

## Ocean Gazing: Episode 51

### *Only one ocean*

<intro music>

**Ari:** This is Ocean Gazing, the podcast that tracks the real-time swirl of creatures, chemicals and currents of our seas. I'm Ari Daniel Shapiro.

**Steve:** You know, song writing is a mysterious thing. Who knows where it comes from? As a songwriter, you net the songs. They're already out there, and you throw the net, and you catch 'em.

**Ari:** That's Steve Van Zandt, also known as Solar Steve when he's writing songs and performing with the Banana Slug String Band. The group's based in Santa Cruz, California, and they make music about science and conservation. In this episode of Ocean Gazing – we'll talk with the band, hear some of the music on their latest CD that just won the Parents Choice Award, and I'll tell you about something special that's just happened to Ocean Gazing. Stay tuned.

<fade up music and sustain until it ends>

**Ari:** So what was the genesis of this new CD called "Only One Ocean"?

**Doug:** It came together when we were presenting at the National Marine Educators conference that was in Maui.

**Ari:** That's Doug "Dirt" Greenfield, the co-manager of the band. During that meeting in 2005, he heard about the newly developed principles of Ocean Literacy, which is an educational framework, really ...

**Doug:** ... to get kids and families throughout the country to understand basic concepts about marine biology and ocean ecology ...

**Ari:** ... and physical oceanography and marine chemistry and geology. So anyway, Greenfield was talking about the Ocean Literacy standards with Craig Strang, who's with the Lawrence Hall of Science in Berkeley.

**Doug:** I said, "Well, do you have music that's supporting it?" And he went, "No." And that was the opening moment. He goes, "Wow," cause we said, "Well, that seems like a pretty good fit." The whole project, which we entitled "Only One Ocean", which is our CD, is completely integrated into the matrix of ocean literacy.

<excerpt from "Only One Ocean" heard alone for 4s, and then played as a bed under the following tracks>

**Ari:** Here's the opening track from the CD. <about 5s of the song in the clear> The members of the Banana Slug String Band met one another 26 years ago.

**Doug:** We found each other as outdoor science educators in a school in the Santa Cruz mountains. We were all musicians at the time. We were not focused together specifically as a band – we were playing music of all types to enhance the science lessons.

**Ari:** But it wasn't long until the Banana Slug String Band was born.

**Doug:** We have been in relationship – it's rare that bands can stay together, particularly the original members for 25 years, so we've gone through many, many transformational things together.

<“Only One Ocean” fades out>

**Ari:** For the new album “Only One Ocean,” the Banana Slug String Band attracted numerous musicians from all over the country to contribute their vocal and instrumental talent. And the content of every song was vetted by a team of scientists and educators to make sure the science was right. But that didn't hurt the music. Solar Steve.

**Steve:** We didn't have to compromise anything really. The collaborative process actually made it better.

<fade up “Mountain in My Hand” fades up>

**Ari:** Here's an example. In this song called “Mountain in My Hand,” the band worked with well-known musicians Brett Dennen and Zach Gill. And every bit of the science is correct.

<We hear it in the clear for a while through the section with the kids>

**Ari:** Can you tell me more about how you involved kids and children in this process?

**Larry:** Not all the songs have kids, but there's quite a few that do.

**Ari:** That's “Airy” Larry Graff, the other co-manager.

**Larry:** We help to direct these kids, and it's really fun having the kids in the studio, and they're having a blast. They think this is really cool cause they're wearing headphones, there's microphones everywhere. It's challenging, but it really adds a lot to the record. Some kids, when they're listening to kids' CDs, they really like hearing other kids sing on it. You know, tunes 'em in. <hear music in the clear for a short while> So I think it's a good tool to get kids to listen to lyrics in our tunes.

**Doug:** To feel 'em, to feel the lyrics even.

**Larry:** Yeah.

<fade out “Mountain in My Hand”>

**Ari:** And in listening to the CD, it really seems like you had a lot of fun with it.

**Larry:** Yes, yes, I think our intention is always to make our music uplifting and fun even though we're tackling some serious topics like, for example, global warming on our song "Too Hot."

<excerpt from "Too Hot," which then fades under next graf>

Uh, you know, global warming – pretty serious thing but the way the song is written is just so – it's really fun, you kinda have to laugh a little bit at yourself and then take on the challenge of how we can help prevent global warming. And it's not depressing so I think people really listen to it with a new eye. New ear.

**Doug:** Our goal has always been to transfer ecological understanding to get kids, families, teachers – the idea of empowerment.

<fade out "Too Hot">

**Ari:** Did you have any moments of tension or conflict as you were making the CD?

**Doug:** <laughs> That's a good one.

**Larry:** Always. Every CD has its tension and conflicts. There's always definitely, like, a song that's – I think "Down, Down, Down" – we didn't even think that we could pull this off. Even our producer didn't even believe in us. It just wasn't clicking and then all of a sudden, one day... <fade up "Down, Down, Down"> And then wow! – and then everybody started loving it. <"Down, Down, Down" in the clear for a short while>

**Ari:** If this CD – if it could do one thing in the world, what would you want it to do?

**Doug:** That is a good question, Ari.

**Larry:** We've always wanted to play in the White House!

**Steve:** Before going into the studio for the session, I would go down to the ocean and just look at the ocean for a while. So I could capture that spirit and bring it into the music. And, you know, if it's gonna do anything I hope it does that – that it infuses people with the spirit, the power and the beauty and the wealth of the ocean.

**Doug:** I hope it does what this little Hawaiian girl in Kailua, who turned to me with the most committed, just sincerity that made me cry. And she just said, "We would never, ever harm anything in the ocean – it is so precious." And the look in her eye, it was just, like, this girl – her commitment, her love of the ocean – that is what I hope this music does – it just springs open people's hearts and minds. And with that, there's no way they're gonna harm this planet. So I hope the music opens those kinds of hearts. It definitely opened mine – that little girl opened my heart.

<beginning of “The Living Sea”>

**Ari:** And now for that something special I promised earlier ... we’ve got a new Ocean Gazing webpage.

**Choueiter:** We kept the page very, very simple so it’s based on the idea of the spoken word is the hero on the podcast. And now the written word is the hero on the website.

**Ari:** Mary Choueiter designed our new webpage. She’s used quotes, icons and photos to improve the page’s visual appeal.

**Choueiter:** When you first enter the website, you have the featured episodes, which the Ocean Gazing team selects as 3 to 5 episodes they want to highlight for a week, month, however long.

**Ari:** The page is functionally better, too, with an improved search feature. Now it’s easier to find episodes, and information about those episodes.

**Choueiter:** You can look up the podcasts or stories by their disciplines, by location on a map so you can follow Ocean Gazing around the world and where they’ve recorded the podcasts. And the third feature is what we’ve called the Teacher Zone, which is where you can look up episodes according to the science standards used today in the classrooms. And teachers can use those podcasts as teaching tools.

<fade up “The Living Sea” music again>

**Ari:** Check out our all new website – [oceangazing.org](http://oceangazing.org) – to see some photos of the Banana Slug String Band. To hear them sharing their favorite moments on this new CD of theirs. And to find out how you can get in touch with the band and hear more of their music.

Ocean Gazing, it’s a product of COSEE, and we get our financial support from the National Science Foundation.

<continue music until it ends>