



STEVE TILSTON

singer | songwriter | guitarist

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Steve Tilston is one of our most celebrated song smiths, widely recognised within the world of folk and contemporary music; the words, arrangements and subtle, quite superb guitar playing could be no one else.

"The more you listen, the more there is to discover." Bob Harris

The story of Steve's "lost" letter from John Lennon thrust Steve into the worldwide media spotlight and was the inspiration for a Hollywood movie. **Danny Collins**, starring Al Pacino in the title role is now available to own on DVD. Sadly, Steve's songs didn't actually appear on the soundtrack, but the publicity surrounding the film, brought Steve and his music to much wider attention. You can still watch the clip of when Steve met Al on YouTube.

Steve was also voted, Fetea Awards **Male Vocalist of the Year 2015** and **Truth to Tell** was chosen as one of The Telegraph's top folk albums that year too.

Right up to date, 2021 sees the release of **Such Times** and the continuation of the connection with Riverboat Records begun with **Distant Days**; Steve's solo acoustic retrospective, from 2018. In *Such Times* Steve takes on the role of social commentator and storyteller; 15-tracks almost exclusively new material, recorded during the first national lockdown. The release coincides with the 50th anniversary of his debut album, *An Acoustic Confusion* in 1971. After fifty years in the business Steve can still deliver the goods.

In 2007 a 5-CD boxed-set was released **Reaching Back the Life and Music of Steve Tilston** by Free Reed, the company behind the Richard Thompson anthology. Back on song-writing form, he released **Ziggurat** in 2008 from which *A Pretty Penny* made it into Acoustic Magazine's top 50 songs. In 2009 his early career was hi-lighted in a book **Bristol Folk**, the story of Bristol's powerhouse folk & blues scene in the 60s & 70s. And the Bristol connection is marked once again in 2018 when Steve features in a major exhibition **Bristol Music: Seven Decades of Sound** at M Shed Museum in Bristol. His 2011 release **The Reckoning** garnered 4-star reviews in the Guardian, the Observer and the Scotsman, a guest appearance on **Later with Jools Holland** and the **BBC Four Songwriters' Circle** series, plus a **Folk Award** win for best original song. Followed in 2013 by the highly acclaimed trio album **Happenstance**. Steve was also commissioned to write for the Olympics **Radio Ballads** series and the **Harbour of Songs** project.

Born in Liverpool and raised in the Midlands, Steve made his recording debut in 1971 with the classic **An Acoustic Confusion** and has been turning out quality albums ever since. **Life by Misadventure**, **And So It Goes**, **Solo Rubato** and **Such and Such** all featuring first-class song-writing and stylistically Tilston, marking him out as one of this country's finest writers. Whilst the instrumental **Swans at Coole** is testament to his guitar virtuosity. Though known as a songwriter, Steve has always had an ear for the tradition and included new interpretations of old favourites on his original recordings.

Of Many Hands is his first “all-traditional” album; with unique arrangements of timeless classics. There’s also a “best of” anthology, ***The Greening Wind*** and a live album ***Live Hemistry*** recorded on tour with Fairport Convention.

He joined an illustrious band of guitarists including Martin Simpson, Michael Messer and Wizz Jones, when he was invited to contribute to the **Guitar Maestro** series of DVDs; a combination of live studio performance and interviews, revealing the real passion behind these talented musicians... If anyone ever deserved the moniker “Guitar Maestro”, it’s Steve Tilston!

The writer of such classic songs as ***The Slipjigs and Reels*** and the award-winning ***The Reckoning***, is also a published author. Steve’s first novel *All for Poor Jack* is an historical tale set in Bristol and the New World, full of colourful characters. It’s a mighty good read and has been enjoyed by the likes of Bob Dylan no less!

He’s toured with John Renbourn’s Ship of Fools, traditional singer Maggie Boyle (the classic recordings ***Of Moor and Mesa*** and ***All Under the Sun***), as guitarist with Ballet Rambert, with Maartin Allcock & Pete Zorn in WAZ! with Brooks Williams and with his daughter Martha. Plus collaborations with alt-country band The Durbervilles and old Bristol pals Keith Warmington and the late Stuart Gordon as the Steve Tilston Trio. His most recent project is **Tilston & Lowe** a duo with fellow songwriter **Jez Lowe**, producing ***The Janus Game*** a CD of brand-new co-writes.

