



Welcome to this month's new readers. Please feel free to contribute to the newsletter....anything Russ related.

You should have received the exciting news about the new album. We have been waiting for this for a long time now. Don't forget to pre-order. The links are also on the Facebook page. If you can, **please share the FB post**. Let's spread the word and, maybe, introduce some more people to Russ's music.

This is a very busy time for Russ with the promotion for the album and preparation for the tours early next year. If you are planning to go to a gig in Europe in March, buy your ticket as soon as you can. Remember Munich is sold out and other venues are selling well.

I have just been **forced** to move over to Windows 10. As a result, I have had a few problems putting this newsletter together. I will get the settings

right eventually, I hope, but apologies if anything looks wrong. Any advice will be gratefully received.

Happy Christmas to everyone. See you next year.
Sue

THIS MONTH FROM RUSS

Hello out there friends, relations and any newcomers to the Newsletter...

For me, November went by the quickest of the year. I had a lot to do and I guess that always appears to speed up time - BMG, the company handling my publishing and now are also my record company, have been sending mails every day, usually concerning my new album 'It's Good To Be Here'.....

The other people supporting me are a company called 'Absolute', a P.R. concern. John Waller appears to be the main man there and has sent me most mail. Through November John arranged photos for the album, [although I chose my friend Sven Kramer to be photographer]....After two days of photography and Sven's flight home to Bremen, the mails came not only from John W. but now from Chris Hewlett who, working alongside John, had arranged phone interviews for me.....the first with 'Classic Rock' magazine. The phone chat was very warm, we talked about all sorts of stuff....my past songs, also groups I'd played with, and it lasted an hour and a half. Two days later, Chris had arranged another phone interview with 'Record Collector'. They had requested a kind of Desert Island Discs concept which they called, 'My Top Ten'. Basically, I told the stories behind ten of my well known songs. It was a very interesting exercise going back through the years and putting my head in that space again....a good meditation actually. There have been some more things arranged, a couple for December and others for January. Well now the CD and album sleeves are designed along with lyric sheets etc...

Actually, it's surprising I had the time to fit in running, usually twice everyday. Also there's Fridays when Richard Cowell comes here. Richard is my fitness trainer and has been working out with me for fifteen years.....I will admit I'm not a fitness fanatic, more than anything I love the endorphin rush. Richard and I have a lot of fun! - After running, I usually go in to the studio and write and record until 1pm. I also enjoy when my son Christian invites me to work with him, sometimes to play guitar or piano [he plays good keyboards]. Sometimes we write together. We have a co - written song on 'It's Good To Be Here' called

'Wasted' [The Last Ride]. It was Elodie's seventh birthday three weeks we had a great day with her....

I wish everyone a happy Christmas and all that and a Brilliant New Year. See You In 2020.

Lots of love, Russ xxx

BOOK OF LOVE (cont.)

Russ: *"For the previous couple of Newsletters I've tried to explain why I wrote 'Book of Love' also the mechanics and sequencing of the songs.....One topic I wanted to cover was, how we hand down 'stuff' to our children.....'stuff' being emotional baggage - the good and the bad. So, I wrote much of what I wanted to say in a song called - LIKE FATHER LIKE SON - The lyric was something I would like my Dad to have heard.....I know he would have said , "You Silly Bugger". It's what he often said when feeling embarrassed. He was a great Man and Loving, without being demonstrative. The song probably says more about my weaknesses than my Fathers."*

LIKE FATHER LIKE SON

I wanted to hold you so much that it hurt
To tell you that I love you but I couldn't find the words

I remember that you told me you were never loved enough
Your Father said, big boys don't cry
And you handed down that stuff
Tomorrow never comes so don't let it wait
It might be too late
Oh, Remember Like Father Like Son
Like Father Like Son
Will you learn to love him
Like I should have done
Just open your heart
Don't wait 'till it's too late
If you were never loved enough
Remember these words
Remember like Father like Son
Sometimes we nearly made it

But then the words came from the wine
Some might say he could have changed his way

He was just born out of time
The thoughts inside my head, the things I meant to say

