



(Header by Sven Kramer)

Welcome to our new readers. You are very welcome to join in and contribute to the newsletter.

The first newsletter went out in March 2013 so this one completes our sixth year... without missing a month. At the start I don't think we had any idea about where it was going to go but we are happy with the way it has developed and continues to do so. We are now a team with, in particular, Dave with his highly informative articles, which I know from your feedback are very popular, and Sven with his artwork. Huge thanks to both of them and to all our contributors, some of them regulars.

This month Dave goes back to reviewing with The Seer. The cover is another one you might not know, although, we have had Elkie Brooks's version here before. We also have a 'Reader's Story' from Gianmaria Framarin.

Have you looked at Russ's Facebook page recently? Carole is putting some great videos and photos on there and the number of 'likes' is ever increasing.

Oh, and good news.....get ready for news about the **RB EXPERIENCE '19!** There will be an extra email about that soon.

Finally, in answer to a query, I (Sue) am still the only one with access to the contact list and, if you send an email, it will come only to me.

Sue

THIS MONTH

Russ: *"Hi, there, I hope the flu hasn't hit you - I'm surrounded by it here....haven't succumbed, yet!*

What happened in January? - I've been working on the music for a film, a documentary about war, basically, the Middle East. War and also the families trying to escape it....The film crew travelled from London and spent six weeks in Afghanistan, where we see, close up, the horrors of war, car bombing, the casualties of war, many children stepping on land mines....Then, for the final forty minutes, we see people attempting to escape across The Mediterranean Sea...The film is heartbreaking and inspiring in equal measure. There are people in the Middle East - Europeans, some from the UK, who are working there to try to help, including a company called, 'Emergency', who have set up a hospital, with limited resources, but have dedicated people, who want to help....they are very inspiring and I've cried every time I've seen the film and that's a lot....My Son, Christian, has been an inspiration too, always suggesting things and finding the right sounds and moods for scenes.....Apart from being an amazing Musician/Producer, he's a great engineer and he's taught me a lot.....

Talking of great musicians - It was Jim Rodford's Memorial Concert at The Alban Arena a few Sundays ago and Jim's lovely wife, Jean, phoned to invite Bob Henrit and myself. The evening was a great tribute to Jim...there was a lot of love in the air - there were also many friends, who I hadn't seen for many years. Jim's Granddaughters sang some beautiful songs, accompanied by Dad, Jim's son Russell, and his other son Steve, also The Zombies drummer....From the moment The Zombies stepped on the stage we could tell they were in the mood to play and for an hour and twenty minutes they took Bob and myself back forty years....Although we never toured as The Zombies, we felt very close, as we still do through being in a

group with Rod for four years from 1969 - 73, and becoming friends as far back as 1964, when we shared the same dressing room at a TV studio....the show was 'Ready Steady Go'. Bob and myself were with Adam Faith, in The Roulettes. The tribute turned out to be a great show, a sad and very happy evening and a beautiful tribute to our Dear Jim...

Talking of The Roulettes, as I was five minutes ago....We still see each other at least twice a year, Summer and Christmas. We had a great excuse for a Roulettes reunion....When our old friend, Chris Andrews, invited us to Germany to see his show/review - It's, basically, a history of Chris's career. For you younger guys, who are not so aware - Chris was singer in a group from 1961, they were called Chris Ravel and The Ravers....Chris appeared on the TV show 'Oh Boy' and The Ravers, with Chris, played stints at The Star Club in Hamburg. Chris left The Ravers and became a successful singer/songwriter. He wrote 'The First Time', 'We Are in Love' and 'If He Tells You' for Adam Faith and The Roulettes, along with some albums. After that he wrote some songs for Sandie Shaw....Anyway, after the invitation from Chris, our cases were packed and we were ready, boarding passes in hand, at Heathrow.. We stayed at The Atlantic Hotel in Hamburg, where we made contact with Chris, who said he'd booked a table at a restaurant ten minutes away and that he was bringing some of the cast with him, namely, "Adam" and "Sandie"....It turned out to be a great restaurant, good food, excellent wine and great people, what could be better.....I realised, when we fell out of the cab, then staggered in to the Atlantic - [Hotel that is] - it had been a good night.

