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Me and this guy, Paul, who plays drums with me we just didn't want to do it anymore. And then we got some acid and we ditched them. When they caught up to us, we were rolling down this hill in a park – which a lot of people do, it's kind of fun. I know we're in our 40s, but I think I consider it extra pay – the idea that we don't have to grow up.

And so, we sat up on the park bench and told them that we think they should stop filming us. Just as they are doing that, our friend Elizabeth Cook, who is a singer who lives down around the corner came up and told us and she had just gotten a deal with David Letterman where she is supposed to come up with a TV show and she can't find an idea.

Then she took acid with us and the Barnes Brothers were still filming and somehow, I've only seen it once, at a certain point I said "I'm gonna help you (with the TV show) and it's gonna be way easier than you're making it sound. Then all of a sudden, we had a plot. And we all got interested. Even though it was a blurry interest, there was a point A and a point B.

They ended up capturing a movie that is kind of a documentary about two people running into each other in a park and taking acid and deciding to put on a show. And then we really put on a show.

We made a talk show. Two hundred people came to it and we had guests. And I did it on acid and we filmed it and recorded it and they turned it into a movie called "East Nashville Tonight." The last 20 minutes of which are the actual show. The first hour of which you're watching us try to get it together in a pretty gonzo way. Almost everybody around here [East Nashville] is like me or worse.

S.Z.: Where can I see it?

T.S.: It comes out in the fall. There will be a tour, I think. I don't know exactly how it comes out or all that, but I know it does.

S.Z.: Tell me, how did the song "New York Banker" come about?

T.S.: I met Rahm Emanuel in D.C. when he was working for Obama. He came to one of my shows with his wife, Amy. And I really got along with them. And then they moved to Chicago and they came to my show again.

I asked them about politics and the military industrial complex – which I always thought of as a stoner fable. I told them

about these songs I was working on and Rahm said, "That's a cool idea, but right now the most comfortable people that are afflicting the afflicted are the bankers."

That inspired me to get my father-in-law to teach me what that was all about – to figure out some sort of story that would be about something that I would understand, a story that would be about somebody that I might end up drunk with one night. I learned a lot about what the military industrial complex is and what the banks are.

S.Z.: You're married. How's married life?

T.S.: I love it. It's my favorite thing in my life. We live a great marriage. I feel really lucky. She's definitely the most important thing in my life. More so than music and all that.

S.Z.: You are also an ordained minister. Do tell.

T.S.: I was ordained. Two friends of mine – songwriters who are on fire right now Jason Isbell and Amanda Shires – they told me they wanted me to marry them. So they made it happen so that I was a reverend. I just got a license one day. At the service I said some stuff and made them married. Now that I have the ability to marry people, I'm available for hire.

S.Z.: But now you only marry same-sex couples?

T.S.: Yeah. I married a couple of guys about a week ago. It was great.

S.Z.: Tell me about the wedding.

T.S.: It was a video-slash-wedding. There is a band called the Turbo Freaks and they're one of my favorite punk bands. They are just chaos and disorder in a box and I love it. They're in the "East Nashville Tonight" movie.

We decided to record "Why Can't We Be Friends?" by the band War. And then we got this idea that what would be a cool video would be a gay wedding, but in the South. So there's two men getting married, but it's a bunch of people with cowboy hats that are cheering this on. It looked like Southern, country people that are at this wedding and very happy to be there. And then they kiss each other and everybody cheers, and then a party breaks out that is insane.

It was a really fun wedding. And it made a cool wedding video. Everybody fell into the

pool – it looks like a rap video.

S.Z.: You have a bipolar diagnosis. How do you manage that?

T.S.: I wonder if I do. I don't know. I have medicines I take. I don't remember exactly what they're supposed to do. Since I was really young, I've kind of been told I was crazy. And I still don't really believe that. If I am, I'm OK with that. "The only ones for me are the mad ones." That's what Jack Kerouac said. And I feel closer to homeless people than I do to the people who are allowing them to remain that way. I don't mind – especially in today's culture – if somebody would say I was suffering from any kind of mental health issue. I would take that as a compliment because that would make me feel like I was having a hard time fitting in.

S.Z.: Mental health issues are rampant on the streets. It is reported that half of the people who are homeless in the U.S. are mentally ill. Many don't have access to services and medications they need. Drugs. What are your thoughts about drugs?

T.S.: The thing is, many people think that those people are the responsibility of themselves and their own families. That goes against exactly what we were trying to get going.

The original idea was that we could create a situation where the majority would rule and it would work as long as that majority always kept its heart open to the minority. We thought we were going to be better than people before us and we trusted ourselves to do that. And now, I feel like those people, they hide behind phrases like "love the sinner and hate the sin," but it's really just an excuse to not help anybody but your own children. It's an excuse to be extravagant with your own children as opposed to help the people in your community who need it.

My idea is that the very, very first time somebody in a community – whatever community it was – was like, "Hey man, I don't have anywhere to sleep, so I'm just gonna sleep on the street."

If I had been in charge that day, I'd have said, "Alright, let's just stop everything until we figure this out, you know?" Nobody is going to work today. We're all just gonna have a meeting and figure out what to do about the fact that one of us doesn't even have a place to fucking stay."

Todd Snider will be performing at the Oregon Zoo Amphitheatre, Saturday, Aug. 10



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