But it's too late, time don't wait he won't be there to stay
You didn't tell me that you loved me
Not until the day you died,
Oh how I cried....
Oh, Remember like Father Like Son
Like Father like Son
Just open your heart, Don't wait 'till it's too late

If you were never loved enough,
Remember these words, Remember like Father Like Son

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<https://youtu.be/FawloX-Wjls>



[Russ Ballard - Like Father Like Son](https://youtu.be/FawloX-Wjls)

From Russ's Book Of Love album
[youtu.be](https://youtu.be/FawloX-Wjls)

IT'S GOOD TO BE HERE

You can find the links to pre-order the album, in CD form or vinyl, and the book in the mailing I sent out on Monday 9th December...launch day. I said there that you could buy the single. I should have said you can listen to the single, 'Kickin' The Can', if you are on Spotify. Here is the link.

<https://listnin.co/KickinTheCan>

QUESTION OF THE MONTH

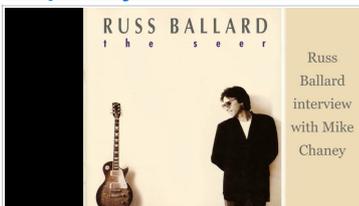
Russ has a great band but, if none of them was available, if he could have anyone else he wants, who would he have in his band? In other words, his dream band?

Russ: *"This is a hard one - DRUMS,- I love the simplicity of DJ Fontana, he played on my favourite Elvis tunes and Ringo, he was very sympathetic to the songs....and again, he played in an uncomplicated way. However, after playing with Simon Phillips on my 'Voices' album, I'd go with Simon. He seems to have everything covered. BASS - Probably John (Nobby) Dalton. We've been friends from childhood. He took P Q's in The Kinks and left years ago...He came with me when I promoted my 1984 Russ Ballard album in Italy....He's a lot of fun too. KEYS - I'd take Marc Rapson - In fact I'm taking Marc on the 2020 tours... He qualifies because we haven't yet been in a band together, although he's played my piano at home and I love his style."*

INTERVIEW

At the end of October Russ did an interview for an American radio show. This was off the cuff, over the phone, done in the late afternoon. Here is the full interview before Mike edited it for his show. It lasts for 20 minutes.

<https://youtu.be/JK4nUs6jow8>



[Russ Ballard Interview With Mike Chaney](https://youtu.be/JK4nUs6jow8)

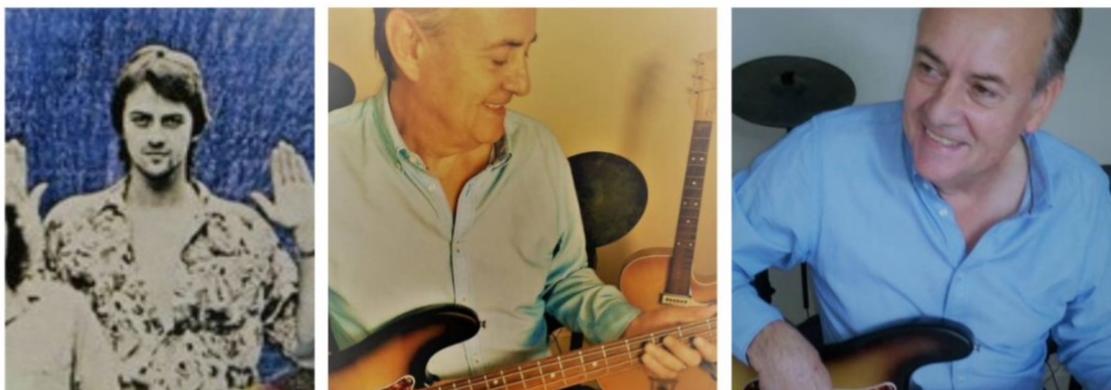
Interview with rock legend Russ Ballard of Argent fame. Great song writer with an impressive list of songs recorded by numerous bands. Like Kiss, Three Dog N...
[youtu.be](https://youtu.be/JK4nUs6jow8)

RUSS'S MUSIC HISTORY

By Dave Williams

MEET THE BAND – Tony Lester

With plenty of exciting news circulating about Russ's new album and 2020 tour, once again I've turned the clock back to the equally exciting mid-70s when **Russ** returned to the road for the first time since leaving **Argent**. As a follow-up to the recent feature on the **BBC Radio One In Concert** programme featuring the **Russ Ballard Band**, I'd like to introduce you to the bass guitarist of that line-up, Mr **Tony Lester**.



