

## Steve Gillette – Bio

Steve Gillette was born on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1942 on the naval base in Pensacola, Florida – at the time his father was a flight instructor. Till the age of five, Steve lived in Cambridge, Massachusetts while his father attended Harvard Law School. The Gillette family then moved to Southern California where he grew up. His parents sang at home and his father played piano, listened to jazz and big band music, with Fats Waller and Hoagy Carmichael being particular favourites. With stringed numerous musical instruments lying around the house, it was hardly surprising that by his mid-teens Steve was an adept ukulele and banjo player and later a guitar player. Following high school Steve studied English at UCLA, where he played in a bluegrass band, the Valley Boys. As a teenager, in the pop arena, Steve's musical heroes included the Everly Brothers, Buddy Holly, Chuck Berry, Eddie Cochran and Elvis. Folk music was also an interest, as performed by The Kingston Trio and The New Lost City Ramblers, and subsequently by Joan Baez and Judy Collins. As for the blues the teenager listened to Big Bill Broonzy and Josh White.

It was the early sixties folk revival that inspired Steve to start writing songs. Early in his career he played open mics. at the Golden Bear in Huntington Beach, eventually becoming the club's opening act. In the process he met Ian & Sylvia, Judy Collins, Brownie McGee and Sonny Terry and Rambling Jack Elliot and others. Through the early sixties, Gillette performed in numerous southern California folk clubs/coffeehouses, and headed east in 1966 when invited to play the Philadelphia Folk Festival. During his early-twenties Steve befriended Tom Campbell who was working at Disneyland at the time, and they collaborated on a number of songs including "Darcy Farrow," which four decades on has become tantamount to a 'folk standard.' Ian & Sylvia covered the song on "**Early Morning Rain**" [1965]. With fellow performer [and Disneyland employee] Linda Albertano, Steve rewrote "Molly & Tenbrooks."

In 1967 harmony group The Sunshine Company covered Gillette's "Back On The Streets Again," and when issued as a single it reached U.S. Top 40 Pop. The same year Steve was signed by Vanguard Records and went on to cut a self-titled album. Buffy Saint Marie, Bruce Langhorne and Dick Rosmini guested on the sessions. For pretty much the next decade, Gillette was a deskbound songwriter in Los Angeles, with the time-honoured sports car and large exclusive Hollywood Hills home. Deciding on a return to live performance, Outpost Records issued "**Back On The Street Again**," which was produced by drummer John Ware [Michael Nesmith]. The 1000 copy limited edition disc featured contributions from Spanky McFarland and Emmylou Harris' Hot Band. Two years later John DelGatto's Sierra Briar Records issued the direct-to-disc collection "**Alone...Direct**." Gillette's fourth solo album "**A Little Warmth**" was produced by Graham Nash, and issued by the Regency label [distributed by Flying Fish]. The session players included John Barbata and Pete Sears [Jefferson Starship], David Lindley and Jennifer Warnes. The latter disc is currently available via Steve's Compass Rose Music.

In 1984 Steve made the decision to leave Los Angeles, and that year attended the Kerrville Folk Festival. At the festival he met old friends who were still pursuing a career as touring folk musicians. Kerrville has been Steve's 'summer camp' for the last two decades. For a number of years Steve's home was a 28-foot Airstream Argosy motor-home, as he criss-crossed America in the role of performing songwriter. At a folk festival in Rochester, New York, circa 1988, Gillette met fellow musician Cindy Mangsen, from Vermont, and soon settled down with her. In 1989 the pair were married. Touring and performing together, the following year the duo issued a fourteen track, live cassette titled "**Live In Concert**."

As for further duo recordings, Compass Rose subsequently issued a nineteen-song CD version of "**Live In Concert**" recorded at The Ark in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Swiss based Brambus Records issued the album in Europe. It was followed by "**The Light Of The Day**" on Compass Rose/Brambus, "**A Sense Of Place**" on Redwing Music, and in early 2006 on Compass Rose by "**Being There**." As for side projects, Steve and Cindy teamed up with friends Michael Smith and Anne Hills for the Appleseed Recordings release "**Fourtold**" [2003]. In the late eighties, in a solo capacity, on Compass Rose, Steve issued a pair of cassette-only albums "**Steve Gillette**" [1988] and "**American Songwriter**" [1989]. Recorded in Nashville, the twelve-song "**The Ways Of The World**," produced by Jim Rooney, featured studio contributions from Stuart Duncan, Mark Howard, Roy Huskey Jr. and Mark Schatz. Released by Redwing Music, the "**Texas & Tennessee**" session musicians included Charles Cochran, Mark Graham, Mark Schatz, Pete Sutherland and Pete Wasner.

To date, Gillette's songs have been covered by Glenn Yarborough, Carolyn Hester, Gordon Lightfoot, Linda Ronstadt, John Denver ["Darcy Farrow" on the 4 million seller "**Rocky Mountain High**"], The Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, Garth Brooks, Kenny Rogers, Waylon Jennings, Anne Murray, The Oak Ridge Boys, Tony Rice, Spanky and Our Gang, Jerry Jeff Walker, Jennifer Warnes, Don Williams and Tammy Wynette. In addition to his in-concert performances, Steve has supervised songwriting workshops and seminars, authored "**Songwriting And The Creative Process**" [Sing Out! Press, 1995 ISBN 1881322033], and been involved in record production. Gillette has also penned film music, including singing the theme to "**The Outfit**" [1973]. On the silver screen even Jiminy Cricket, Dumbo and Winnie the Pooh have sung Steve's songs.

Discography :

Solo - "**Steve Gillette**" [1967] ; "**Back On The Street Again**" [1977] ; "**Alone...Direct**" [1979] ; "**A Little Warmth**" [1979] ; "**Steve Gillette**" cassette only [1988] ; "**American Songwriter**" cassette only [1989] ; "**The Ways Of The World**" [1992] ; "**Texas & Tennessee**" [1998] :  
with Cindy Mangsen – "**Live In Concert**" [1990] cassette only ; "**Live In Concert**" CD version, different tracks [1991] ; "**The Light Of The Day**" [1996] ; "**A Sense Of Place**" [2001] ; "**Being There**" [2006] :  
with Fourtold [Michael Smith, Anne Hills and Cindy Mangsen] – "**Fourtold**" [2003] :

**Arthur Wood**

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