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For Immediate Release

New Steve Bell album a glad surprise—for him and, he hopes, for listeners too

THE GLAD SURPRISE available Oct. 1

WINNIPEG, Man. -- For Steve Bell, his 23rd album, titled “The Glad Surprise,” is surprising for a couple of reasons.

First off, Bell—who will be 65 next year—is surprised to still be writing, singing, recording and touring. “When I started in my late teens, I never expected to still be playing all these years later,” he said.

But the other reason is how the first song written for the new album came to him. “The pandemic was so difficult emotionally,” he said. “I found it hard to write anything. Words just wouldn’t come.”

But one song did come—an instrumental guitar piece—out of nowhere it seemed. “I wrote it at a particularly low point of the lockdown. And it surprised me because it was a happy, bouncy little thing. It was out of step with the experience of the pandemic and how I was feeling at the time,” he said.

There must have been a reason for it, Bell thought. “It’s as if the song had a point to make. That even in the midst of anxiety and despair, like during a pandemic, there is joy to be found: that “This Too, Is True” (the song’s title)— and it’s vitally important to give it a voice.”

It was the only song he wrote during the Covid lockdown. The rest of the original songs on the album were written as the pandemic dissipated.

“This collection of songs reminds us that, despite the surge of anger, polarization and meanness that has surfaced in the world and in the church over the past several years, God is still about ‘mercy, pity, peace and love.’ We need to internalize that message today. I can hand this album to people and honestly say ‘I think we need this. There is medicine in it.’”

Bell hopes listeners will find healing, hope and challenge as they listen to the ten songs on the album, including *The Glad Surprise*, *The Divine Image*, *One Can Hope*, *A Lovely Longed-for Blue*, *This Dark Hour*, and his unique cover of Bruce Cockburn’s classic 1984 song *Lovers in a Dangerous Time*.

“Cockburn’s song really stands out for me at a time like this,” said Bell, who has now covered 16 of Cockburn’s songs. “I started playing around with it about the time Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022. It was not lost on me how pertinent this song, written forty years ago in the shadow of the Cold War, still is today. The song suggests, and I agree, that love may be the most potent protest we have.”

As for how long Bell will keep writing, singing and playing, “I’ll keep going as long as the songs keep coming,” he said. “They are a gift to me personally, but they seem to be for others as well. I feel a certain obligation to give them a fighting chance at being heard.”

Produced by Murray Pulver for Signpost Music, *and with album design by Roberta Landreth*, **The Glad Surprise** will be released October 1. The disc comes with a beautifully designed 130-page booklet of Bell’s reflections on the songs. It is available for \$30 at www.stevebell.com. It is also available on all the regular digital platforms.

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About Steve Bell: Singer-songwriter and storyteller Steve Bell was a member of Winnipeg’s acclaimed Elias, Schritt & Bell in early 80’s and active in Winnipeg’s studio and night-club scene throughout the decade. Since 1989 he has independently released 23 CDs with combined sales of over 400,000 units. Three of his CDs have been awarded JUNOs, with another 3 nominations. He has also won four Western Canadian Music awards, numerous Gospel Music Association and Prairie Music awards, including Producer of the Year in 2002.

Since 1989, Bell has performed over 2,000 concerts to over a half million people in 15 countries. He has also done advocacy work for organizations like World Vision, Canadian Foodgrains Bank, Compassion Canada, and the North End Family Centre (Winnipeg).

Bell is the recipient of the 2012 Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal. He was appointed to the Order of Manitoba in 2021 and the Order of Canada in 2022.

For more information, or to request interviews, contact manager Dave Zeglinski at 1-204-774-3715 or dave@signpostmusic.com

