



Steve Bonham – Vagabond Philosopher

Short Version

You could say that Steve has lived a double life. He is, on the one hand, an award-winning psychologist and an internationally respected consultant to organisations all over the world. On the other he is a storyteller, a published author, an inveterate traveller and adventurer, and has for decades been a songwriter and musician with many recordings and festival appearances. It is in his latest book, *How To Survive and Thrive in an Impossible World*, that the two paths he has simultaneously walked along finally intersect.



Long version

Wide-brimmed hat. Long dark coat. Guitar slung on back. 40 years on the road. A hundred thousand miles and half a thousand hotel rooms. From the Berlin Wall to the Atlas Mountains, from the Sahara Desert to the streets of Hong Kong: a memory brewed in the long simmering soup of people and place. A man who has learned to watch and to listen, to walk and talk in the ebb and flow of meeting and parting. He is a chronicler of the human spirit in words and music.

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adventurer, for decades a songwriter and musician with many recordings and festival appearances. It is in his latest book, *How To Survive and Thrive in an Impossible World* that the two paths he has simultaneously walked along finally intersect.

Steve was born in Derby in the age of steam, when the winter damp rolled the chimney smoke over and over till the days were a long twilight of sulphur mist, of a Geordie mother and a Hampshire father whose own birth places in the great ports of Newcastle and Portsmouth ensured a young boy grew up dreaming of a far-off sea and the open road.

School mostly bored him, but somehow he scraped enough of an education to study philosophy and psychology at University despite a much deeper wish to play lead guitar in a rock and roll band. Lost on graduating, he spent what little money he had to buy a one-way aeroplane ticket to Atlanta, Georgia and caught a bus from there to California. Returning after many adventures he was equally lost, but infected with a continuing, deep and clear-eyed love for the moonshine, myth and madness of the USA.

Such ramblings came to an end as back in England he found work first as a project planner for a major building services group and then as a teacher until in his early 30s he joined The British Institute of Management (now the CMI). He quickly became Head of Management Development there and gained a Masters degree in Occupational Psychology. He represented the Institute at National and European level before leaving to co-found a consultancy, Apter Development. In these roles he authored many papers and three well-received books on leadership and management. In the banking crisis he led a team to rebuild the leadership capability of a large failed bank, for which he received a national award.

But at the same time a strong need to express himself creatively meant that he continued to perform and write music whenever possible. He recorded several albums and three musicals, the last of which was *Miracle Man*. Billed as the first mystery play for 500 years, it received Arts Council funding for its performances in both Chesterfield and Derby.



The death of his father at the relatively young age of 70 prompted Steve to need to see more and more of his life as requiring adventure. In his consultancy work, he and his colleagues began to focus on running leadership programmes in unusual and challenging places, including the Sahara Desert, the Atlas Mountains, the Alps, Hong Kong, the Middle East and off the Cape of Good Hope. He signed up personally for hard-core trips to Namibia and toboggan hauling across the frozen lakes of Ontario before undertaking expeditions of his own. These included a 550 kilometre journey on foot from the top of the Atlas Mountains to the Sahara desert along the old camel routes. He has since trekked on foot for three weeks through the wilderness of the Appalachian forests, spent a month rambling and exploring the remarkable landscape and history of New Mexico, walked through the Sierra Nevada in Spain, made several returns to Morocco and is often out on the trail in the UK.

Perhaps it is these sometimes-competing elements to his life and his essentially restless and inquisitive spirit that has led him to write the songs and books which arise from this vagabond life. Books such as ***A Little Nostalgia for Freedom*** and ***A Beautiful Broken Dream*** are more than travel books: they are often funny, wry explorations of the human condition and the extraordinary lives of ordinary folk. *A Little Nostalgia for Freedom* is an exploration of why we so often don't do what we really want to do. It was from these ideas and stories that Steve developed his 5 Rules framework and many of the other ideas that now shape his work. His latest book, ***How to Survive and Thrive in an Impossible World***, was released on 1st October 2020. His new music project, ***American Wilderness***, consisting of 15 songs as four 'EPs' is doing well on all social media platforms and one of the tracks, *Wrapped Up In You*, was a 2019 number 1 on UK Country Radio and a 'track of the year' on National Indie Radio.

Currently Steve lives in Derbyshire, spending as much time as he can on his rusty old narrowboat Emeline down in Oxfordshire.

October 2020

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