

Exercise 8: Dr. Spock's Backup Band

By Eric Peterson (ePeterson2)

Puzzle Solving 101 • Lesson 8: Steganography

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ps101.puzzlehead.org/gcyxz8

The solution to this puzzle is a set of geospatial coordinates (longitude and latitude) in the form:

N DD° MM.mmm' W DD° MM.mmm'

Where "DD" is degrees and "MM.mmm" is minutes (in thousandths). These coordinates are the solution to the mystery cache Puzzle Solving 101 - Lesson 8: Steganography ([GCYXZ8](#)). (This cache has been archived—the puzzle-solving lesson on the cache page is still visible, but the cache can no longer be found and logged.)

This solution can still be used to complete, discover, and log the cache Puzzle Solving 101 ([GCYXN0](#)). Concatenate the five digits in the north minutes followed by the five digits of the west minutes (ignoring spaces and decimal points). Use that ten-digit sequence as the password for the web page ps101.puzzlehead.org/gcyxz7/clue, which will give you one of the nine clues you will need to complete The Final Exam.

Six Questions for They Might Be Giants

By Cecil Portesque, NPR's Duke of Dead Air

Born in Raleigh, NC, and raised in Columbia County, NY, Cecil Portesque has They Might Be Giants in his blood...even though he admits he loves Weezer too. Like his arch-nemesis Bill O'Reilly, Cecil attended college but never matriculated. Even "hippie" college Bard was too many rules for his free spirit to bear. Cecil ALWAYS listened to late night radio (starting with WABC's "Good Guys" late at night) but the idea of being on the radio didn't cross his mind until he worked as an intern at a public radio station in the mid-1980s during a fund drive. As his political awareness rose and his respect for the politically correct broadcasters fell, he figured he could do it, too! When someone at WBAI, New York, couldn't make the overnight slot, Cecil was ready to fill in. And so the career of the "Duke of Dead Air" began!

Cecil spent most of the '80s and '90s lost in what he describes as the "Bermuda triangle" of New York public radio. Stints behind the microphone at WBAI, WFMU and WFUV finally led to paying work as a consultant for Sirius, where he programs a variety of the alternative-music channels. Encouraged by longtime engineer and TMBG archivist Julian Dufy to return to the other side of the glass, Cecil brings back some of his late-night magic to They Might Be Giants podcast. Cecil says of his new gig: "TMBG's music is original and I love their energy. Working on these podcasts is a dream for me."

CECIL PORTESQUE: Welcome. It's a beautiful day outside, it's a beautiful day inside. As regular listeners of my show know, it's time to play Six Questions. My guests today are just a couple of guys from Brooklyn, New York. Of course, I'm referring the little duo with the big name: John Linnell and John Flansburgh of They Might Be Giants. Thank you agreeing to be on the show, and good ... uh ... afternoon to you both.

JOHN LINNELL: Good afternoon.

JOHN FLANSBURGH: Good afternoon to you, Cecil.

CP: All right, let's begin. So, John: when you first started recording and, ... uh ... performing together, you used recorded drum and synth tracks instead of a band. How did that affect your future music?

JF: Was that directed to me?

CP: Uh ... either one of you.

JL: Why don't you field that one, John.

JF: Okay, well ... huh. Well, we would have loved to have had a band early on, but at the time we were just playing in our living rooms and were pushed into clubs by friends that loved our music. So we just brought the drum machines and tape recorders that we were using at home into the clubs and studio with us. That let us get away with layers of sound, like on "Put Your Hand inside the Puppet Head" – that's a song we could never perform live with just a guitar and accordion.

CP: Ah.

HINT (in [ROT13](#)): [First] Bxnl, fb vg'f xvaq bs n gevivn punyyratr, gbb. Lbh zvtug svaq jji.gzoj.arg gb or n urycshy erfbbhepr.
[Second] Bayl hfr Gurve shyy-yratgu fghqvb nyohzf, cyhf gur PQ sebz gur Irahf Fbatf QIQ/PQ frg
(juvpu unf fghqvb erpbeqvaf, nf bccbfrq gb gur ZG3 qbjaybnqnoyr irefvba, juvpu qbrfa'g).

JL: But playing with a tape over and over was terribly ... limiting, too. While it gives you the ability to perform with a smaller number of band members, it also constrains what you can do live. So we looked for creative ways to kind of break out of that mold a bit, such as during the Flood tour when we used nothing but a metronome for percussion on "Where Your Eyes Don't Go" ... it was kind of a minimalist response to the drum track.

JF: Right, I mean, where you really saw the limitations of taped accompaniment was with a song like "Someone Keeps Moving My Chair". When you play a song like that live, you want to change the tempo to go with the flow of ... energy, I suppose ... that the crowd is giving you. But the energy of the tempo on tape might not be what the audience is in the mood for that night, so ... y'know.

CP: Energy flow ... let's go with that. What range of ... uh ... energy does a typical audience expect from you?

JF: That depends upon the city.