Others have also recorded Steve’s songs. *Here’s to Tom Paine* is the adopted theme song for the Tom Paine Society of America and we’ve lost count of the number of versions of *The Slipjigs & Reels*!

Steve Tilston Quotes | the recordings

Such Times (2021)

"*Such Times* is an album of great authority, musical diversity and consummate skill. Like a good late vintage port, Steve Tilston really does seem to improve with age." **Folk Radio UK**

When listening to a new album from a favourite artist it can be easy to go looking for the familiar. Well, on this album the familiar comes with the expected virtuoso guitar playing and a voice that is as strong and clear as ever, but the songs will take you in some different directions and leave you in no doubt how Steve feels about today's world. There is a lot here to enjoy. **Phil Thomas, Fatea Magazine**

Distant Days (2018)

A solo acoustic retrospective - Steve reworks some of his most treasured self-penned songs, offering a unique insight into his musical journey since the early 1970s.

"In a similar vein to Richard Thompson's *Acoustic Classics* is Steve Tilston's 19-strong set of revisited songs going as far back in his career as *An Acoustic Confusion*. Unsurprisingly this solo project is impeccably played and sang with the lack of ornamentation giving the songs plenty of room to breath and lending a simplicity that harks back to Tilston's days touring the old folk clubs with Bert Jansch and Maggie Boyle. Also effective are the previously unreleased instrumental nuggets placed throughout the set like interludes, adding texture by shifting the focus from vocal to guitar lines." **** **Glenn Kimpton, Songlines**

"A more conventional, warm summer treat is Steve Tilston's lovely *Distant Days*, a welcome solo acoustic retrospective of his wide, whole-hearted career." **Jude Rogers, The Guardian**

"...succeeds in so many ways: it allows Steve to revisit his back catalogue in a new way; it points us to songs that perhaps we've forgotten or not heard before and provides excellent listening in doing so." **Dai Jeffries, Folking.com**

"...is something very special ...hearing these songs performed once again in the context of a mature singer all these years later is a joyful thing ...another confirmation that this songwriter just keeps on giving." **Allan Wilkinson, Northern Sky (Album of the Month)**

"...has the effect of refreshing your love for the music of Steve Tilston, seeking out the originals from your collection and tracking down those CDs you don't yet own." **Ian Cripps, Fatea Magazine**

Truth to Tell (2015)

"Both voice and musicianship are, needless to say, impeccable." **R2 *******

"...still making good music... *Truth to Tell* has some sparkling songs..." **The Telegraph *****

"Steve Tilston shows no sign of faulting on delivering class music that is at once timeless, intelligent and built to last." **Northern Sky Magazine ******

"Classy, thoughtful, folk... I suspect Lennon would have approved." **The Guardian ******

"Classy work." **The Observer *****

"...another tour de force from one of the finest songsmiths and guitarists that the folk scene has produced over the last 40 odd years." **Folk Radio UK**

Happenstance (2013)

"...is this year's feel-good album." **R2 ******

"...great stuff...great fun, wonderful playing and top songs, what more do you want from an evening." **Mark Radcliffe, BBC Radio 2**

"...a fine and thoughtful songwriter and singer and remarkable guitarist." **The Guardian ******

"Brilliant stuff!" **Mike Harding**

"...an artist still very much at the top of his game." **Living Tradition**

The Reckoning (2011)

"A great narrator on top form." **The Observer ******

"...dominated by Tilston's exquisite guitar work." **The Guardian ******

"...songs of great heart, delivered with authority and instrumental panache." **The Scotsman ******

"...yet another excellent album..." **Maverick ******

"...proudly accomplished and gloriously strong new offering from this most consistent of our contemporary song-smiths ...who just can't seem to put a finger wrong."
fROOTS

And a selection of quotes from previous releases...

