REVIEW · BLUES

Walkin' Man | Seasick Steve

Where does the character end and the person begin? The line is drawn on the road.

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The drifter is an ancient presence in the blues. With Seasick Steve, at some point, you start wondering where the character ends and the person begins: the border is a line that is **thin, shifting, uncertain, elusive and provisional**, drawn on the road and bound to fade under the footsteps, like chalk after a downpour.

Steve Wold's public image tells of a rough musician who found success late after a life on the move. Some accounts have challenged it, pointing to an earlier professional career as a musician and producer. Wold has defended parts of his story. The tension between biography and character remains; there is no need to turn it into a trial or to rule on who he "really" is.

Walkin' Man appears on *I Started Out with Nothin and I Still Got Most of It Left*. Steve Wold is its writer, producer, voice and guitar; Dan Magnusson plays drums. The surprise comes from the sound: among guitars stripped to the bone, homemade instruments and stomps, a tender, melodic, almost delicate song opens

up. The roughness lets a soft light through, like sun between loose planks. The drum beat walks beside the melody: **boom, ba-boom**, without breaking its sweetness.

The biographical controversy does not automatically make a song false. A stage persona can be built and a performance can still reach the listener. The blues has always turned experiences and figures into characters; sometimes a song's truth does not lie in certifying every detail but in the way voice and melody make you feel the walking. The song stays **gentle, roaming, wistful, affectionate and light**, like a wanderer whistling so as not to feel alone.

> ***Where does lived experience end and mythology begin? And why should we expect a blues song to show us exactly where that border lies?***

LISTEN

Walkin' Man — Seasick Steve — is in our playlist Acoustic Blues, Roots & Dust.

Seasick Steve. Updated every Friday. Selected by ear.