

TMC: [00:00](#) And we're here today with Ken Stringfellow of The Posies. And you're celebrating 30 years now and straight out of the Pacific Northwest. You got your start, from what I understand, with a self produced cassette tape, recorded at home that somehow landed with Geffen records. Do I have that right?

K. Stringfellow: [00:20](#) It is pretty much that. I mean it's. It's a very unlikely trajectory. So John Auer and myself, buddies from high school, played in bands together. We're kind of heading into a direction that we .. You know after playing with other people, and we're talking about high school here, but in playing with people who had various motives for playing music, we realized that we shared a common ground, that we were great admirers of good song craft and that a song should be able to be produced with any kind of window dressing, any kind of clothes you want to put on it. But the nuts and bolts...the basic skeleton of a song should be something that you could break down and play an acoustic guitar that you know that it's not based upon production. In the eighties, that's a big deal because production sometimes made a hit; and those songs aren't necessarily good songs.

K. Stringfellow: [01:06](#) Anyway, we had this one fantastic asset that John's dad, who was a college professor, was also an amateur musician and as a project they put together this little home recording studio. And once again we're talking about the eighties, long before everybody had a computer and a sound card and whatnot and you could do whatever you want. This was a little more elaborate, modest still, but but something that most people didn't have. So we. We wrote some songs that we believed in and recorded them and we made a cassette. I mean we didn't even have the means or the knowledge to figure out how to press a vinyl or... and CDs were kind of not totally the thing yet. In 1987, 88, when we were doing this, we released this cassette in total naïveté. I'd say we dropped a cassette off at some radio stations in Seattle, which is the nearest city to where we come from, which is Bellingham, Washington. And uhm a commercial station immediately picked it up and put it in rotation much to our shock. And then things just kind of exploded from there.

TMC: [02:12](#) That's awesome. And so you just surreptitiously jumped into a station, said, hey, check this out. And they did. And they loved it. And uh,

K. Stringfellow: [02:22](#) I mean "check this out" might even sound like we had any confidence. You know, we were just like two teenagers, like, hey, we've got this tape. Would you guys listen to it? Yeah, I mean, it's like the kind of thing where in any other case that tape should have ended up in the wastebasket, you know, or

just in some dusty corner like un-listened to. But for whatever reason, you know, uh, one of the jocks listened to it and said, hey, this is pretty good. And I mean, imagine my surprise because we're talking like a few days and it's the station that I listen to every day. I left Bellingham, Washington when I graduated high school and I moved to Seattle. It's 90 miles away, uh, to attend the University of Washington. Uh, for whatever reason.

K. Stringfellow:

[03:07](#)

And the reason is I wanted to move to Seattle. But let's be clear that in 1988, Seattle was not Seattle. I mean Microsoft was just starting. There was no Sub Pop Records. There was, I mean, like the Seattle scene of music didn't exist. There was no Amazon, no, none of that stuff was there. It was a sleepy little fishing town that, that happened to have an airplane factory in it. But it was the biggest city with proximity to Bellingham, which was definitely not where you want to spend the rest of your life. A beautiful city to come home to after you've done everything else, but not a place you want to be as a 20 something. Anyway, uh, you know, I'd moved to Seattle. I listened to this station KJET, which is a commercial alternative station. And we dropped the tape there because, you know, just due diligence, but we didn't think that.

K. Stringfellow:

[03:58](#)

I mean nobody plays you're stupid cassette that you bring in. A couple of days later I'm listening to the radio and I hear one of our songs and I was like, whoa. I mean, super surreal moment. It's like if the TV starts talking to you. I mean I thought I might be becoming unwell or something and maybe I was hallucinating. So I was like, that's crazy. They played our song an hour later they played it again. I'm like, what? They put us into heavy rotation. We didn't have a full band and we didn't have anything. I mean we were just to, pardon my expression, but we're just too numb nuts from Bellingham and I mean like we're not prepared. And suddenly we had people calling us for gigs and major labels and it just. We had two songs that ended up in heavy rotation in Seattle from this cassette. Later on when a local label picked us up and pressed to vinyl from this cassette, we, we even got on commercial stations around the country. Pretty crazy.