The next day, my good friend from Hamburg, Promoter, Michael Bisping, came to show us the sights of this great town....I'd played there a few times and loved what I'd seen, that was the journey from airport to hotel, to venue, then, hotel back to airport, so I was looking for someone to guide us around town, and as a guide, Michael was brilliant...We sat in his Chrysler as he gave us the history of Hamburg. He suggested we have lunch and we thought the Indian option sounded good....I'd played shows for Michael over twenty five years and it's always a pleasure to be in his company....Lunch was good, wine, beer and more stories. Out of the warmth of the restaurant, back out into the freezing cold, we walked to

the car. All the way to the Atlantic Hotel, Michael continued his history....I said to Michael, "How have you become such a good guide?" - Michael laughed, "Oh, I've done it through many years with many American bands". Before we said our goodbyes, he told me he had a show for me in Portugal in May...."Our old friend Emanuel wants you to play at The Casino"....that sounded good to me. The shows for Emanuel have been amazing in the past..."I'll look forward to that, Michael"

At 7.15, a cab took us to the venue, where we sat at our table, which was close to the stage....We ordered beer and wine and for the next hour and a half, we were transported back to our teenage years, through song and dance and humour, and, would you believe, all in the German language....We didn't need to understand what they said, we knew the story well....On stage could have been any early sixties youth club, the songs, the jiving - Adam Faith singing 'The First Time' and 'It's Alright', then hearing Chris again with 'Yesterday Man' and 'To Whom it Concerns'. A magic time, then and now. Hearing Sandie's songs again brought back many memories....

We left the Atlantic Hotel in plenty of time to catch our afternoon flight back to Heathrow.....We said our goodbyes to Pete Thorp, who took a train from the airport....Then we met our driver, Ian. After dropping Bob at Enfield, Ian suggested he drive to Waltham Cross to drop Mod at the station, where he would continue to Liverpool St., then on to his home in Suffolk.....After dropping Mod off, Ian and I continued on our journey to Ware...After fifteen minutes, or so, there was a call from Mod. He was on the train...."Russ"...."Hello, Mod, did you make the train?" - 'Yeah' - There was a giggle, then he said, "I'VE GOT YOUR CASE" - Oh well, who cares. I'll get the belongings back. My dad would have said...."THAT WAS THREE VERY SWEET DAYS""

JIM RODFORD TRIBUTE

https://youtu.be/3_vTwrZG1Ac



[The Zombies - God Gave Rock and Roll to You at the Jim Rodford Tribute Show](#)

The Zombies, Arc, Argent, and family perform Argent's "God Gave Rock and Roll to You" at the Jim Rodford Tribute Show at Alban Arena in St Albans, UK on 20 J...

youtu.be

ADVERTISED GIG

Several people have alerted us to a gig at The Cheese and Grain in Frome, Somerset, on 24th May 2019, which has Russ on the billing. Russ was asked to be involved in this gig but wasn't able to agree to it as he has other commitments on the same weekend. However, his name went onto the advertising on the venue website and on Ents 24. Sorry if you have bought tickets but Russ is **not** playing at this gig and he never was.

QUESTION

I would like to know when Russ heard first about the use of his songs in Miami Vice. Did he already hear about the show? How did that go? Did he get a message from a department dealing with syncs for Miami Vice or was this via an agent? Did he like the show as well?

