

CHURCH FUNERALS ARE A DYING TRADE

JUST one in six people now want a traditional church service funeral.

Many would prefer an outdoor event, with 28% saying a gathering to scatter their ashes is a better move, while 17% want to be buried with the seeds of a tree.

Changing attitudes to funerals mean a third believe funeral directors are in need of a refresh. The research by

by JAMES MANSON

death specialists Farewell revealed 41% would rather see money spent on personal touches, such as an urn, than a lavish service.

Dan Garrett, of the firm, said: "The funeral industry hasn't changed in over 150 years. We must move away from the grim Victorian approach and help people to remember their loved ones."



VICTORIAN: Service

Crisis point for our trees

TREES are approaching crisis point in the face of habitat damage, climate change and pollution.

Just 7% of the UK's native woods are in a good ecological condition, says a Woodland Trust report.

Runner has weigh to go

FITNESS coach Lee Freeman will run 180 miles in 30 days wearing a 35lb vest.

Lee, 40, from Sheffield, is raising cash for a suicide prevention charity after being touched by the death of victim Ross McCarthy, 31.

FORGET HIS BORING TAG, BAIZE HERO DAVIS CHALKS UP ROCK CAREER

EXCLUSIVE
by NADINE LINGE

HE might have won six snooker world titles – but Steve Davis is more proud of his musical achievements than anything he accomplished on the baize.

He retired from the game in 2016 after more than 35 years and has since gone to form a band, play festivals including Glastonbury, and release four albums.

And Steve still can't believe anyone in that world took him seriously – considering his only previous musical venture was a solo line on Chas & Dave's song Snooker Loopy.

The green baize legend, 63, says: "What you can judge is how much thrill it's giving you and how proud you are. And in that respect I'm more proud of what's happened recently, maybe because it's fresher.

"Winning snooker events became the norm. But this is all so unexpected, beyond belief, when the snooker, in the end, was expected.

"But kudos to my band-mates for having the guts to go on the road with somebody whose only previous output was one line in Snooker Loopy."

A long-term lover of psychedelic and experimental music, Steve became pals with guitarist Kavus Torabi in 2006. They did a radio show, some DJ gigs, formed band The Utopia Strong with Michael York, and have a book out this week called Medical Grade Music.

Robot

It details the pair's musical adventures from DJing a packed-out tent at Glastonbury in 2016 – worse for wear after starting drinking gin at 11am – as well as another festival where the crowd were given Steve Davis masks to wear, and the champ's idea for a YouTube channel where he plays snooker while on drugs.

It's quite a change for the man who had the reputation of being boring, most notably due to his "Interesting" Spitting Image puppet.

In December Ronnie O'Sullivan even claimed Davis "ruined" snooker in the 1980s as players went on to copy his emotionless style of play, leading to a lack of characters in the game.

The south-London born star only began to show his real personality later, including when he famously stripped off while appearing on I'm A Celebrity in 2013.

But he's happy to admit that in his snooker heyday, he really was boring.

He says: "If you practise eight hours a day in a dark room you're not going to have any personality, are you? How can you?"

"The nature of snooker lends itself to having a robot-style mentality, so I wasn't out partying. I fully hold my hand up to my boring persona but I was on a mission.

"When the 'interesting' puppet came out, I was able to laugh at it – as long as I was playing snooker well, I didn't really care what people were making of my personality.

"If you wanted to identify what makes someone a winner, one of those things would be being in control of yourself.

"I agree a lot of personalities could get exorcised from a sport if it gets more successful and I was a stepping stone to that.

"But you're always going to get the maverick, a Ronnie, a Jimmy White, a Bubba Watson, a John McEnroe. What is nice is the mixture of personalities."

The so-called "golden age of snooker" in the 1970s and '80s is the



IN TUNE: Steve with Kavus and Michael. Right, from top, performing with Kavus; DJing at Glasto with Madness singer Suggs in 2016; and playing the piano in 1982



ON TOP: World Champ in 1988

Snooker ace Steve really is interesting

subject of an upcoming Louis Theroux documentary, for which Steve has been interviewed.

But he reckons the game is in its prime now, comparing the 18.5million viewers he got during the 1985 World Snooker Championship final against Dennis Taylor with the 60m who will tune in from China alone for this year's event, which starts on Saturday.

Steve adds: "This documentary concerns itself with a specific time back in people's memories.

"They were asking me all these questions and I was thinking – this is all in the past.

"For me there's a frustration, I think, with the UK in general. We're living in the past. The actual

golden era of snooker is now. The game is more worldwide than it's ever been.

"I sense with this documentary they'll make a fair bit of the bad boy image of it, sensationalise it. I understand they've got to try to make it attractive to watch, so it can't be about me going to bed at 10pm with a glass of hot milk.

"But somewhere down the line maybe we can stop living in the past."

Blessing

In the book, Steve dubs his snooker fame "The Thing" and admits it's been both a blessing and curse when launching his new career in an alternative band – where he plays a complicated electronic instrument called a modular synthesizer.

He adds: "I'd never even considered I was a liability. Usually it would be the seal of approval

if I put my name to a snooker product but when the record company had to try to sell our record, you can imagine people going, 'What?'

"It could have backfired if the record had been crap. But we believed it was good."

While the events of the past year put gigging on hold, The Utopia Strong have a tour planned for November.

Steve adds: "Making records and rehearsing has taken over as a driving force and it's certainly injecting enthusiasm into the veins.

"There was no plan – this has just happened. And going on stage to play live improvised music is not the job spec of somebody once they've retired. I really should be filling out the forms for the heating allowance now."

● *Medical Grade Music by Steve Davis and Kavus Torabi (White Rabbit, £20) is out tomorrow.*



I'M A CELEBRITY: Steve after stripping in the Jungle



£1 A WEEK FOR 8 WEEKS
WITH OUR LIMITED TIME SUBSCRIPTION OFFER*

NOW £1 P/WEEK FOR THE NEXT 8 WEEKS WHEN YOU TAKE OUT A VOUCHER SUBSCRIPTION WITH YOUR



PROMO CODE: SPRINGSALE21

VISIT www.newspapersubs.co.uk/STA
OR CALL US ON 0345 149 4848



*Newspaper subscription terms and conditions: This offer is for a 7-day voucher subscription-only payable by direct debit. It entitles you to receive both your Daily and Sunday papers for £1 each a week for the first 8 weeks, £2.99 for the next 16 weeks and a 20% discount thereafter. The offer is only valid until 16/04/21 and for new customers only. Standard call charges apply. Lines open 9am-5pm, 7 days a week, excluding bank holidays and. Once your subscription has been set up you will be sent individually dated pre-paid vouchers (to redeem at retail) within 14 days by post.