music or your writing*

ST:

Yeah it has yeah, very much so, I mean certainly the last.....last couple of albums yeah, there's definitely.....I think the last one in particular, there was quite a sense of.....of place on it you know, you only have to look at the cover of the thing to know that and.....so, yes, it has had an affect.....

TW:

*What is it then, I mean because some people would say that the landscape round here is very bleak, and others would just say it's wonderful and beautiful, and.....both are true.....and if you go out walking all over the place, there's lots of different types of environments you'll come across, but what is it then that's affected you then? Are you trying to emulate the feelings you get when you're out there or is it just a visual thing that you're trying to transpose into music?*

ST:

Well both, I mean the thing is just.....getting up on the tops I mean, just from.....going up the jitty up next to where my back garden runs, you can get up within.....within twenty minutes I can get right up on the top, you know, on the top of the big hill there, and the view from there is just fantastic and there's a kind of....you can walk along the ridge up there, and.....so all of a sudden you've got this kind of great feeling of...because as far as the eye can see, you can see these.....the hills rolling off way into Lancashire and everything, and.....so it's kind of you know, we say it's a small island but up there you can, you know, you can.....think we're in this really big country [laughing].....cue Gregory Peck [singing].....

TW:

*So when you actually start writing songs, I mean there's probably more than one way, but.....is it an idea that you start with, or are you just playing on the guitar and there's a bit of a sound and you think 'oh I'll try*

ST:

Both, both, every way, you know like you said yourself, you said there's probably loads of ways; there are, you know, so I use every conceivable way; sometimes like a

phrase will have a certain musicality, it will suggest something; sometimes.....a musical phrase.....making good mistake is usually.....what I call making good mistakes usually helps a lot; sometimes I write the lyrics beforehand; mostly I don't; mostly it comes out through the music, and the music....I've had various ideas about subjects that I want to write about but I don't know exactly how I'm going to.... approach it, but yet something musical will happen and it will.....it will spark off, it will go in some direction and I will know then, you know, whether it'll....it'll start presenting itself and then gradually the thing will.....will happen, and that's sort of the way I like working best really.....so just letting the.....the music.....you know, take over and go where it will...but other times, I mean just a little while ago I had to write.....a couple of projects; one was.....for the radio ballads, for the BBC about the 1972 Munich Olympics, so I wrote a song.....for that; there was a whole bunch of songwriters who were involved in that and I was asked to contribute a song, so it was nice, kind of to sit and have a brief and listen to all this kind of.....this stuff about it, but particularly the seventy-two Olympics because I was actually there; I was booked as the.....the English folk singer to play the.....what is it....on the Schlegelstrasse, I can't remember, and of course, all these Israeli's were killed, of course, so I never got to play a note but I had a week's holiday in Munich, and.....so it was kind of....I was very aware of all that so it was kind of interesting being asked.....the people who asked me had no idea I had been there you know, and I was.....there was no way....I didn't write it from a personal point of view, you know, because it just wasn't relevant, but I.....so I chose a different subject to write about within that, and then I was asked to write as part of this thing called *The Boat Project*.....it's quite interesting actually because there's a boat that's been made.....and incorporated in the whole of all these bits of wooden artefacts that have got stories and are donated by different people, and.....like a guitar, cricket bat, a swagger stick from the First World War, you know, a piece of planking from an old sea ship, a bobbin of cotton, all these different, and they've all been incorporated in the hull of this ship, and it looks fantastic; well it's a boat....it's about thirty foot long this boat, and so....there was a whole bunch, again, a whole bunch of song writers were asked to write songs about some of these specific articles, or these artefacts, and by the time I got involved a lot of the choice stories had been.....been taken, so I kind of said 'well, the only way I can do this is write an overview about this whole idea coming together' which is what I did, so it's worked out a treat, you know, so that was that, and it was done with

*The Unthanks* and *Adrian McNally* who's.....the main arranger with them; he's.....he'd arranged the whole thing, so we got to do it with.....*The Unthanks* and their kind of like orchestra which was....it was lovely you know, in front of a live audience; it was a real pleasure to do, yeah.

TW:

*It makes me think of.....you know, you write a song.....and then you write another song, and then....do you see them as their own individual things or is there a kind of link between songs, almost like....you know, you can tell a story, but then you can have a frame where you tell lots of different kinds of stories within a larger framework. Do you do that?*

ST:

Yeah, well sometimes, I mean, if.....I think if.....songs are written over a longer period of time, then the chances of a correlation between them is.....is pretty remote really, but if you write a bunch of songs in a....so you kind of like 'oh I must.....I've got to get an album out' you know, and you kind of like.....you get focused on that, there usually is some kind of thread or correlation, certainly in the.....in the last album and I was aware of that, and I kind of ran with that idea you know.

