

# Steve Newman

## BAND STORY

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### An interview with Steve Newman by Howard Butcher for Garden Route Living, September 2008

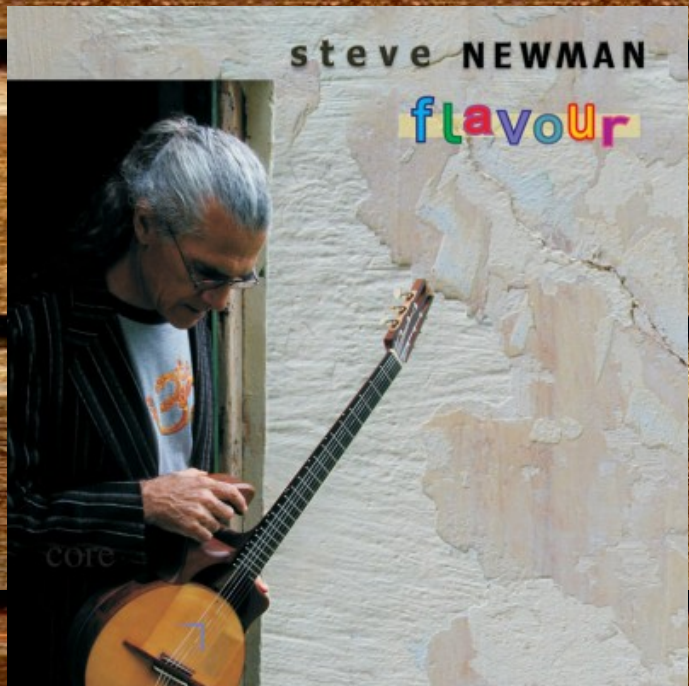
The Garden Route abounds with artistes, eclectic mixes of potters, carvers and even the odd enjinear, many attracted here by the majesty of its forests, mountains and endless beaches, spaces that inspire creativity and unlock vision. Perhaps lesser known are the musicians amongst them, variously talented individuals and groups creating music in every genre from reggae to classical baroque.

Some relatively big names graced erstwhile telephone directories of the Garden Route, places such as Karatara, Gouna and Geelhoutbos. Freedom's Children front man Brian Davidson springs to mind, as does Four Jacks and a Jill's Glenys Lynne and Clive Harding, part of the

being South Africa's biggest international success.

Steve Newman - is a Garden Route citizen, an icon of the acoustic guitar whose name is synonymous with the legendary Tananas internationally acclaimed world fusion group consisting of Newman, Ian Herman and Gito Baloi. Steve now lives in Uniondale having recently moved there from the Baviaanskloof and prior to that he was a somewhat celebrated resident of the Wilderness.

Howard Butcher, who recorded Steve's Flavour album at Peace of



#### STATS

Visits	Plays
886	225
Streams	Downloads
201	24

#### Featured Songs



forest

Other



tea garden (for michael kier)

Other

Steve's 5th album at the end of Eden Studio caught up with him at Cape Town's Acoustic Earth festival held in the leafy precincts of the Constantia Walden Centre where he was sharing the stage with guitar luminaries Tony Cox and Shawn Phillips. Ensnared in the comfort of a voluminous teepee clearly marked 'musicians only' Steve's chill zone was one of a few

separated various VIPs from the 3000 or so audience that had come to enjoy the spectacular day of summery weather, music and fair. Initially they talked about the artwork concepts for his forthcoming CD which

released and whilst they did so a constant stream of well-wishers and fans sauntered by asking for autographs on tee shirts, programs and the like. Shawn Phillips ambled in looking more like a technician than the celebrated artiste he is decked out with a pouched belt sporting a leatherman, torch and a satellite phone, amongst other gismos.

Howard Butcher - What drew you to the Garden Route as opposed to other areas in pursuit of an alternative life-style?

Steve Newman - I got stuck hitching through the area on my way back from visiting someone in Port Elizabeth in 1977 and passing Plett, Knysna and Wilderness I thought this would be a nice place to live one day. Then came a gig for four and half months playing at the Wilderness Hotel and that kind of decided it for me.

Howard Butcher - You have just moved from living in a fairly remote part of the Baviaanskloof to Uniondale what brought the relocation on and how is life in Uniondale?

