

Seasick Steve

Current album: Man From Another Time

Release date: November 20, 2009

Label: Atlantic

Distribution: Warner Music Group



**neuland
CONCERTS**

a division of
WARNER MUSIC GROUP GERMANY HOLDING GMBH
Alter Wandrahm 14 | 20457 Hamburg

PHONE: +49 (0)40 30 339 390
FAX: +49 (0)40 30 339 9390
info@neuland-concerts.com
www.neuland-concerts.com

Much has been written recently about the long and colourful life and late-developing career of Seasick Steve, not all of it accurate. The facts, so far as he remembers them, are as follows.

Steve Wold was born in Oakland, in the San Francisco Bay Area around the post-war period when white folks started paying serious attention to the music of black America.

His father Gene played boogie-woogie piano in a local band. Steve tried the piano as a kid *"but my fingers weren't big enough to get anywhere."* Instead, aged 7, he fell in love with a guitar he came across at summer camp. *"It just gobsmacked me, the way the thing looked. It was as big as I was but the moment I saw it, I knew I was gonna play guitar."* That was fine with his dad who arranged for him to have lessons with his buddy KC Douglas, once a sideman with the Mississippi bluesman Tommy Johnson.

After his parents split up, Steve went to live with his mother. When relations between her and her psychotically violent new partner *"got to the point where I knew I was gonna kill that guy, for real"* the 13 year old Steve ran away from home. He spent the rest of his adolescence living rough: working as and when on farms, funfairs, anything that would pay cash without asking to see his paperwork. He got around by jumping freight trains, spent some time in a little place called jail, or 'juvenile detention centre' as the cops preferred to call it. *"I wasn't tryin' to be no hobo,"* Steve explains. *"I know a lot of people have written books about this, thinkin' it's cool, but I was just tryin' to escape. And that was the only route open to me at the time."*

Well, not quite the only one. At 16 Steve began busking. *"It was hard to make good money playin' on the streets, but the more I played the less I found I wanted to live under a bridge."* Trouble was, he was playing music that was rapidly going out of style. *"The country blues was getting to be a dead issue in America. It had a brief revival in the early 60's when they dug up those old Mississippi guys. But pretty soon they was back workin' in the train station, or deliverin' the laundry."*

So, more or less, was he. For most of the 1970s Steve supported himself, his first wife and their two boys, working at whatever blue collar jobs he could find. *"I tried anything."* He recalls spending some time in Europe, busking in the Paris metro, before returning to America where he skittered around living in motels, cars, and when funds permitted, rented accommodation. The best it ever got was the music gigs, when he was hired as a studio engineer or played guitar in scratch bands for stars he would rather not mention *"because I hate name dropping, and anyways, they was just jobs."*

By the time the 1980s rolled around, Steve had settled down with a Norwegian waitress he met in a bar in Oslo during one of his stints in a touring band. Moving to rural Tennessee he built a small recording studio, but when that didn't work out *"because there was this whole country and western, Christian bullshit thing goin' on down there,"* the Wolds eventually had to pack up and leave again. This time, on account of the fact that Mrs Wold was pining for the fjords - *"she just wanted to live someplace that looked like Norway"* - they chose to head north to Washington State, on the North Western seaboard.



neuland
CONCERTS

a division of
WARNER MUSIC GROUP GERMANY HOLDING GMBH
Alter Wandrahm 14 | 20457 Hamburg

PHONE: +49 (0)40 30 339 390
FAX: +49 (0)40 30 339 9390
info@neuland-concerts.com
www.neuland-concerts.com

It was after he re-assembled his studio in Olympia, a town an hours drive to the south of Seattle, that Steve's musical career stepped up a gear. *"Turned out this was the time when the whole punk grunge thing was taking off up there, so I got to make records with dozens of them grunge bands."* After recording albums for the likes of Bikini Kill and Modest Mouse, Steve became a bit of a face on the Washington music scene, and started picking up some bookings of his own. In 1996 he supported RL Burnside when he played Seattle. *"Everybody, even the kids, went crazy, but I didn't think anything of it. It didn't occur to me that anybody would ever want to see me. At home I was just like this old lava lamp in the corner, playin' the guitar."*