TMC:

[04:58](#)

That's wild. And now 30 years later you've got Omnivore Records is rereleasing your 1990s catalog with You're 23, Frosting on the Beater, which I love the name, Amazing Disgrace as a double CD. And you're going to have all sorts of bonus tracks and unreleased stuff on that as well, right?

- K. Stringfellow: [05:15](#) Yeah, so it's a little bit complicated because we're licensing these, these albums from Universal who owned the rights. The CDs will be double CDs replete with, you know, they're stuffed with bonus tracks. And it's the only way you can get all the bonus material. The LPs will just be the album in its original form. You know, the bonus being that the LPs will sound amazing. if you want all the bonus stuff--you got to get the CDs due to the nature of the license with Universal and what they were willing to do. And let's say by willing, which is what we had to beg and negotiate and pay for to get the privilege to do, you know, there's no, there's no digital aspect to this, you know, Universal retains the rights for streaming and downloads. So they didn't grant us that right. So the only way to get the bonus tracks is to get the CDs. There's no download card with the LPs, for example.
- TMC: [06:11](#) Okay, well obviously to support this, you are out on tour and you're coming to the Ram's Head on June 10th. I'm sorry, June 11th, on your 30th anniversary tour. And Tara Llightfoot. will be opening for you and there are tickets still available. You can get them at RamsHeadOnstage.com, but I'm presuming that you're going to be selling. You'll have those CDs available at the show.
- K. Stringfellow: [06:28](#) Uh, you presume incorrectly? My friend. Dear 23 drops later in June. Even after our initial negotiations with Universal, there were some delays on their side because, you know, it's like dealing with the Pentagon. I mean, it's like a huge, like monolithic, draconian entity. Um, but this is my little pull quote for this whole thing. Led Zeppelin was famous for saying, you know, people used to do tours to promote albums. We released albums tours. 40 years later, 2018 The Posies say we do tours to promote a crowdfunding campaign. And essentially these albums or up for presale along with a bunch of other things at Pledge Music (pledgemusic.com). So if you go to Pledge Music, you can preorder the albums. We had originally hoped that they would be dropped, that at least Dear 23 would drop in time for the whole tour, but it's going to drop later in the tour than this show. But you can go to Pledge Music and sign up and in and a, the tour, we'll give you a taste of what you have to look forward to.
- TMC: [07:31](#) Very cool. And the tour is going to be, I don't want to say a little bit different because you guys shake....you guys have had some changes throughout the years, obviously. But you've got yourself and John Auer, but you're bringing back Mike Musburger and Dave Fox from...And you guys haven't played together in 25 years as a group, correct?

- K. Stringfellow: [07:49](#) Yeah. So Mike and Dave are the rhythm section that's on our 1993 album Frosting on the Beater. Uh, Mike was also on our 1990 album Dear 23. We had a different bass player at the start. Yeah. So we haven't toured the US since 1994 with this lineup. And I have to say that it's kind of the lineup that should have lasted, but just things were kind of tumultuous back in the day. And you know, I mentioned that the band started out with John and I and we had this runaway success in Seattle and we grabbed Mike by pure chance, uh, and our first bass player, Rick Roberts. But since the band had started out as our thing and you know, and we were the wunderkind, I guess it'd be wunderkinder, who wrote the songs except for, you know, it was kind of hard for people to share the spotlight and it was hard for us to figure out how to, how to share the journey in a sense, but still retain, retain quality and control of what we're doing.
- K. Stringfellow: [08:51](#) It was just, you know, we were kids and it was, it was hard for us to find stability. Um, if we'd all come up together, you know, play in the garage for years and years and then like kinda hit it, it would have been a different story. But yeah, we had some lineup changes over the years and so it's great that we can go out and go back around with Mike and Dave once again because they are fantastic. I mean really, I mean Mike is just sick. I mean, he's such a good drummer. I mean Dave is wonderful too, but Mike is at a whole other level of... kind of one of those once in a lifetime kind of finds. I mean, this guy, he could have been in any band, I'd put them up there. He's as good as is Seattle counterparts of Dave Grohl or Matt Cameron, uh, who are both wonderful.
- K. Stringfellow: [09:34](#) Mike, is that good! He could play with anybody.
- TMC: [09:36](#) That's awesome. Now how long, how long have you guys been playing together on this tour? When did you start up again on the tour?
- K. Stringfellow: [09:41](#) Our first show was just a week and change ago. We got together in Seattle when, you know, a couple of weeks ago and rehearsed for a couple of days and like it was like May 18th was like our first show we played in Victoria, Canada.
- TMC: [09:55](#) Was it like riding a bike getting together with them again?
- K. Stringfellow: [09:58](#) Um, yeah, kinda messed up bike with a lot of rust on it. No, I mean actually playing the songs from that era. No problem. Even for playing songs from, you know, because these, you know, what we've done is for this tour, we're playing stuff, you

