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Men of Substance



It is not just beauty but also spirituality that is in the eye of the beholder. Gathering at the shores of enlightenment is an ever diverse range of souls awaiting the tidal wave of newly energized spiritual teachers. **Claire Gillman** speaks to two such inspired individuals whose incredible talents and pure intentions belie their modest exteriors

Spirit Warrior

Steven Clarke breaks the 'enlightened' mould in so many ways that he must have come across his fair share of prejudice and adverse reactions from the spiritual community in his time. From appearances alone, you would not suspect that Clarke is a powerful medium and healer – in fact, he looks more like a night-club bouncer than a light-worker. Yet, as the old adage says, appearances can be deceptive and Clarke is actively trying to make a positive difference in people's lives working for the light and through spirit, albeit in his own distinctive 'non-stereotypical, non-conformist' way.

On the day of our interview Clarke, who stands about 5'7" tall and is wearing a Brazil football shirt, strides around his strikingly modern home, talking loudly into a mobile phone in

a strong Mancunian accent. Yet the moment we start to talk about the aims of The Tribe of the Light (TOTL), the spiritual community that he launched at the MBS Northern Festival in October 2007, there is a potent intensity to his words and I get the strong impression that he will bring the same dynamism and enthusiasm that has brought him success in the business world to what he hopes to achieve with this new spiritual undertaking. The idea for TOTL came to Clarke as he drove his seven year-old son to Blackpool for a weekend away. The 34 year-old says: 'When I drive, my guides tend to speak to me. Suddenly, Tribe of the Light came in. I stored it in my phone and I left it. Had a great weekend and a few days later I asked the guides what it was about. I'm a healer and a medium. I'm also doing a crystal healing diploma at the moment, so I do my bit for people. There was no real need for me to do the Tribe but, because it came to me, I always trust what my spirit guides say to me, so I bought the company and it went from there.'

Getting it together

He and his co-founders, Sheridan King and Sharon McCuminskey, then set about bringing Clarke's idea to life. TOTL

is a multi-faceted operation. On the one hand, it is an on-line community for light workers where they can share ideas and experiences and lend each other support. Since the website started at the end of 2007, some 250 or more members have joined to use the on-line information and social network. Clarke says: 'The idea was to give people a link and to bring people together to work together.' Yet the aspect of TOTL that Clarke is most keen to emphasise is the help that this loose community of light workers, whether they be Reiki teachers, healers, crystal workers, mediums or pagans, can offer to others, and principally those from under-privileged areas. Clarke's idea is that members of TOTL will occasionally volunteer to give their services to those who do not normally have access to light-workers or to information about self-development. He says: 'The Tribe's real direction is to help the people who are sat in council houses and have no money. There are people who live on rough estates and they may be as spiritual as someone who can afford to find out more. We need to help the people who don't already know about it. We'll get a hostel for the day and say "free mediums, free crystal healers, free Reiki". These



people come in and touching the light could move them on.' It is clear that he is keen to bring the light to all people irrespective of their backgrounds or current situations, rather than just to those who have traditionally sought enlightenment. Through TOTL, he hopes to promote the work of many of the leading lights of the MBS world so that they may reach an audience who might not otherwise hear about their gifts. He says: 'We will tell people that these are the people who are genuine and if you take a look at what they are doing and listen to what they say, it could help you. It's helped me and my life.' Respected and well-established names in the mind, body and spirit field have responded positively to what Clarke is trying to do. An impressive line up of speakers and performers supported the first TOTL event held in Bolton in late February (see panel) and this two-day event was offered at a very reasonable, subsidized (by Clarke) price to try and entice as many people as possible

Common touch

Clarke stresses the fact that the venture could fail if it does not receive the support of the MBS community. He also believes that revenue from advertising will pay for what TOTL is trying to do whereas currently it is largely funded by Clarke himself. He admits: 'I am losing money but I am sowing the seeds.' One of the reasons that Clarke is so

"I used to hate the life I had but I am glad I had it because it has equipped me for what I am doing now and to know what people are"

impassioned about the goals of TOTL and is prepared to use his own funds to see it succeed is because he himself knows first-hand how hard it can be to follow a spiritual path when you have a difficult start in life. Although he has always known spirit was around him, it was not something that he advertised when he was growing up in a children's home although he confesses: 'I prayed a lot at the children's home. I had nobody.' At 16, he joined the army – another environment that is not renowned for its sympathetic approach to spiritual matters. However, there were enough incidences in his childhood and youth

to convince Clarke that spirit and the guides were with him. One of those who comes through regularly from the spirit world to Clarke is one of his best friends from his army days who died in a motorbike accident. He says: 'He was the first person to give me love. The connection with Steven was there – he helped me to find more. Up to the age of 14 or 15, that was a hurtful time and I'd faced a lot of rejection. I used to hate the life I had but I am glad I had it because it has equipped me for what I am doing now and to know what people are.' It is this ability to judge character and to be accepted both by prison inmates and the guiding lights of MBS that makes me think Clarke will probably succeed in his quest to help those less fortunate and less well-informed than others. He explains his common touch simply by saying: 'There is not one element of society that I have not dealt with and they have all got heart. The man on the street who goes betting and has a pint can be fine – but people prejudge others. The divine has taken me to where I am now. For you to get respect from people, you have to have been through it yourself. I've been around a lot of different circles.'