Russ: *"I don't remember receiving a sync request, although there might have been one. I was told that the director thought 'Voices' would be good for the visuals. I thought the series had an atmosphere...it's own atmosphere."*

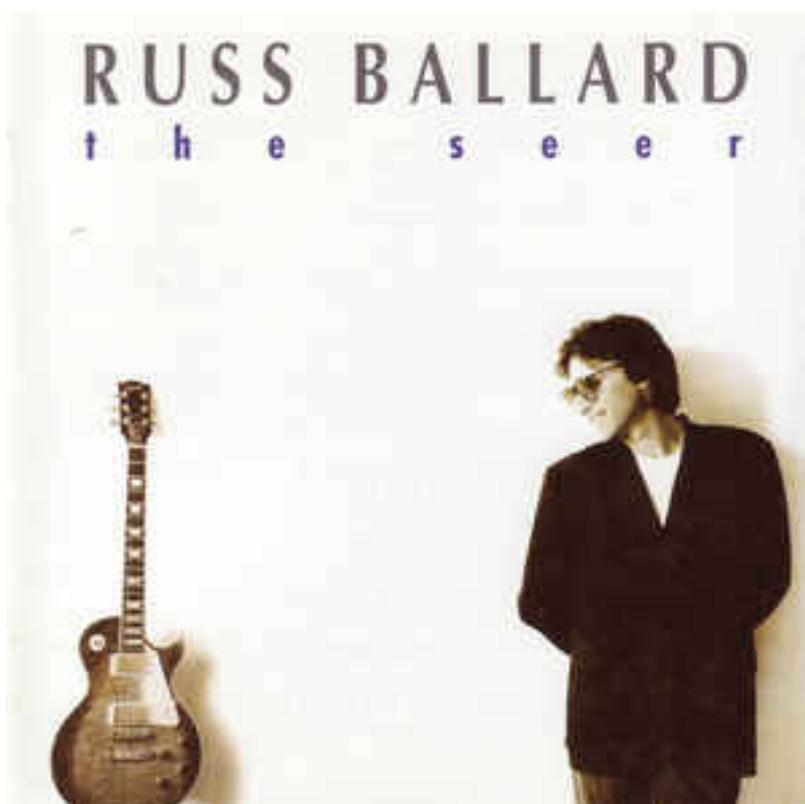
RUSS'S MUSIC HISTORY

By Dave Williams

Winter's arrival puts a Spring in the step!

Following the release of the two EMI America albums, **Russ** put his career as a recording artist back on hold. Rather ironic considering that during this period

he'd gained increased attention, notably through the relative success of the **Voices** single. Around this period **Russ** established his own home recording studio and much of his time was no doubt focussed on setting this up and getting to grips with the engineering side. Meanwhile, new songs written and co-written by **Russ** continued to trickle out, including **Break the Chain** for **Elkie Brooks** and **Hearts of Fire** for **Roger Daltrey**. Also, during this period **Russ** accepted an invitation to join **Roger Daltrey** on his American tour, during which Roger invited **Russ** to perform his song **Your Time is Gonna Come**, which Roger recorded himself for the **McVicar** film soundtrack.



Russ Ballard – The Seer (1993) Intercord INT 845.193

Fast forward to 1993. I was on a short City Break in Amsterdam when a heavy rain shower caught me unprepared and I sought shelter in a little independent record shop. Whilst browsing the racks I was delighted to discover a CD by **Russ** titled **The Seer**. I'd no knowledge of its existence. Back then the internet was in its infancy and I'd long ceased buying music papers. Fearful of losing it, I duly handed over the required Euros to make it mine. Having no access to a CD player, I had to settle for reading the sleeve notes until I returned home. Two things instantly struck me. The sleeve features a picture of **Russ** looking down towards a Gibson Les Paul. Interesting because we've been so used to the sound

of his Fenders. Secondly the involvement of a co-writer in **Chris Winter**. What a musical marriage that would turn out to be.