TW:

*Okay, right. We're getting up towards the end of your time now, so I just want to kind of.....just really talk about Hebden Bridge really and the Upper Calder Valley, and just get a kind of general view of what you think the scene is now shall we say, the music scene, or.....life in general even, really. I mean, has it changed since you've been here, and has it been a good change or a bad change?*

ST:

Well I.....I really enjoy living here; I think it's a great place to live and I think it's a wonderful little town.....a lot of interesting people live here.....and most of them are, you know, what we call offcumdens; people who've come in to the area, but that's kind of enriched it, and that's what sort of gives it its special.....character, I mean I can understand why there'll be a certain amount of resentment from, you know, people who are kind of like born here, whose families have lived here for

years, but it's kind of.....it's.....in a way this is how life is isn't it? We are more mobile than we ever were before, you know, we don't just move and marry the woman from the village next door kind of....or the next village; it's.....you know, we have the right I suppose to move and live where we choose to, you know, we could live anywhere in Europe, so it's kind of.....it's my choice to live here and.....I don't mean in an arrogant kind of way, just.....the part of the world where I was brought up was.....in comparison the countryside was very boring compared to this part of the world, you know, why shouldn't I be able to live here? [laughing] So I kind of....yeah, but you know, I like the people up here.....I just, yes.....it's.....it's great, so obviously I've only lived in this part, this area around Hebden Bridge for eight years, but I suppose I've seen some changes in that particular time and....but you see, a lot of it is the fact that I now know more people that I did when I was...eight years ago, so it's changed from a personal kind of point of view because I now know more people and.....a lot of it through the music obviously, so it's home, and.....yeah, it's just a great place and.....yeah, I can't wait to get up on the tops again, you know.....get the old walking boots on and go.....yeah

TW:

*Is there anything I haven't asked about that you would like to talk about? Something I haven't brought up that you would like to express?*

ST:

I can't think.....I think I've rambled pretty continuously [laughing]....I think you've got quite a....no, I think.....I think that kind of covers most of....what else I can think of to say.

TW:

*Right. Well I'd like to say thank you for talking to me.*

ST:

A real pleasure, a pleasure

TW:

*And I'll just put that on hold I think for a moment.....yeah, I was told recently that John Lennon had written you a letter, to play with him, but the letter had got lost*

ST:

Well it wasn't to play with him.....what it was....a bit like Chinese whispers is this, but what happened was I did an interview with a magazine called *Zig Zag* in 1971, just after I'd had my first album out, and in it I was asked by the fellow who was interviewing me whether I thought if I.....if I became you know, rich beyond the dreams of avarice you know, whether it would affect my song writing, you know, whether it would detrimentally, and I thought it, I said I thought it would. Anyway, John for some reason took exception to this, and wrote a letter in saying, you know, 'Dear Steve Tilston and Richard Howe the guy who interviewed me 'it doesn't make any difference; I've been poor, and Yoko's been rich then poor, now she's rich again' so it was all this kind of..... 'it wouldn't affect me and you'd still have to kind of.....you know, be engaged with the world' and things like this, so.....but it was a very friendly letter, and.....and he finished it with 'well what do you think of that?' and then sort of, but he'd kind of taken the trouble of this....of colouring in bits and writing little.....you know, doodles and things and he his home telephone number in Ascot, so if I'd have got the letter, you know, when he sent it, I would have rung him, so that's the frustrating thing you see

TW:

*So did this go missing in the post? Is that what it was?*

ST:

No, no, what happened was, the.....somebody at.....I won't mention the name, but.....somebody at *Zig Zag* obviously kept the letter themselves and then.....they must have flogged it to somebody in America.....and that's how I heard about it because the person in America contacted me to verify this, so I've never seen the.....I've never seen the real thing; I've seen the.....you know, a facsimile and.....

TW:

*So was it.....possession is nine tenths of the law?*

ST:

Well that's it; in fact it's.....it's in.....in America as well, I mean really the letter should be my property, but you know, in order to do that it would probably be like a court case and all this kind of thing, you know

TW:

*So do you still think riches beyond avarice wouldn't change anything?*

[laughing]

ST:

It would be nice to see, but [laughing].....well I mean, the thing is, life has changed anyway; it's changed; it's gone through.....some amazing changes.....and the thing is now that I'm kind of....I've reached an age where I don't really write anywhere near as much music as I was writing.....just a gradual slowing down process; I'm still engaged in music, I still play it a lot, but I don't find the kind of.....the....that compulsion I had when I was younger, to just write music; it came pouring out of me you know, it was like this tap you couldn't turn off, which was very fortunate, it was great, you know, but that's kind of.....just through age I think, has kind of....has slowed down, you know, but....so I'm more sort of circumspect about what I write about, you know; I still enjoy the process you know, I still kind of.....tease the process out, you know, yeah, but a lot of things I kind of like I would start writing something and I would think 'oh I think I've written this before.....and better' so I kind of like shelved it, but it's still a joy going through the process....yeah.

TW:

*Okay, well we'll call it quits then.*

ST:

Right, thanks Tony, cheers, thank you, thank you.

**[END OF TRACK 1]**