know, concentrating on those three albums that are being reissued and it's a retro, you know, it's a 30th anniversary tour. So it's cool to look back and say, hey, how great were we back then?

K. Stringfellow: [10:24](#)

We have also learned some more modern songs. And those people a little more work to get everybody up to speed, um, and lock into a group. But I mean, we're talking incremental degrees here.

TMC: [10:34](#)

You talked about how surreal it was to hear your music on the radio. How surreal was it when Ringo Starr covered Golden Blunders on his Time Takes Time album.

K. Stringfellow: [10:47](#)

Yeah. I mean that is a whole other level. I mean, you know, the Beatles are my formative music. My mom had Beatles records and since my parents weren't that big on rock and roll, like the only rock records we had

TMC: [11:02](#)

Most parents weren't that big on it back then.

K. Stringfellow: [11:05](#)

Well, I mean, my parents grew up in the sixties. I mean they should have, you know, they could have been, but they were not hippies and they were not. They were just old enough that, yeah, they kind of their sensibility was just a little pre rock or whatever. But they had some rock records, primarily the Beatles. Also a little Beach Boys, little Elvis. So I grew up with these records in the house, you know, and every kid my age knows Yellow Submarine. I mean that is like, it's like it's a children's song. Let's be clear. Really, when you think about that, it's colorful, it's fun, it's friendly, and Octopus's Garden is a children's song. Let's be clear. It's fun. It's colorful, it's friendly. And who is the voice on those two songs? Ringo Starr. So this is like my childhood speaking my own words back to me. Super weird. So the. But the fantastic part about it is, is that it was a total surprise. I mean, we're completely punched by a Beatle. So basically we were in LA. This is the album that we're talking about, this, that our version came from, and let's be clear, the song was talking about his Golden Blunders, which itself is a pun on Golden Slumbers, a Beatles song that ... and the chorus of Golden Blunders is "You're gonna Watch", which is like "You're gonna carry"...

K. Stringfellow: [12:27](#)

It's kind of references carry that weight. So anyway, it's a Beatles pun already. So it was even weirder. It's so Meta. But anyway, we're in LA. It's 1992 and the album in question that the original version came out, came from, is from 1990 and we've got a call from Peter Asher's office. Peter Asher, famous,

uh, from Peter and Gordon, you know, 60s duo and produced a, you know, as a manager and producer and produced all the Linda Ronstadt records and whatnot. Um, anyway, so Peter Asher's office calls us, Hey, we've got something we'd like you to check out. And we're like, okay, you know, come on by. Okay, no idea what they have in mind. Uh, go to the office. Peter himself wasn't there, but an assistant said, oh great, glad you're here coming to this conference room, sit down bring in a boombox, pushed play and out comes our lyrics our music with Ringo Starr's voice.