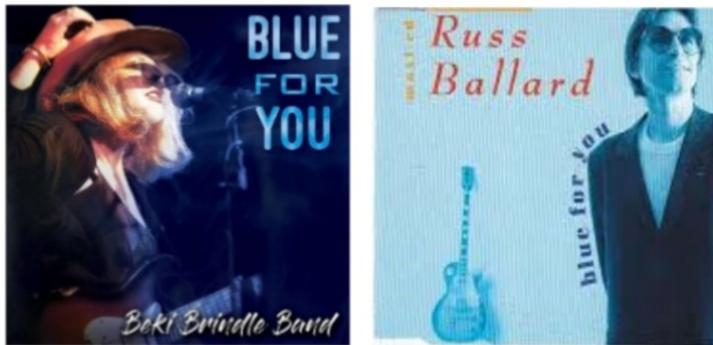
Released by Intercord based in Germany, **The Seer** features 13 songs, six of which are co-written. The first three tracks are solely written by **Russ**, including the opening song **Only Love Can Save Me**. When I first heard it, I have to say that it didn't endear itself to me. There are a lot of lyrics in the verse as the singer pleads for the return of his lover to save him from a broken heart. Standard lyrical fare but wait. There's a musical twist. Just as you think you've heard the first verse plus a chorus, it transpires that the chorus hasn't happened at all. When the chorus does arrive it's short but has that trademark hook. Suddenly I started to grow into it. I must admit that even now, I'm still not sure where the boundary lies between verse and chorus, which at least makes it a little unique.

Stay with Me Tonight follows on its coat tails. Now this is much more accessible. It's a killer in my opinion. Infectious, catch, punchy. Air guitar music for sure. Everything I admire about **Russ's** music. I never tire of listening to this song. After a fairly sedate intro, the song bursts into life courtesy of a kick drum that features prominently throughout. Packed with jangly rhythm guitar riffs in the background overlaid with intermittent power chords, lots of synth and a sax solo courtesy of **Chris Winter**, there's plenty going on here. The chorus embeds itself in your head and takes root, a gift that **Russ** seems able to call on repeatedly. The same applies to the next song **Vibrate**, which is equally strong for different reasons. Founded on the bassline, this one is a real pick-me-up with power chords on the chorus giving way to catchy riffs on electric piano. Again, **Chris Winter** features on sax, and all three tracks played so far are notable for the quality of the vocal arrangements.

Barenaked is the first song to feature **Chris Winter** as co-writer. It's a slower song but no less infectious thanks to its singalong chorus, which makes way for **Russ's** lead guitar solo. Another high point of the album. **House of Fools** written by **Russ**, has all the ingredients of the songs that he used to release as singles in previous years. **The Healer**, co-written with **Chris Winter**, is another ballad. If **Barenaked** is strong, this one, in my opinion, is even stronger. It features some nice guitar soloing from **Russ** backed with some outstanding orchestral-like string arrangements. Full credit to **Russ** for singing it so beautifully. A hidden classic. I say hidden because it's easy to lose such a beautiful piece when it's embedded between anthemic numbers, and anthemic once again applies to the next song. **Hold on to Love** again relies on a strong drum rhythm so prevalent in previous songs such as **New York Groove** and **I Know There's Something Going On**. It's

the chorus that stands out here with **Russ** and co-writer **Chris** singing their hearts out in harmony.

It Takes a Man to Walk Away is yet another quality song from **Russ** and **Chris**. This is an up-tempo song in the more traditional sense. Again, it's got a chorus that begs you to join in and brass stabs help to give it some extra umph! In fact, the brass arrangements are an important feature of this song. Intercord released the next track, **Blue for You**, as a single. It's a slower piece and one that draws you into the lyrics. It sits comfortably amid the more energetic songs and provides some nice light and shade. Newsletter readers might be familiar with this song as **Russ** revealed recently that it has been covered by **The Beki Brindle Band**.



This is the only cover that I know of from **The Seer**, probably due to lack of awareness. **Blue for You** provides an ideal opportunity to showcase some lead guitar, and naturally **Russ** obliges.