Vision and drive

After spending 10 years in the army, Clarke decided to start his own business. 'I decided I needed something more, so six years ago, I started my business with just £17. I ran a Rent-a-Desk scheme with one desk and four people paid me for their desk space and a phone line,' he explains. 'I expanded. Now, I run a direct sales and marketing company and I have a lot of people working for me. I have done it once for myself and I'm prepared to put the same drive into The Tribe but, to tell you the truth – it's easier to make money than to make a difference.' But making a difference is his calling – and he will persevere. He says: 'Spirit guides me. I won't ever let them down because spirit has never let me down. Spirit has rewarded me for something. I am not going to walk away. I will always give everything back to spirit. I want to help.' There is not a trace of arrogance in Clarke's words, just surety. He does not believe that his way is the only way. He simply hopes that by making the TOTL inclusive, more people can benefit. He concludes: 'We don't consider ourselves better than anyone else. We need the people out there who are doing it with the right intent to continue doing it. What matters at this point in time is the intention. If your intention is good, then it doesn't matter how you do it – whether it's Reiki or angels. We are all spirit and true spirituality is intent. Clarke has ambitious plans for TOTL and he hopes to set up a Kid's TOTL in

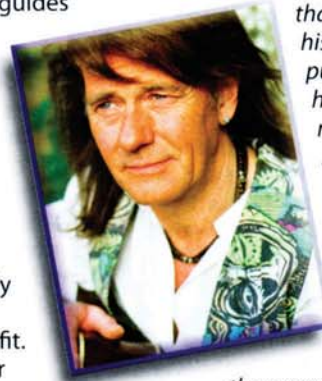
the future, saying: 'As light workers, we need to lay the foundations. Let's pass this on to the kids.' Although he admits that what he is trying to achieve is a tall order, he feels he has the best possible support for his enterprise. He explains: 'I believe there is a spirit world and let's just say I'm right. How many people are there who are in spirit who must be top experts in IT, accounting etc – you name it. And the angelic realms must be looking at TOTL and thinking we are doing something good here, let's put them all together. It's synchronicity. The intent's right.'

Clarke is part of a new breed of spiritual trail-blazer whose down-to-earth approach and street-cred style will resonate with many of today's spiritual seekers. He is not dismissive of the traditional approach at all; indeed he says: 'We need the old school because they have the information and wisdom but I hope that they still want to make a difference.' Nonetheless, he feels that there has been a necessary sea-change in the way that the spiritual community presents itself to the outside world. He is unapologetic about his persona or the fact that he does not conform to the usual 'alternative therapies' and spiritual healer-style of appearance or speech. In fact, he strongly opposes the use of jargon and language when presenting spiritual matters to the public. Finally, he says: 'The energy has changed. I am not a soft lad. In business, I am aggressive and I can go to the gym and press weights but I have got a soft heart. Spirit ain't soft either. I have to honour my own spirit.'

Music Man

Music is said to feed the soul but, in the case of musician and artist Nick

Ashron, it could be said that it is soul that feeds his music and art. When pushed to describe himself as either a musician or an artist, Ashron reluctantly admits that his first love has to be music, and he has spent the past 30 years writing, recording and performing his works with



the express aim of relaxing and healing his listeners. But he is also a psychic artist, specializing in spirit guide drawings, although this aspect of his work only became apparent once he had been on his own spiritual journey.

Even as a child, Ashron knew intuitively that art and music were going to form an important part of his life but at that early stage, he didn't know quite

how. His somewhat unconventional upbringing – his father was a commercial airline pilot so he lived in many different countries – set the foundation for his love of art. He says: 'I was constantly changing schools. My schooling was very erratic. As I was always drawing, the only subject I excelled at was art – and probably English because I spoke it better than most of the teachers. I suffered academically but I gained a worldly understanding.' In his early teens, he wanted to be a drummer and so he asked for a drum kit for his birthday. His father opposed the idea and suggested that his son should settle for a guitar. A fortunate compromise for his fans because, from that point on, Ashron started writing his own songs, albeit that these were slightly more pop-oriented than his later works. While living with his parents in Borneo, he cut his teeth as a performer by playing in local bands.