- K. Stringfellow: [13:24](#) I mean, imagine trying to wrap your head around that. Imagine if you like turned on the TV one day and fricken Justin Bieber's reading out of your diary. You know, like on Saturday Night Live. I mean it's just, I almost blew a gasket. I mean, it was, I just starting even a Beatle, like his thinking, but it's, it's, it's a total skit. It was just so wonderful. I don't even know how to what to say. I mean if. Yeah, if we'd been, if we'd had anticipation and heard about it, we'd be pretty excited of course. But we got totally blindsided. It was just the most surreal, crazy thing. Totally wonderful.
- TMC: [14:02](#) That's awesome. That is awesome. You guys were always. It seems like you're always touring, whether it be as your current iteration with the early people or the solo artists. Do you prefer, do you prefer studio work or touring yourself?
- K. Stringfellow: [14:19](#) Ooh, well, I kind of view it as a, as I'm part of a balanced diet really. I love touring. I really, really do. For the umpteenth time, getting in that van and driving through the Badlands or through Utah or through Montana, all the most beautiful parts of the country or getting on the train, going to Copenhagen or Berlin. I just love it. I mean, I don't think that I could live without it. It's become such a part of my life. I have a family, I love being home, I love my children, et Cetera, but they all knew or in the case of my kids came to understand that this is what I do and this is what I have to do. Having said that, I love my studio. I love, I just got the most wonderful working space and when I go up to my studio in France and I open the windows and look out on the grounds of our estate and look at it. We lived next to a convent. So I have basically a forest around us. I think my God, you know, like what a lucky guy.
- TMC: [15:24](#) Do you take your family out on tour with you.?
- K. Stringfellow: [15:25](#) No, not really. You know. Full disclosure. My wife has had some health issues and traveling is really tough on her. We used to, you know, and, and when our daughter was teeny tiny, maybe

she could come or we could get grandma to keep an eye on things. And you know, my wife came with me to South Africa when I toured there and uh, has been to the states on tour and blah blah, blah. A few times, so we got some touring under our belts and my daughter when she was a wee one, came on tour with The Posies a little bit, but my wife doesn't really travel much these days and my daughter's school is like the thing, so she's got an obligation so she didn't have. Although... my daughter's really got some ambitions to make music and we've been working on a little bit of recording and stuff and I would love ... my dream as while she's still a teenager is to show her, she's as American as she is French though she has lived her life in France. She's been to the states of course many times to visit the grandparents and whatnot, but I would love to show her how beautiful this country is and and take her to all the places that I go routinely on tour.

- TMC: [16:35](#) You know, it's so funny. I've talked to a couple of different artists that have come through the Rams Head. Donavon Frankenreiter with some surf music. He brings his son and he jams with him occasionally and Kevin Costner brought his daughter one time, which was really kind of neat and they both said it is just, again, another surreal moment to be able to sit there and see the talent coming out of something you created in the most honest sense to do it. And it says it's just an incredible moment in parenthood to be able to do something like that.
- K. Stringfellow: [17:02](#) Yeah. And it was a double whammy for me and it's kind of an interesting twist on that whole notion, which is that I recently met my biological parents. I'm adopted and my biological parents were unwed teens in southern California who found themselves in a little bit of a pickle and I was given up.
- TMC: [17:25](#) Sounds like a good nickname.
- K. Stringfellow: [17:26](#) Yeah. And, uh, so and after that I researched and found out who my biological mom was and she was able to tell me who my biological dad was. And I started doing this research back in the nineties and finally met them a couple of years ago. And they're both really wonderful. Um, and interesting. And, but what's cool on this musical side is that my biological dad is a musician and was a professional musician, you know, not anyone you would have heard of, but you know, in the scene in LA in the late sixties, early seventies.
- K. Stringfellow: [18:04](#) And his dad was an amateur musician and his dad was an amateur musician. So here's this lineage there that I didn't even

know about and that is alive in my daughter who's, you know, we just have it coming out of us and it's kind of, it's very heartwarming.