Left to right: Tony Lester sleeve shot (left) from Bandit's Partners in Crime LP in 1978 and (centre and right) still looking youthful today.

DW: Hello Tony. Thank you for agreeing to tell us a bit about yourself and agreeing to share some of your experiences of playing in the Russ Ballard Band.

TL: *Thank you Dave. My pleasure.*

DW: Can I start by asking you a little bit about your background? How did you get involved in playing? Do you come from a musical family?

TL: *I am not from a musical family but loved listening to music, anything and everything from a very early age. I started playing guitar at 13 years old on an acoustic from the junk shop which I painted white to look like a Fender Strat. I had a copy of **Bert Weedon's Play in a Day**.*

DW: At what age did you join your first band? What made you migrate from playing guitar to playing bass? Do you play any other instruments?



Left to right: Tony (top right) with Russ and brass section at Shepperton; Tony

TL: *I started on guitar then switched to bass to join a band in school at about 14 years old. I also play drums. I left school and got my first chance to earn some money playing bass at a Pontins holiday camp in Great Yarmouth. I was 18 and bought my first Fender Precision bass with the wages. I did my first ever recording session in a local studio owned by **Allan Smethurst**, better known as **The Singing Postman**, the guy who picked up an **Ivor Novello Award** in 1966 for his novelty hit **Hev Yew Gotta Loight Boy**. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xL5d837xB7w>*

DW: I believe you were a member of **Danny Adler's** band **Roogalator** who were very popular in the 70s. Presumably this was an early incarnation of the band?

TL: *I didn't play with Roogalator. I heard an advert on the **Emperor Rosko Show**, on BBC Radio One, that a band were looking for a bass player. I phoned the number, went for an audition and got the job. The band was called **Smooth Loser** and it had two guitarists **Chris Gibbons** and **Danny Adler**. Danny was the main songwriter and we played a lot of future Roogalator songs. The singer was Rosko's brother **Jeff Pasternak**, the original drummer was **Paul Huggett** but he was replaced by **Malcolm Mortimore** who had just left the prog rock band **Gentle Giant**. We were together for about a year and when we split up Danny and I kept in contact. Danny went on to form **Roogalator**. I joined a band called **Café Society**, which featured **Tom Robinson** on vocals.*

DW: How did the invitation to join **Russ** come about? I know that **Russ** did **OGWT** with yourself, **Alan Wicket**, **Jeff Skates** and **Russ's** brother **Roy Ballard**. How did that morph into the 1976 touring band with **Roy** and **Jeff** being replaced with **Bill Roberts** and **Wally Wilson**?

TL: *My invitation to join **Russ** was through Alan who I have known since school. We lived close to each other growing up in Birmingham. When Alan and I got the call to do the **OGWT** with **Russ**, the 'phase one' band was pulled together, Bill and Wally were drafted in afterwards when the tours were organised. I had never met Wally or Bill before the tours. Sadly, I have never seen or heard from Wally since.*

DW: How did you find it working with **Russ**? Any particular high points that you can share with us?

TL: *Working with **Russ** was unbelievable. As a budding songwriter to be in his company, to hear and play his music was a dream. I don't know where to start with high points without waffling on and on and name dropping in true old muso style... but sitting with **Russ** and **Paul McCartney** chatting*

in a bar in Stockholm has got to be up there. Alan and I also featured in a promotional video for **Roger Daltrey's Ride a Rock Horse LP**, which **Russ** produced. Tracks included **Proud** (an early **Argent** song written by **Russ** that was never recorded).

DW: After the group disbanded, you joined the English rock band **Bandit**. How did that come about?

TL: After working with **Russ** I was invited to audition for **Bandit**. I didn't know much about them, but I remember being told that bassist **Cliff Williams** was leaving to join **AC/DC** and there was a vacancy. I auditioned and got the job. At this point the band still had **Jim Diamond** on vocals, Graham Broad drums, **Danny McIntosh** on guitar and the first album had just been recorded. Jim then left to join **Ph.D.**, who achieved a top 10 hit with **I Won't Let You Down**.