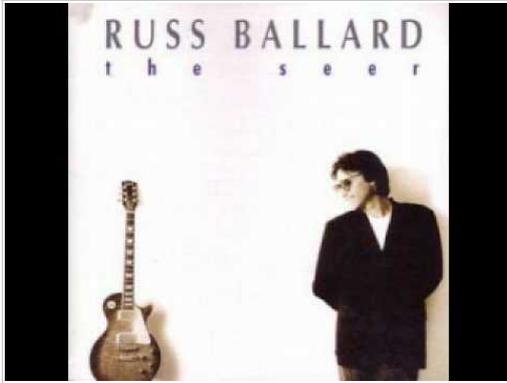
Possession and **King for a Day**, though sufficiently different both follow the pattern of previous tracks. Programmed drums overlaid with synths, guitars and vocal layers. I defy anyone who admires music by **Russ Ballard** to find anything to dislike here. The same goes for the punchy **Love Comes Tumblin**, which again features prominent drum programming and some strong horn arrangements behind the chorus. Believe me when I say it's all good.

The album closes with **These are the Times**. Co-written with **Chris Winter**, this is slower paced and probably closest in style to some of **Russ's** earlier work from his **At the Third Stroke** period. It brings the album to a nice close.

The Seer is a joy from beginning to end. Variety seems to be the key. **Chris Winter** deserves special credit as a co-writer of six of the songs. In addition, he co-produced the album, played guitar, keyboards and saxophone, contributed

backing vocals and worked on the horn and string arrangements and drum programming. **Russ** and **Chris** clearly work well together. Its such a shame that **The Seer** is quite hard to come by. It deserves to be heard by a wider audience.

<https://youtu.be/GyiVpR77rqA>



[Russ Ballard - Blue For You](https://youtu.be/GyiVpR77rqA)

From the Seer album

[youtu.be](https://youtu.be/GyiVpR77rqA)

READERS' STORIES

From Gianmaria Framarin

Russ to me will always be the first time (1982) I noticed his name on the America tape ('View from the Ground'): I was sitting in the back seat of a friend of my mum's car, we were listening to that tape, I was so curious about America (I had just discovered they had tight links to Britain) and I immediately became curious about Russ. Same thing happened again one year later when - same car, same back seat - I first heard the 'Your Move' album by America: I was travelling with my family and this friend of ours, it was a long drive, I'd never been to England before, we were heading to Liverpool. I loved those tracks I was listening to and yet again Russ's name was there too... the 'third Russ' was summer 1984, I had just moved to Italy, it was all hot and at the same time so fresh, until I heard a fascinating tune on the Juke-box at the beach: that was 'Voices', it was a huge hit in Italy well before it was featured on 'Miami Vice'. I happened to watch the video, so I first found out how Russ looked like, and knowing he's a Brit I found it rather funny he was so tanned and 'dark' on the whole...

After 1984-85 I didn't hear of Russ anymore: them 'no-Internet' days... people got out of the mainstream and they basically disappeared... same thing happened to America indeed, I thought they might have disbanded after 1985... only now I know these artists NEVER cease doing their thing, they just don't get the spotlight on... well, luckily after 1985 I decided I didn't want to get involved

in the whole 'MTV-'80s dance-plastic music' thing, I grew hungry for anything coming from the '70s. I was 12... I simply put a stop to 'the news', if ever Russ or America were really doing anything new I'd watch them straight on the telly, the national broadcast, MTV was inexistent for me.

Chances were that America indeed showed up at Festival di Sanremo in early 1990, so I thought <<Jings! They're still doing something! When is their new record coming out?>>... it actually came out in 1994, but no-one said anything about it... Russ never showed up again, instead, when 'The Seer' came out again no-one told me about it, mind you: back then I had to be careful and watch through all the CDs in my local music store to find out, say, Yes had released a new album (it actually happened, 1994), otherwise no-one would have told me about it.