JL: And the type and quantity of illegal substances consumed by the audience prior to the show.

JF: Right, like, when you play for the potheads in Los Angeles, even something as melodramatic as "Narrow Your Eyes" can get them excited, whereas you've got to pump it up with something like "AKA Driver" to keep the dance floor moving for the crack heads in Detroit.

CP: Really.

JF: No, not really.

JL: Although, I can't envision any combination of city and controlled substance that would receive "How Can I Sing Like a Girl?" very well.

JF: Word.

CP: Okay, so, ... what do you do when you aren't writing music?

JF: Well ...

JL: That's sort of one of those unanswerable questions, like "What do you look like when your eyes are closed?" I mean, writing music something we do every day, as naturally as breathing.

JF: Sure, I mean "Operators Are Standing By" was written while I was on hold on my cell phone in the car. Do you realize how difficult it is to drive and write a song at the same time? Especially with a Martin acoustic in your hands?

CP: But you've also performed songs that you didn't write.

JF: Is that question four?

CP: No, it's an elaboration, not a question.

JF: Oh. Well, sure, I mean sometimes when you hear a catchy tune you really like and you think to yourself, "Wow, we could put our own unique spin on that" or "That really meant something to us", then it's hard not to respond to that call. And as long as you get permission and pay the licensing fees to the publisher, it's all good.

JL: Right. For instance, we remade the song "Yeh Yeh" for Mink Car and did our due diligence with licensing and all, and we were sitting in John's living room watching TV one night when a Ford commercial came on with that song playing on it! Of course, they'd never gotten our permission, much less the permission of the original publisher ... they were cool about settling out of court, though.

JF: Yeah, fortunately, their lawyers are all big TMBG fans.

JL: The funny part about Ford's legal team was that they had this abnormally strong love of the song "The House at the Top of the Tree". I'm not sure why.

JF: Probably because of the lyric about the dog. Everyone likes dogs.

JL: Indeed.

CP: Let's get back to the interview. Video. It's always been a big part of TMBG, as you guys kind of surfed the ... MTV "wave" back in the late 80s and early 90s. What is video like ... for you now?

JF: Well, the best part is that other people do all the hard work for us! For instance, shortly after the release of The Spine, the guys over at Homestar Runner cranked out a Shockwave animation for "Experimental Film" which was just so wonderful, better than any ideas we were kicking around at the time.

JL: Yeah, it came out a lot better than the traditional TMBG video fare, which largely consists of us jumping around in a synchronized fashion.

JF: Absolutely. And with the expansion into children's music that we've begun, working with Disney has only expanded our possibilities and opportunities for self-expression.

JL: I think my favorite kids video we've done lately is "Go for G!"

JF: Really? Why?

JL: Because it's my son's favorite ... it keeps him distracted while I work on new songs.

CP: New songs, ah ... new songs. While touring after the release of *The Spine*, you wrote a new song every day for every venue you played. What is it like to work under that kind of pressure?

JL: Well, like everything else, it's sort of a double-edged sword ... it has a lot of the yin-yang thing going for it. On the negative side, it just adds to your workload, which is already pretty considerable while touring, a lot more than when you're working in the studio. But on the plus side, it's invigorating - I enjoy challenging myself, and being forced to produce in a very immediate way brought out some ... creative karma that I don't think we knew we had. Maybe John could explain that better ...

JF: Oh, absolutely. It was tough to do, and we didn't always execute very well. But occasionally a few gems emerge from the rough ... I think "Glasgow (T-H-E-G-A-R-A-G-E)" was one of my favorites not only because it's a catchy tune, but also because it meant a lot to the audience there at the time.

CP: I see.

JL: And that situation was a big contrast to our most recent album, *The Else*. I think we were so burnt out by the end of the *Venue Songs* tour that we wanted to take a more ... measured approach to production. It has a very different sound, one that's a lot more polished and thoughtful. I think "Climbing the Walls" is one of the better examples from that album ... it has a lot of subtlety in the production that you don't hear directly unless you're really paying attention, but which ultimately really kind of shapes the sound in some interesting ways.

JF: And that's going to continue to be a part of our sound for some time to come, especially with the release later this year of our next children's album called *Here Come the 123s* ... you may have already heard the song "Seven" which is airing now between shows on The Disney Channel.

CP: I can't say that I--

JULIAN DUFY: Time check, Cecil. Wrap it up.

CP: Oh! All right, well, it's time to wrap things up. At *Six Questions*, we have a tradition here; we like to end the interviews with a question Jann Wenner liked to end his interviews at *Rolling Stone* with. If you were to die, what would you like the angels in heaven to say about you?

JF: Hmmm ... probably "When you wanted rock, They rolled."

JL: I think I'd like them to say this: "By paying attention to Their songs, Their fans always knew where to find Them."

CP: All right. I want to thank my guests John and John of *They Might Be Giants* for being on my show to play *Six Questions*. Thank you both for coming by the studio today.

JF: Thank you, Cecil.

JL: Yeah, thanks a lot.