DW: I bought the second Bandit LP **Partners in Crime** after seeing your name listed on the sleeve. A case of curiosity, I guess. Of the ten songs, I noticed you wrote seven of them and co-wrote one of the other three. This struck me as unusual for saying you were new to the band. Were you always a songwriter?

TL: I've been writing songs for almost as long as I've been playing.



Left to right: *Partners in Crime* (album), *One Way Love* (single) and the 2016 *Bandit3 EP*

DW: Two of your songs, **High on your Love** and **One Way Love** were released as singles. If my memory serves me correctly, the latter achieved some success.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JRHTP9JqCoE>

TL: **One Way Love** was released as a single and reached No.76 on the American Billboard chart. The only member of the original line-up to feature on the **Partners in Crime LP** was **Danny McIntosh**. The other band members were **Gerry Trew** on lead vocals, drummer **Theodore Thunder** (John Dentith), and myself on bass.

DW: Bandit came to an end in 1979 after touring with John Miles. What became of you after that?

*TL: My music career was coming to a close after the **John Miles** tour. The last work I was involved with was with **Dollar**. I played a gig with them and did some studio work, which to my knowledge never surfaced.*

DW: It appears that you have recently become active on the music scene again. You were instrumental (no pun intended) in releasing the Bandit3 EP. How did that come about?

*TL: A third **Bandit** album was recorded and featured guitarist **Mick Grabham** of **Procol Harum** but was never released. A 5-song EP from the unreleased album was made available in 2016. This is titled **Bandit3 EP**.*

DW: Two of the five tracks from the EP can be heard by using these links: ·

Pushing Through: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xFRNlw7gmlo> ·

Working on It: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OwQME4XSWng>

DW: Are you playing with anyone currently and do you have any future plans music-wise?

*TL: I don't have a band as such, but I do depts and play occasionally with the **Harrow Concert Band** and a jazz trio for which I've recently acquired a double bass that I've nicknamed **Bessie**.*



Tony brushes up on his drumming skills (left) and getting to grips with Bessie (right)

DW: Tony, thank you so much for your time. It's been very interesting hearing about your musical career and I'm sure newsletter readers will join me in wishing you well for the future. Hopefully many will be encouraged to visit some of those Bandit tunes on You Tube.

Footnote: Tony Lester appears in the following You Tube clips:

- **Since You Been Gone** with **Russ** on **Supersonic**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_v0bDfZytwk

- **Proud** by **Roger Daltrey** <https://www.youtube.com/>

[watchtime_continue=3&v=x5X7rfRbhvk&feature=emb_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watchtime_continue=3&v=x5X7rfRbhvk&feature=emb_logo)

- **Get Your Love by Roger Daltrey**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=5&v=MzApNg5P0GY&feature=emb_logo

- **Walking the Dog by Roger Daltrey**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ka7csUS_Ysc

THE ITALIAN APPROACH TO RUSS

Gianmaria Framarin

Apart from the fact I had already known about **Russ** through **America's** <<View from the Ground>> and <<Your Move>>... **America** were enjoying an incredible wave of success over here at that time... Italy favours AOR more than other countries, methinks, punk was never any big in Italy, Italians like melodic stuff quite a lot and they're also so much into 'progressive rock' (**Genesis** became huge here before than anywhere else)... well, anyway, my mum owned these two tapes (the **America** ones) and I was quite curious all about it, so I immediately read the credits and got familiar with **Russ**. I was 9 or 10.

This is my story. The Italians discovered **Russ** all of a sudden in summer 1984, instead. None of them/us (I still have troubles with my national identity...) knew anything about **Argent**. Like many other 'minor progressive-hard rock bands' of their time, they had enormous trouble coming up to front... our stocks were filled with the same names, the legendary ones: **Genesis, Yes, EL&P, King Crimson, Gentle Giant, Van der Graaf Generator**... it was hard for other bands to come up and get their share of fame... we had Italian progressive bands who were immensely popular (**PFM** and **Banco** above all), there were some European progressive bands who at times made it to our ears (well, **Focus** from Holland were one of them), but **Argent** didn't make it that much.