- TMC: [18:22](#) That's very cool. That's very cool. I mean this is sort of debunks the whole talent is developed. I mean, not totally, but I mean certainly I would think that lineage and upbringing and probably genetics play a big part and I can't dance two steps.
- K. Stringfellow: [18:41](#) It's in there, but you also got to develop it. I mean like a plant, a seed has the plant contained in it, but he got to water.
- TMC: [18:47](#) It makes sense. Hey, speaking of touring, you know, in 1986 you were recording on audio cassette tapes and you thankfully you missed out on the eight track era I think, but
- K. Stringfellow: [18:59](#) Yeah, no, we didn't have eight tracks, I have to say just yet what you mentioned that. That Failure, our first album, we recorded it on analog, half inch eight track studio master tape, but we, because our quarter inch machine was broken, we mixed it to a cassette and the master of that album is a DBX encoded cassette. You don't hear that everyday.
- TMC: [19:22](#) No, no, not at all. Now things are distributed by digital. CDs and albums are nearly, you know, relics at this point.
- K. Stringfellow: [19:33](#) They're in a kind of a, another like a neither nor there not gone, but they're not really here.
- TMC: [19:36](#) I mean, what, what are your thoughts on the changes in the way this? I mean, you know, when you first started, I mean you had to go to the record stations and hand them tapes and hope for the best and uh, you know, play the game with the labels and everything else in anymore. Now you've got so much potential for so much more exposure with these streaming things the Spotifys and everything else like that. Is that a good thing or a bad thing for the music industry because I mean you're, you're a veteran of it, been around for 30 years and seen both both sides of it.
- K. Stringfellow: [20:03](#) I think there's absolutely no point in judging it because it's not like you're going to change it. If it's a bad thing, there's nothing you can do about it]. So it's better to just kind of roll with it and figure out what you can do with it. We can debate what makes us who we are and by that I mean that, you know, when I was growing up as a listener, you could hear about a record read about it and you might not be able to find it.

- K. Stringfellow: [20:27](#) That will never exist again. I can go online if I want to dig around a little bit. I could hear like unreleased Led Zeppelin demos that they don't even have one online. I mean like nothing is hidden anymore and nothing is a mystery. We would never make Failure, our first album, as teenagers because we would never have been that naive. There's no way to be naive anymore. I think because you, you just have knowledge at your fingertips, that's kind of just unreal and, and, and limitless, right? So I don't know, but I mean, is it good? Is it bad? I don't know. I mean it does it matter if they call it good or bad. Not really the, the genie's out of the bottle for sure. I think that information, the way we organize it and art is a kind of organization of concepts into something that you can hold onto and aren't used to be made for mystery in a sense.
- K. Stringfellow: [21:20](#) And knowledge came out of the darkness in the form of art many times and now they're like, there is no darkness. Everything is knowledge. So now you're just trying to like organize the giant knowledge sphere into this mosaic and you're trying to be part of the mosaic. It makes each individual piece a little bit less meaningful in a way, I think. It's also more democratic. I don't know. I've never thought of art as a very democratic process. I mean there's the genius theory, you know, you've got your Wagner and you've got your Picasso and they can only only they and can do that. Maybe this is starting to be debunked and we're all more like in giant hive bees and you'd got your artists bees and you've got your coder bees basically on the hive now. It's a little less romantic in a sense, but it is what it is.
- TMC: [22:09](#) No, that's fair. That's a fair. That's a fair assessment there. You've been asked this probably a million times The Posies named for a flower? Where did The Posies come from?
- K. Stringfellow: [22:19](#) Boy, our first album is pretty retro. I think it's our way of kind of a sixties reference in a sense like we definitely wanted to go in the opposite direction of the prevailing winds of that time, which was like Motley Crue and whatnot. We wanted to.
- TMC: [22:40](#) And you certainly have.
- K. Stringfellow: [22:42](#) And we certainly have, you know, we wanted to express a certain kind of sensitivity and meant to be a little bit flower power in a sense.
- TMC: [22:50](#) Okay. Do you have a most memorable show that you've ever done?

K. Stringfellow: [22:54](#) Yeah, I dunno. I mean we've seen a lot of things and you have to also encompass all the things you've done. I mean, you know, I would start throwing stuff in there like me, like jamming with Neil Young and stuff like that.

