

What is your definition of a ‘Qualmpeddler’?

“Qualmpeddler – well, it’s very simple. It’s a euphemism for stand-up comedy. You know, because that’s very much what we do. We peddle qualms. We get out there, we hawk anxieties, we’re worrymongers. And we like to air the general sense of unease in the nation in comedy form. And hopefully boil down these various qualms into serviceable nuggets of whimsy.

There is a reason I always find something very pleasing about the word ‘peddler’; I found out, in my research – since my research into the word ‘qualmpeddler’ of course – that peddlers, not only would they sell their wares, they’d go round selling spoons or tea towels or nice cups or something, and then what they’d do is, they’d sing a song! So that does actually have some kind of historical lineage back to the peddlars of old. So that is basically what qualmpeddlers used to do. They used to go around the country singing slightly bawdy songs for money. And that’s not a million miles away from what comedy is really. I kind of like that.

And I like the word ‘qualm’ as well. ‘Qualm’ is a lovely word. You say; ‘I’ve got no qualms about that’, or ‘I’ve got qualms about that’. Those two are not mutually opposing. You know, having qualms about something is something you’re slightly worried about. My grandmother used to say, ‘Ooh, I’ve got qualms about these scones!’ But then she also had qualms about nuclear war. So it’s quite a wide spectrum of worry.”

<http://thelatest.co.uk/brighton/2013/09/10/interview-bill-bailey/>