Italians also tended to prefer long-playing records to 45s, that's why probably we didn't give much of a chance to <<**God Gave Rock'n'Roll to You**>> while we had gone mad for something so complex and intricate as **Yes's** <<**Tales from Topographic Oceans**>>...

The '80s came, AOR was spreading all around (**Toto, America, Donald Fagen**, etc.), punk had done little over here, new wave had sprung **The Police, Dire Straits** and **The Clash** while most of the other typical British names weren't that successful by then...

1984 saw some shift towards dance hits more than before... that's when **Wham!, Duran Duran, Madonna, Spandau Ballet** started dominating the charts...

Here comes **Russ**.

MTV wasn't available over here, we had our own music TV programmes though. The <<**Voices**>> video really caught the eye. It was the typical kind of video lads and lasses in the '80s would adore... had it been **Bruce Springsteen** rather than **Russ**, it would have suited perfectly too... **Russ** made that video as if he was conscious he was a superstar. That's how he looked like. We all wondered <<who's this guy??>> because he really looked as if he had come out of some unwritten page in the history of rock.

Mind you, we didn't care much about the actual age of superstars: **David Bowie** still looked pretty young to us, very modern. **Russ** was just like that. Wearing his denim

jacket, the immaculate dark glasses, showing such a splendid tan as to mislead us (we all thought he was American), his three-day-old beard that made him look so masculine... well, that was already enough.

Put all these things in a west-coast American desert scenario and the game was done. It was a movie, not a video. The first notes of the song were intriguing and fitted perfectly along with the footage.

The whole plot in that video was very catchy, especially when **Russ** was fronting up to the 'upper class tycoons' shouting at them <<'I've got the key! I've got the key!>>...

All of a sudden, <<**Voices**>> was heard anywhere. Juke-boxes at the beach, radios in local pubs, going to the local disco, even waking up early in the morning as an 11 year-old lad like me was still used to do... you turned on the radio and <<**Voices**>> would sooner or later peep in...

Many songs during that summer became huge hits and were going to last very long: <<**Careless Whisper**>>, <<**Dancing in the Dark**>>, <<**Eyes without a Face**>>, <<**Miss Me Blind**>>, <<**Against All Odds**>>, they're still evergreens in the place I live in. <<**Voices**>> was simply one of them. The only real difference was that we knew about **George Michael**, **Springsteen** and **Culture Club**... we knew nothing about **Russ**. But we were certainly charmed by him, no doubt.

<https://youtu.be/FNrbrhQknLQ>



[Russ Ballard - Voices](https://youtu.be/FNrbrhQknLQ)

Promotional video for Russ's 1984 hit from his self-titled album.

[youtu.be](https://youtu.be/FNrbrhQknLQ)

He started coming over to play at the “**Festivalbar**”, the most important summer festival in Italy, lasting from early June to late September, all the dates were broadcast by the telly (it was Berlusconi's private channels back then), so finally we had this guy, **Russ Ballard**, stepping into the scene like an old rockstar, armed with his guitar and always showing the same looks (who knew about his catapult accident back then???), he did fit in the category of 1984's new faces... yep, we all thought he was “something new” coming from the US or maybe the UK, we really didn't know... yet we had the feeling he was doing great.

Many bands or artists had come to Italy for their first time after having spent at least two years at the top of the charts in their homeland... we thought that was **Russ'** case as well, and it wasn't...

I probably got to know he was English, but that's because I'm half a Brit so I'm keen on that... I don't think the majority of my fellow Italians knew or cared where he actually was from... Italian people are obsessed with the US, so I think they all tended to think **Russ** was American.

So he was coming over here and probably giving his best to us 'cause he hadn't had the chance to have a career back home before... well, he fooled us all, we all though he was a big name we hadn't heard of yet!!! People like **Men at Work** or **Ph.D.** were the ones we

all thought about when trying to figure out where **Russ** was coming from: people who had topped the charts in their homeland before coming over here...

1984 went by, Russ almost disappeared.

