



Listen to the band

## Chris Lydon **'The Bishop!'**

*Tuba, piano, cajon and vocals*

**Chris 'the Bishop' Lydon is long-time musical compadre of Steve Bonham, somewhere between a musical director and go-between to musical reality for Steve. He is also an amazing, rootsy piano player and a tuba player who boldly takes the instrument to where it ain't never been before! In fact, it was combining his amazing playing with John's virtuoso banjo that was the catalyst for creating the BIG sound that is *The Long Road*.**



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### ***What's the story so far of your musical life?***

Starting piano lessons as a child was inevitable, wanting to copy my older brothers and sister. Whilst at primary school, the opportunity to take up a brass instrument also presented itself, so I started on cornet, but by the time I was at secondary school had transitioned to the tuba (most people seemed to think I looked the part, if nothing else). Unsettled and unconvinced by traditional teaching (I've never much liked doing what I'm told, musically) I quit having music lessons as a teenager, as it had become about passing the exams, rather than loving music. Given time and space to appreciate playing music for the joy of it (discovering rock 'n' roll, blues and jazz around this time), I could see no other path in life than to be involved in making music. Sure, it's an unstable life, but the joys of it far outweigh the instability in my book. After a degree in music at Manchester Uni - the certificate is nice, but the experiences I made for myself in the course of my degree are far more valuable and useful! - I've carved out a "portfolio" career, a mixture of playing, teaching, composer, producing and arranging, working with various bands and ensembles in the UK, touring to various parts of the world, live radio time in the UK, France and Germany and, of course, creating the new sound of guitar, tuba and banjo for the world to enjoy!

### ***Who influenced your playing?***

Mostly the people who have influenced my playing are those people around me - my friends at school, my colleagues at university and, for the last 15 years or so, Steve Bonham and his various/varied musical friends along the way. I was never one for taking recordings and wanting to mimic them. I always listened to stuff and then did my own thing. I never had the attention span for practicing something over and over again, listening to a record, to get it note for note accurate. I wanted to get on and play the damn thing! I listen to all sorts of music, from "rootsy-american-a-y, acoustic" stuff, to classic 80s/90s rock, to musicals, to jazz and blues, to classic 1950s rock and roll.... everything and anything! I don't much care what the label is, just as long as the music is good.

## **What instruments do you play, what is their story and why are they special to you?**

My tuba, probably the most expensive single item I have in my life right now, is a Besson Sovereign EEb (BE981). A 19" bell looming over me for the last 16 years, and ten kilograms of metal to keep upright, I suspect (hope?) this will be the only tuba I ever purchase in my life. Tuba supremo, John Fletcher (Fletch to his friends), helped Besson craft the "perfect" tuba - great in orchestras, but also great in small ensembles. Whilst I don't think he ever played with a guitar and banjo in a trio (although I don't know for certain), I'm sure he'd approve. Fletch is the grandfather of modern tuba playing. As a teenager he didn't know that tubas weren't supposed to play the cello lines, and he just got on with it. A new breed of tuba player was born - doing more and risking more, to see what you could get away with. When people see me hauling my tuba around, often on my back, they often say to me "Oh, I bet you wished you play the flute, now, don't you?". Absolutely. Not. Nothing wrong with the flute or flute players, but I was born to play the tuba. You can just see it when you look at me!

Currently, for gigging I use a Yamaha P105 stage piano. It has semi weighted keys, meaning it has a good feel to it, but you can still lift it in and out of your car! One day, the plan is to have a Yamaha baby grand knocking about at home to tinkle away on, but I'm not there yet...

## **What are the challenges and what is the excitement of playing with The Long Road?**



Trying to make music on an intimate scale, just three players, but sounding meaty and sonorous, and yet not muddy, is all kinds of challenging. For me, playing the tuba with The Long Road has opened up a world of possibilities. In many of our songs, the tuba line is not the bass line. We use it often as a tenor/baritone line, which works wonderfully with the texture of the banjo and guitar. With my cajon pumping along, it sounds big and beefy when needed, and soft and gentle when not. More often than not, after gigs, people - strangers no less! - come up to me and say how surprised they were by the tuba. "It's not just oom-pah! is it?!" The lyrical lines from the tuba are not what people are used to hearing, but quite often they are the most challenging to play, and therefore rewarding. Regarding the piano, I've never been one for reading classical piano music, or having a very good piano technique, so I've ended up with my own style - enough

clashes and added notes to chords to make it interesting, but not so much as to bore. You can hear the internationality in the music we make - west coast America, Southern states, East Coast sometimes, mixed with deepest, darkest Derbyshire, tinged with the North East and North West, the hint of a brass band here and there.