"...it's a testament to his skill as a songwriter that he's still penning such memorable songs." **Acoustic magazine**

"By the time Tilston's intoxicating voice kicked in I was hooked." **Maverick**

"...a lyricist attracted to the rich details that bring alive a story or a setting."
Songlines

"...the triumphant return of the songsmith's songsmith...." **Living Tradition**

"...a refined and perfectly paced masterwork." **Colin Randall, Telegraph**

"Soul food for those who appreciate quality words and music..." **Barfly, Australia**
Such & Such, "Basically, you must own this; it's in a different class." **Folking.com**

Steve Tilston Quotes | the musician's musician

"100% - exactly what we've come to expect from Steve Tilston." **John Tams**

"...has always been a guitarist I've greatly admired, one of the best in Britain." **Richard Thompson**

He is one of my and Fairport Convention's favourite performers. If you haven't heard him, I suggest you go and check him out as soon as possible. A remarkable talent!

Dave Pegg, Fairport Convention

It seems to me that Steve Tilston has never sought fame on anything but his own terms. He has been driven by his own enthusiasm for his chosen subject matter. He writes beautiful words and melodies and when our generation of songwriters is assessed on our contribution to our time, Steve's work will rank alongside much better known artists.

Ralph McTell

Steve Tilston has an annoying habit of doing things with his guitar and lyrics that I wish I'd thought of first, coupled with an integrity of expression that compels me to say things like this in public. **Chris Smither**

One of the select band of songwriters with the vision to write great songs rooted in the tradition. **Robin Williamson**

A songwriter and guitarist I admire. **Bert Jansch**

Over the years Steve has become my all-time favourite songwriter on the British acoustic guitar scene. He's a fine singer who combines beautifully executed original melodies with superb lyrics on almost every subject under the sun. **Wizz Jones**

Steve Tilston Quotes | the critics roundup

I have so much respect for Steve Tilston. **Bob Harris, BBC Radio 2**

Steve Tilston, in case events have conspired to conceal the fact from you thus far, is that very rare combination of singer, songwriter and guitarist who actually excels in all departments. **fROOTS**

His musicianship is beyond question, while the arrangements set a standard against which other acoustic/roots albums ought to be measured. **The Daily Telegraph**

I don't know the chemical formula for stardust. What I do know is that Steve Tilston has a rare and precious gift that transcends mere musical ability. **Folk on Tap**

...can stand shoulder to shoulder with any guitarist/songwriter in the world. **Dirty Linen**

Unlike many of his contemporaries though, his work simply gets better as time goes on. **Mojo**

Steve Tilston, singer songwriter and exquisite guitarist... is hard on the heels of Richard Thompson in the perennially underrated stakes. **Q Magazine**

...absurdly accomplished singer/songwriter and guitarist. **Living Tradition**

His music has a flow and poignancy, which makes it, stand out from the plethora of singer/guitarists on the scene. **Guitar Magazine**

...He's an unsung hero quietly going about the art of music making. **Zip Code**

Steve Tilston | Chronology

1971 - Records first album, ***An Acoustic Confusion*** on the Bristol-based **Village Thing** label. **Melody Maker**, Album of the Month. **Rod Stewart** likes it and orders a box to give to friends.

1972 - Records **Collection** for **Transatlantic Records** and **MCA** in the USA. Tours Scandinavia with **Fairport Convention** and **Mott the Hoople**. Appearance at **Munich Olympics** cancelled due to terrorist activity. **1973** - moves to Bristol.

1977 - Sets up **Cornucopia** label and releases third album, ***Songs From The Dress Rehearsal***, with support from **Mike Giles (King Crimson)**, **John Parry** and pre-Fame **Rupert Hine**, who also produced.

1978-81 - Moves back to London. Secures publishing deal and concentrates on writing, performing in London with his band, **Loose Shoes**. Meets and marries singer **Maggie Boyle**.

1982-85 - Back to Bristol, forms a rock band and releases ***In For A Penny In For A Pound*** on the **TW** label: performs in acoustic/folk duo with Maggie Boyle; tours with **Ballet Rambert Dance Company**.

1985 - Helps set up **Run River Records** and records its first album, ***Life By Misadventure***.

1986 - Records tracks for US label **Shannachie's** music of O'Carolan and ***Silently Falls the Snow***.

1987 - With John Renbourn, **Tony Roberts** and **Maggie Boyle**, forms **Ship of Fools**, and records album for US label **Flying Fish**. Tours Canada and USA to great success.