Taking flight

It was not until he returned to London to attend Art College that he started to explore his interest in healing and spiritual development – an interest that had been prompted by his early experiences of living abroad in developing countries. He says: 'At the age of nine, I lived in Pakistan and India.

"I realized that music was a great conduit to channel healing energy"

At that young age, seeing poverty etc had a real effect – I wanted to heal people and the urge was very strong. From the age of 21, as I learned more about a spiritual path, I realized that music was a great conduit to channel healing energy. I wrote my first piece of healing music in 1975. Originally, I was thinking in terms of commercial pop music but this came as a specific pathway. I took the path of music and spirit – I knew it would be the harder one but I also knew I had to follow that path and that it was the way I had to go.' To this end, he formed a progressive melodic rock band named 'Pegasus', and rapidly made a name for himself as he toured the newly emergent festivals and fayres devoted to spiritual, ecological and holistic awareness. They even performed their 'New Age' music at one of the first Mind, Body and Spirit festivals in Earls Court, London in 1979. He also performed with another band he called 'Crazy 4 Animals' at the Glastonbury Festival – and all this before 'New Age' Rock became a recognized musical category! Eventually, after a spell as a

licence negotiator for a music copyright company in London, Ashron went on to form his current band called 'Elfin Spiral' and several albums (channelled through his guides) followed, the most recent release being 'Pleiadean Love Dance' in 2005.

Back to the future

Ashron is currently revisiting some of his early music and reworking it into songs with vocals using the wonderful voice of his new vocalist, Regan. 'I don't read or write music,' he explains. 'I just sit with a keyboard and play around. I see it as spirit informing me and it's the same with my drawing. I start with spirit.' It was during the frenetic period of recording his double albums 'Celestial Gateways' and 'Tribal Awakenings' in the early 1990s that Ashron developed his own psychic gifts. These skills began to manifest through his artwork and subsequently enabled him to become a channel for Spirit so that he is able to draw people's Spirit guides. Ashron has established a working relationship with his own Spirit guides who allow him to connect to the Guides of his sitter and to channel them through his drawing. He says: 'I don't actually see people's guides. They channel through me and I draw them and then I am given information at the end.' This usually takes the form of a channelled message about the guide and how s/he wishes to work with you, which Ashron then passes on to the sitter at the end of the session. His music and art keep Ashron very busy but he has managed to find time to write and independently publish his first book *By the Light of the Star – An Exploration into Creating Your Own Reality*. The book describes his unusual journey and how it has given him a profound understanding of the meaning and purpose of his life. As he says: 'It tells my spiritual journey and the intent of the book is to empower the reader. Spirit has spoken through me and I have shared their words in the book.' Despite this diversion into literature, at heart Ashron remains a travelling musician (the music label that he set up in the early days of his career was called 'Wandering Minstrel Music' – perhaps as a nod to his life purpose) and he is still a regular performer at workshops and festivals around the country and his inspired music is still giving healing and pleasure to many thousands of his followers. ks

more information

- For more details on The Tribe of the Light and for information about forthcoming events, go to www.totl.co.uk or call 01204 529311
- Further details of Nick Ashron's art and music can be found at www.nickashron.com You can also purchase CDs of his music or arrange for a Spirit Guide Portrait on the site. His book, *By the Light of the Star – An Exploration into Creating Your Own Reality*, is published by and available from Real2Can Books (www.real2can.com/storebooks.htm) or Amazon (www.amazon.com).
- Nick Ashron will be performing at the 3 Wishes Faery Fest in Bodmin, Cornwall from 20-22 June 2008. Go to www.3wishesfaeryfest.co.uk for more details.
- You can also listen out for Nick on the newly launched Glastonbury Radio where he has his own weekly one-hour on-line show. Tune in at www.glastonburyradio.net

A Weekend of Crystals and Angels

This first event presented by the Tribe of the Light took place in Bolton, Lancashire over an action-packed weekend in February.

The atmosphere at the event was highly charged. The advice given by speakers such as the internationally renowned author and crystal specialist Judy Hall on self-protection and cleansing your crystals, for example, was fascinating and the attendees said it had been highly beneficial.

Similarly, Edwin Courtenay was both informative and entertaining when speaking about crystal skulls. The line up of presenters during the weekend, which also included Theolyn Cortens, Steve Clarke and Lorraine Alder, among others, was well balanced, highly informative and simply enthralling. In general, the sessions presented by these highly celebrated speakers were very intense and each managed to pack a great deal of information into his or her slot so the performances of the musical guests including internationally acclaimed composer and performer Tim Wheater and healing musician Nick Ashron were a very welcome and much-needed interlude. The Tribe of the Light founders hosted a dinner at which speakers from the weekend dined alongside guests and invited mediums for what proved to be a very entertaining psychic supper.

For information on forthcoming events, contact: 01204 529311 or go to www.totl.co.uk/events