Finally there came the Internet era, around 1995 or something, that's where I was finally getting all the news I had missed and that's where I discovered how to reach those artists. 'MySpace' was something special, it made it so easy for anyone to get in touch with people like Rick Wakeman (I wrote to him twice) or Russ himself.

And (as James Taylor would put it) 'that's why I'm here'. ;-)

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. It started to become something of a quest to discover as many songs as possible. There's lots of material out there and I thought it might be nice to share some of these discoveries with readers. Here's this month's offering:

No.7

Don't Want to Cry No More by Stevie Lange

Zambian born **Stevie Vann** is the former wife of famous record producer **Robert "Mutt" Lange**, who she first met at school. Showing an aptitude for music from an early age, Stevie was playing piano from the age of six years old and was performing with dance bands before reaching her teens. By the time she was 16,

Stevie was on her way towards starring in her own TV variety show and would go on to release two solo albums picking up an award along the way as South Africa's Top Female Vocalist.

Having later met and formed a relationship, Stevie and Mutt went on to marry in the 1970s. Around this time the pair emigrated to the UK, Stevie picking up work as a session singer on recordings by many top artists including **Colin Blunstone**. During a recording session for **Manfred Mann's Earth Band** she met **Chris Thompson** and was invited to join his new band **Night**. The group released two albums, achieving two Top Twenty US hits with **Hot Summer Night** and **If You Remember Me**. They later had a minor hit with **Love on the Airwaves** before their break up in 1982.

Following her separation from Lange, the pair remained best of friends, which certainly can't be said about the relationship between Mutt and his subsequent "ex" **Shania Twain**, but that's another story. In the UK, Stevie continued to work as a session singer for chart toppers including **Chaka Khan**, **Wham!**, **Tears for Fears** and **Nik Kershaw** plus many others. Her voice also graced many TV commercials and jingles. In the 1980s she spent a couple of years touring as a backing vocalist for **Elton John** and also continued her studio session work alongside **Madeline Bell** and **Vicki Brown**. Those who are paying attention will recall that this pair featured in one of my previous cover quest articles.

In 1995, Stevie went on to record a solo album, but way before that, in 1982, Stevie released a solo single **Don't Want to Cry No More**, on Jive Records, written by **Russ**. You can hear it here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xqBkDAKMytE>.



[Stevie Lange...Don't Want To Cry No More](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xqBkDAKMytE)

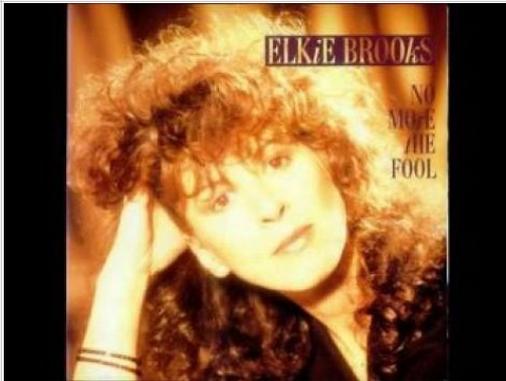
The awesome Stevie Lange with a solo release from the early 80's after the break up of the band "NIGHT". This lady has an incredible voice, if you have heard the song ...

www.youtube.com

Sadly, the song failed to chart, probably due to fierce competition brought about by the arrival of the "new wave" era. **Elkie Brooks** would later record the song

for her **No More the Fool** album in 1986. It's a close-run thing, but I feel this latter version has the edge, possibly because Russ himself is involved in the production, his backing vocals clearly evident.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cJOou7WEQGO>



[Elkie Brooks - Don't Want To Cry](#)

[No More](#)

from "No More The Fool", 1986

www.youtube.com

Stevie continues to work in the music industry and has carved out a new career as a vocal coach. She has her own website which is well worth a visit and provides much greater detail than I've been able to include here. Visit <http://stevielange.com>