1988 - Fired by his own interest in the instrument, he commissions the Kinkade Brothers of Bristol to resurrect the arpeggione (bowed guitar)

1989-90 - Records the all-instrumental ***Swans at Coole***. Plays mandolin and arpeggione on friend **Bert Jansch's** album *The Ornament Tree*, also on Run River. Moves to Yorkshire.

1990-93 - Records ***Of Moor & Mesa*** with Maggie Boyle (**Run River/UK & Green Linnet/USA**) Album of the Year on Boston's prestigious folk radio station **WUMB**. Tours USA and Canada.

1995 - Sets up **Hubris** label, releases ***And So It Goes***, US release on **Rounder/Flying Fish**. **Fairport Convention** record, *The Slip Jigs & Reels & The Naked Highwayman* on **Jewel in the Crown**.

1996 - Duo releases, ***All under the Sun***, with backing from members of **Fairport Convention**.

1997 - Tilston/Boyle duo splits. **Fairport Convention** records *Here's to Tom Paine*, Irish songstress **Dolores Keane** records *The Night Owl*.

1998 - records **Solorubato** for **Fellside**; *An Acoustic Confusion*, re-released by Scenescoff in USA; releases **Fully Chromatic** with WAZ!

1999-2000 - Releases first 'best of,' album: **The Greening Wind** for Hubris - **Fairport** records *Rocky Road* from **Solorubato**. Tours USA.

2001 - Tours UK with Fairport Convention. First live album ***Live Hemistry*** for Hubris. *Life by Misadventure* re-released on Market Square Records.

2002 - *I Really Wanted You*, covered by Chicago band **Mascott**, later used as **Super Bowl** soundtrack.

2003 - ***Such & Such*** released on Market Square. Voted Album Of The Year on WUMB Boston. First Songbook published. Tours UK with band. Surprised to find himself an answer on **Mastermind!**

2004 - Featured guest on Andy Kershaw Show. Starts recording first all-traditional album.

2005 - A Transatlantic Song-Swap tour with Brooks Williams. *Of Many Hands* released.

2006 - A DVD in the **Guitar Maestro** series released in March.

2007 - Toured for the first time with daughter **Martha Tilston** the "like father, like daughter..." show. *Reaching Back* CD boxed set retrospective released by **Free Reed Records**.

2008 - New CD **Ziggurat** released June - Radio 2 "live": Mike Harding and Bob Harris.

2009 - Features in "Bristol Folk" book. *A Pretty Penny* in Acoustic Magazine's top 50 songs.

2010 - Celebrates 40 years as a professional musician. Publishes first novel *All for Poor Jack*.

2011 - Band collaboration with The Durbervilles. *The Reckoning* released. *LATER with Jools Holland*, records **Songwriters' Circle** for BBC Four, **BBC Folk Awards** nomination.

2012 - **BBC Radio 2 Folk Awards** winner Best Original Song. Writes for new series of Olympics themed **Radio Ballads**. Contributes a song to **the Lone Boat Project** CD *Harbour of Songs*.

2013 - learns Bob Dylan has enjoyed reading *All for Poor Jack*. Releases CD **Happenstance**. Live in Session on Mark Radcliffe's Folk Show and features on 2013 Mark Radcliffe Sessions CD.

2014 - **Bob Harris** in session. Writing for a new release...

2015 - premier of *Danny Collins* movie starring Al Pacino. New album *Truth to Tell* released - The One Show news feature presented by Andy Kershaw - debut UK tour for duo with **Jez Lowe** - winner of Fatea Awards Male Vocalist of the Year.

2016 - new album of brand new co-writes *The Janus Game* with Jez Lowe released November.

2018 - records *Distant Days* a solo acoustic retrospective released on Riverboat Records July 2018 - features in **Bristol Music: Seven Decades of Sound** at M Shed Museum, Bristol.

2020 - 50 years in the music business milestone year; new recording and celebratory concert tour planned - covid-19 pandemic put paid to that!

2021 - *Such Times* new album started pre-lockdown finally released on Riverboat Records late January, 50 years after his debut release *An Acoustic Confusion*.