Ten years in the damp Pacific North West was enough for Elizabeth Wold. In 2001, at her insistence, she her husband and their 3 boys (Steve has fathered 5 in total) re-located to Oslo. It was here that Steve acquired his alias *"Seasick"* after a stomach-churning experience on a booze cruise to Denmark. *"I don't do good on boats. At all. Tell ya the truth, I didn't ever like that name, but it just kinda stuck."*

With not a lot else going on in his new Norwegian life, Steve took the plunge in 2003 when he finally recorded an album of his own country blues variations with a couple of Swedish musicians. 'Cheap' by Seasick Steve and the Level Devils did surprisingly well. It was picked up and played in the UK by a couple of influential tastemaker DJs, Charlie Gillett and Resonance FM's Joe Cushley who encouraged him to come to London.

Just when it looked like things were at last starting to happen for Seasick Steve, disaster struck. In 2004 he suffered a heart attack at home in Oslo. Luckily for him, his wife had re-trained as a nurse. *"I was minutes away from dyin,' but I survived,"* Steve says. *"But then I figured I was really done. I thought it was definitely over for me and my music."*

His wife thought otherwise. Hearing him plinking around on a busted 3 string guitar one day she insisted that he take himself and his 4 track recorder off into the kitchen and record some more tunes. *"I think maybe she thought I was gonna bump off in the near future, and that it would be nice to have some memories, you know. I didn't feel like I was makin' an album at all."*

But he was; and there were plenty of people waiting in Britain to hear it. In 2006 Seasick Steve's Dog House Music (now 200,000 plus and counting) was released on the independent Bronzerat label. Tongues wagged in the media village and a high profile appearance on Jools Holland's Hootenanny – Later's big New Year's Eve shindig – was booked. Steve being Steve *"thought it was shit and that the audience was gonna boo,"* but he was wrong again. The Later performance confirmed him as the hot new not-kid on the block. It also made him the must-see act on the European festival circuit in the summer of 2007. At that year's Mojo Awards, Seasick Steve won the gong for Best Breakthrough Act.

He remains modestly bemused by all the attention. *"Every time I walk out in front of these thousands of people, I think 'Goddamn, how can someone who's not young, and didn't used to be famous already have all this success out of the blue?' My belief is I've come at the right time. People are tired of everythin' bein' so fancy. I guess they kinda like hearin' me with an acoustic guitar stompin' on a box."*



neuland
CONCERTS

a division of
WARNER MUSIC GROUP GERMANY HOLDING GMBH
Alter Wandrahm 14 | 20457 Hamburg

PHONE: +49 (0)40 30 339 390
FAX: +49 (0)40 30 339 9390
info@neuland-concerts.com
www.neuland-concerts.com

Luckily for them, in the spring of 2008 Seasick Steve recorded a new album in a studio at Wymondham in Norfolk. As well as Steve and his drummer Dan Magnusson from the Level Devils, *I Started Out With Nothing And Still Got Most Of It Left* features guest performances by Nick Cave and his Grinderman group. Steve, who detests what he calls “*the blues police*” and considers any accolade from the purist community “*the kiss of death*,” is delighted to welcome all young visitors aboard. “*The kids who come to my shows don’t know nothin’ about Charley Patton or Son House*,” he observes, with some satisfaction. “*They just know it rocks*.”

‘*I Started Out With Nothing...*’ debuted in the Top 10 of the album chart and sold over 250,000 copies, making Seasick Steve one of the hottest ‘new’ artists around. Since then, he’s sold-out major shows including a prestigious Royal Albert Hall date, charmed every festival from Glastonbury to Latitude and became the oldest Brit Award nominee in history.

Now Seasick Steve returns with ‘*Man From Another Time*,’ a resolutely organic album that eschews modern studio trickery in favour of the warm style of ‘live’ analogue recording. Everything on the album was performed by Seasick Steve, aside from drums which are again credited to his longstanding Swedish sticksman Dan Magnusson.

“I hope by making records like this, that it’ll make people want to hear music that’s recorded without the use of digital equipment, and that people’s ears can get a little rest from all that shit,” he explained. *“But if not, at least it was nice for me. Me and computers do not see eye to eye.”*