Some of us had the chance to listen to <<**Once a Rebel**>> one year later, we were a wee lucky lot, though. The second half of the '80s came in and new 'heroes' started dominating the charts, we had honestly forgotten about **Russ** by then: he might have been a superstar somewhere else in the world, he had been one of them over here for one summer, time flows by and that's it, you'd always remember him for that crazy summer when he shouted <<**Voices**>> to all of us.

I never heard of **Russ** any longer until the mid '90s... that's when the Internet craze invaded Italy as well... I finally had some chance to find out what **Russ** was doing and most of all who he was!!! Bang on, it took me just one day to find it all out.

When I got to know about **Russ**, I was completely flabbergasted by the fact he had discovered **Sandie Shaw**... she had been so famous in Italy back in the '60s... she had found her dreamland over here, my mum often said she wanted to look like her... the fact that **Russ** was behind her as well made me shiver.

I then got in touch with **Russ** through **My Space**. It was year 2006, that was the first time I wrote a single word to him... and he replied almost at once, I was so honoured...

Now, after 14 years of Internet and all I've done delving into his biography, well, I can really say I know who **Russell Glyn Ballard** is. I also suggested he may have some Welsh ancestors because of his middle name, and you know, the Welsh often show some good tans! ;-)

DAVE'S COVER QUEST

Whilst writing my articles I've discovered scores of versions of songs written by Russ, some well-known, others less so. There's lots of little gems out there and I thought it might be nice to share some of these discoveries with readers. His music knows no bounds and can be found all around the globe. Off to the Emerald Isle for this month's offering.

No.17



How Can I Prove My Love? by **Dana**

Born Rosemary Brown on 30 August 1951, not in Ireland as most of us probably assume, but in Islington, North London. Her parents Robert and Sheila relocated the family from Northern Ireland to the UK due to high unemployment in their native country and Robert became a porter at Kings Cross Station. When Rosemary was five years old, they were advised by their doctor to leave London as the smog was having a bad effect on their children's health. Rosemary was the youngest daughter of seven children. Taking their doctor's advice, they moved back to Derry.

Coming from a musical background, Robert played trumpet and Sheila played piano, Rosemary took piano and violin lessons and taught herself to play acoustic guitar. She entered several talent contests and entered a competition in 1969 to represent Ireland in the **Eurovision Song Contest**. A nervous performance saw her finish in second place, but she entered again a year later, this time winning and going on to represent her country at Eurovision. She achieved fame by winning the contest with the song **All Kinds of Everything**. It became a worldwide million-seller and launched her music career. Dana was 18 years old at the time and still at school. Check out the video clip. It's a long way from today's lavish Eurovision finals, and clearly no relation to later winner **Dana International**.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8xmnd3uiK_Y

Dana has released and had hits with dozens of singles in several countries. Another of her UK hits will be riding the airwaves over the next two or three weeks. **It's Gonna Be a Cold, Cold Christmas** reached No.4 in the UK in 1975 and still gets plenty of seasonal airplay.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9vMR3bt3ibg>

Aside from music, **Dana** is passionate about politics and ran for the Irish Presidency in 1979, finishing third. In 1999, under her married name of **Dana Rosemary Scanlon** she won a seat in the European Parliament representing Connaught-Ulster and in the same year was granted US citizenship.

Our interest lies in 1979 and her album **The Girl is Back**. Produced by **Barry Blue**, it was the first album by **Dana** to feature all original songs rather than covers. Our featured song this month is a song written by **Russ** that nobody had previously recorded. **How Can I Prove My Love** definitely has the RGB trademark sound and, as you'll hear, there are influences from **So You Win Again**.

<https://youtu.be/A2PtRmC8s-o>



[dana - how can I prove my love](https://youtu.be/A2PtRmC8s-o)

Dana, 1979

[youtu.be](https://youtu.be/A2PtRmC8s-o)

It sounds like a follow-up to that song, though I suspect Russ would count this as one of his conveyor belt songs that helped to meet his publishing deal requirements. Sadly, the song was overlooked when singles were chosen.

Some Things Cookin' in the Kitchen was the lead single reaching No.44 in the UK. This was followed up by two more singles, the title track **The Girl is Back (in Town)** and **I Can't Get Over Getting Over You**. Both failed to chart.

Last month **Dana** released **My Time**, her first album of new songs in many years. It includes her recent single **Falling**.