K. Stringfellow: [23:06](#) That's pretty big in my memory banks. But as far as The Posies go, I would say um, each time we play Seattle with every passing year, it gets more and more intense. I think as people, as time goes on, people want to fight to preserve us and keep us alive and they, I think our audience feels responsible for keeping us alive and they're not wrong. So when we play Seattle, which is a defacto hometown, it's hard to describe. I mean, the feeling that we get from that audience is so intense. I mean, it's like we're the biggest band in the world at that moment. I mean, people just give us so much love and admiration when we play Seattle, It will be a good show. I mean, it's not like we go to Seattle to play an arena. We will play a theater and it's going to be sold out and that's bigger than what we do most of the time on tour we played clubs, but it's not even that. It's like the noise and the feel...they're like there to let us know like we, you're a part of us and we have you and it's. I can't even walk onto the stage in Seattle when we play without tearing up because now I know what's going to happen and I'm like, and it's still more intense than I even have previously experienced in. Every time it goes up a level.

TMC: [24:23](#) That's awesome. Well you're not going to be in Seattle on June 11th are going to be over on the east coast in Annapolis, Maryland. At the Ram's Head On Stage with Tara Lightfoot opening for you.

K. Stringfellow: [24:34](#) Yeah. The last time we played Annapolis, by the way was my birthday in 1990. There's a radio station in Annapolis at the time and then they were playing us and we added that show kind of last minute and bopped on down. So that's the only. That's the last time we were there. It was 28 years ago.

TMC: [24:52](#) Well I know WRNR does play some of your stuff.

K. Stringfellow: [24:53](#) Yeah. They're working with us on this show.

TMC: [24:55](#) Oh, good. Hey, um, if you could do any show with any artist or band, dead or alive, what's the bill and do you open or do you close for opening headline? Is it, is it The Posies and the Mormon Tabernacle Choir? I don't know.

K. Stringfellow: [25:11](#) Well, no, I probably wouldn't. No offense to the Mormons, but uh, Jeez. I mean there's, you know, I'd like to be playing with Stephane Grappelli or something like that. Something ancient that will be improbable, you know, backing up Billie Holiday or something like that. I mean that would be kind of my, my dream things that it wouldn't be possible and you can make of it. Yeah, I mean I got to tell you, you know, like I've been a part of a Big Star. My absolute favorite band. I've been a part of REM, one of my absolute favorite bands. I've been a part of Teenage Fan Club. I've been a part of. I played with Neil Young. My bucket list crossed itself off in many ways and I'm very, very lucky boy. I played with John Paul Jones from Zeppelin. I've, you know, like I got nothing to complain about here, so I kind of feel like I got that bucket list and I'm cool with it very, very much.

TMC: [26:14](#) Well, there you go. Well, I'll tell you, you can cross your bucket list off or Annapolis Maryland at Ram's Head On Stage. The Posies, which is Ken Stringfellow. John Auer Mike Musburger and Dave Fox coming together again after 25 years. Is on, on your 30th anniversary tour, will be here on June 11th. You can still get tickets at RamsHeadOnStage.com and there are a few still left available. And Ken, I thank you very much for spending some time with us this afternoon. Uh,

K. Stringfellow: [26:14](#) My pleasure.

TMC: [26:44](#) You, you only have one daughter, right?

K. Stringfellow: [26:47](#) I have a daughter who just yesterday turned 14.

TMC: [26:47](#) Happy Birthday.

K. Stringfellow: [26:51](#) And I have a son who is 32.

TMC: [26:55](#) Okay, well I'm not, I'm not. I'm not going to ask you to pick your favorite kid, but do you ever do, do you have a favorite Posies song that you, whether it's whether you just enjoy the way it's been received or whether you enjoy playing or

K. Stringfellow: [27:07](#) I have to say I've got to give some props to our last album, which I really think is a great achievement and a great culmination of our studio skills, et Cetera. And there's a very beautiful song which we're playing on this tour called Scattered, which I think, you know, it's absolutely lovely little gem and, and you know, because we're not on a major label and all this stuff, maybe you're, a lot of people didn't hear it, so I would probably

stick up for, for a tune from that album and that one in particular I think is a real nice one.

TMC:

[27:34](#)

Well, I'll tell you what, as we go out of this, I'm going to throw some Scattered on here and we'll give everybody a preview of The Posies that are going to be here June 11th at Ram's Head On Stage. Ken Stringfellow. Thank you very, very much for your time this afternoon and I look forward to seeing you in a couple weeks.

K. Stringfellow:

[27:49](#)

Cool. Thank you so much.