Working with a great songwriter like Steve and an awesome banjo player like John, everything just seems to sing when we three play together. Refreshing, exciting and moving (in all its senses!)

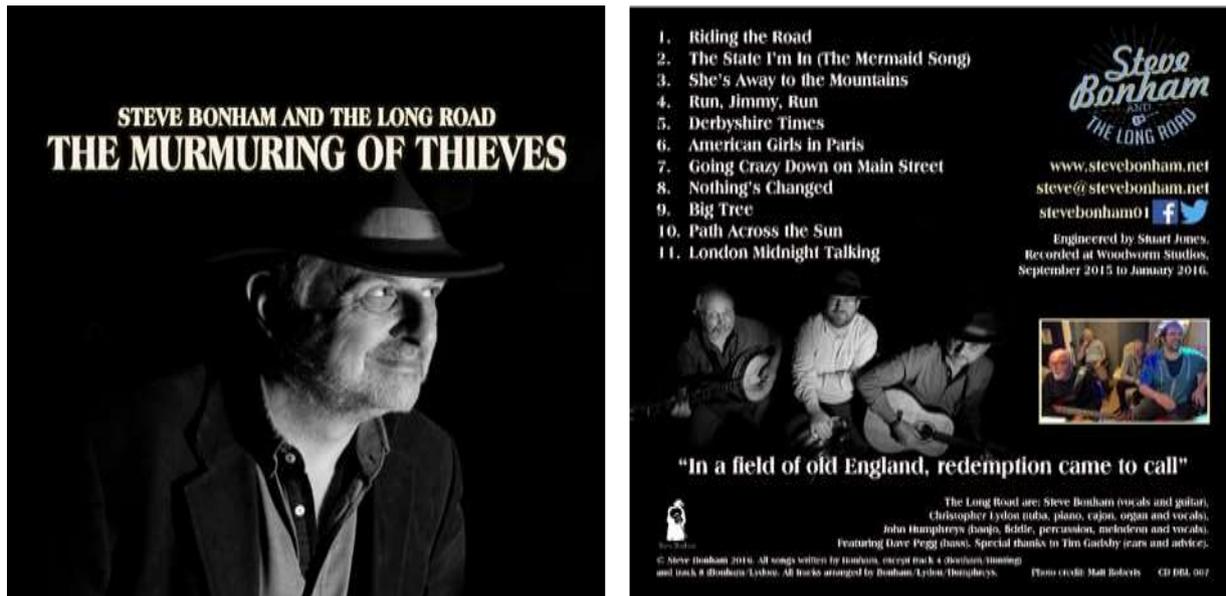
## **How did you find making *The Murmuring of Thieves*?**

Heading off to Woodworm Studios for the first time with Steve and John back in September 2015 was almost a surreal experience. 15 years earlier, Steve had told me about this place, the records, the people, the stories (oh, the stories!) and he'd said "One day, Bish, it would be great to go back there". And there we were. A fabulous piano at my fingertips and a recording engineer who knew more than which end of my tuba roughly to point the microphone at - someone who was excited to have a tuba in, rather than just ... perturbed! Exciting times ahead. But hard work too, wanting to make the very best of the music we'd been crafting as a trio. People often say "it isn't art until it hurts". Well there were times that this recording could have been nothing other than art! The combo of guitar/voice, fiddle/banjo/squeeze box and tuba/piano/cajon is, we think, a new one on the world. But we've been out there, road testing, and it invariably goes down well. We produce a far bigger sound than anyone would believe just looking at us. (The fact we each bring in three or four instruments should give people an indication!!) What I love about recording in studios is those "ah-ha!" moments, when something you knew was in you but you didn't know what form it would take, suddenly rolls out into

the air. And working together to slot the jigsaw together, taking those leaps, taking those risks. The result being the important thing, not the individual components. Everything on the album has character, from the stark simplicity of "She's Away To The Mountains" and "Derbyshire Times", to the raucous and bombastic "Big Tree," and the motoring along "Riding the Road".

### **What are your hopes for the album?**

A lot of love, energy and thought has gone into *The Murmuring of Thieves*. Here's hoping that we can work out how the music industry works these days(!), find the people out there who want real, live, interesting, thoughtful, exciting, from-the-heart, innovative music - and get it to them. There's nothing else like music for lighting up the brain and we think we've found a unique and exciting sound for people to enjoy.



***The Murmuring of Thieves*** is available on iTunes and many other digital platforms, and as a special edition CD from [www.stevebonham.net/themurmuringofthieves](http://www.stevebonham.net/themurmuringofthieves)

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