Steve Newman - Its very much

more town life with a combination of arty and conservative people here, it's a temporary move. We're here because there's electricity available to us (guffaws from the teepee) and to explore initiating another project like the Baviaanskloof (a collective of like-minded people living in community with the environment), people are becoming disillusioned with over-crowded living in the cities, not enough employment and crime. The things that are happening are pushing us to make a change. Our consciousness is saying decentralize and it's all here, to be occupied with grace and gratitude.

Howard Butcher - Your partnership with Tony Cox in the early years cemented you as one of South Africa's foremost acoustic guitarists, then followed the seminal Tananas. Where is your career headed and what can we expect from you in years to come?

Steve Newman - I like to be involved in lots of different projects, we still have the Aquarian Quartet (an ensemble of guitarists Steve Newman, Tony Cox, Greg Georgiades and Syd Kitchen, so named because of their shared astrological sign) and we'll be touring next year at Aquarian time, January - February. Tananas is always an option for me but with Ian living in the States (Ian Herman is the drummer) we only see each other every year or so but I'm hoping to do something this year. Tony and I may play together again at some point but I keep up a solo thing as I enjoy that very much and logistically it's less expensive. I also look out for people I can collaborate with when I'm on the

Howard Butcher - You've had a personal experience with the effects

of violent crime in South Africa (by the loss of Tananas bass player Gito Baloi, murdered for the contents of his wallet). Can musicians make a difference in the fight against crime and if so how?

Steve Newman - I wouldn't approach crime fighting it but rather with understanding. I'm inspired by Sri Neem Karoli Baba who points out that by becoming wealthy we create disparity. I see it that if everybody's got a bit of everything there's no need for crime and certainly with the basics of food and shelter there's far less chance of crime. I think the way forward is to make sure that poverty is not replaced with an unsustainable consumer life style and we need to consider what is sustainability in lifestyle. For example consider the amount of land that is required to support one meat eater, on the

enough vegetarian food to support a village. These are statistics we haven't taken seriously till now, we need to look at our actions. We live in the age of chaos and war but if we follow consciousness it gives us the opportunity to stop and look at our actions and create new directions as the way forward.

Howard Butcher - What philosophies or religion do you live by?

Steve Newman - I would say the rules for living are universal, the Ten Commandments don't belong to any one particular religion. Its just how seriously you take each Commandment and I take very seriously 'thou shall not kill'. I lean towards eastern philosophies and ancient ways interest me very much because everything that's happening today points us back to things that have already been invented and things that we've just forgotten about because of fossil fuels and electricity. We're etc

crisis point and we have no option but to revert to simple life styles and sustainable living in communities, which is traditional in many cultures. I believe that's the future for us.

Howard Butcher

You have just recorded your second solo album of the new millennium, at Peace of Eden Studio in Knysna titled Flavour. How did it go for you and what can we expect from Flavour?

Steve Newman - It was a great fun project, like being a child and playing in a playpen full of very nice instruments, a nice safe place to take chances. You can expect a blend of flavours from Cape to Cuba, Caribbean to the Canary Islands, Africa to Asia and with some mystery spices as well. Most of the tunes are multi-tracked, I'm playing all the instruments so it sounds more like a band at times. It was and still is very exciting and the feed back I've got from lots of people on the rough mixes has been very positive. I'd like to thank Howard and Jeni at Peace of Eden for their friendship and all the fun we had doing this thing, bouncing around ideas, taking pics and doing whatever we had to do (lots of laughter from the teepee). It was a cannot-be-repeated project really.

Howard Butcher - You have toured many major cities and festivals across the globe in the course of your career, what have been the highlights.

Steve Newman - Probably all of them. Everywhere we've played there have been amazing musicians on the bill. (Steve mentions numerous countries around the world from Zimbabwe to Sweden, Japan to the USA). We've played with Salif Keita, Miriam Makeba, Morey Kante, these are people that have inspired us. When we were in

have inspired us when we were in  
Singapore Pandit Hariprasad  
Chaurasia played a Raga to  
welcome the moon and when he  
was finished the moon appeared.

The highlights have been too many  
to single out.

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