



(Header by Sven)

September 2021

A big welcome to all our new readers. We have had quite a few recently.

We have bad news and good news for some of you. We have been hanging on to bring you the good news....read on!

Last month, Richard Westwood sent us his favourite Argent songs. Richard has covered another of Argent's songs this month. I had an email from Liam Wilson saying how much he liked Richard's idea and suggesting we make it a regular feature. I agreed (we are always open to suggestions) and I gave Liam the job of continuing it this month. So below, we have Liam's favourite Russ related songs. Who is next? Think of your two, or three at most, (I know it is difficult to get it down to two - or even three or more) favourite Russ related songs and write a paragraph about each of them....memories they inspire etc. You can choose a track that has already been featured as you will have your own take on it. I will put them into the newsletter in the order in which I receive them, one per month. Anyone??

We have often read in Bob Henrit's pieces that he would go to Jim Rodford to check on his memory of events. Throughout most of Jim's career he made notes for a diary. Since his sad death, his family has had all his notes put into a book. It is now available to buy on Amazon. Dave has reviewed the book this month.

Best wishes

Sue

THIS MONTH FROM RUSS

A few months before Corona virus reared its ugly head, my son, Christian, and I wrote the music to a film, a documentary about the boat people escaping from war in Afghanistan and Syria. Apart from the obvious victims, those escapees, the main focus is a company called 'Emergency'. They're from Italy and they have set up a hospital in Kabul. The doctors, nurses and other staff are mainly Italian, although there are some locals [some ex-patients] working there. I must say, after seeing footage, taken by a UK film company, I was very moved and as the film and story developed, I was moved to tears - seeing Bombs exploding in the streets daily and the victims being stretchered in with every kind of injury... and knowing there are people willing to put their own lives at risk to help the people of Afghanistan is very humbling. We often see boat people crammed into dinghies, many drown and we're so used to hearing the statistics on the news that I'm sure many of us are almost immune....It's not until you see actual bombings, deaths and maimings you realise why they're so desperate to escape the horrors and to start a life in another country.

Emergency also have a ship manned by a crew equally passionate to help the boat people. The intense moments watching the lookouts on the ship looking through telescopes hoping to pick up the refugees and the Love they show to the people as they locate them and bring them on board, it's difficult not to cry as the exhausted individuals and families, many with babes in arms are met by the crew....you hear them say, "Welcome, you're safe now" then see the passengers praying, giving thanks to their God...You know, they looked just like people I know....they just want to live without war with their children....We're so lucky to be born here. I know there are traffickers taking a great deal of money off desperate individuals, however, the next time you hear an item on the news, 'Family dies in ocean crossing' - remember how desperate must they be to risk, literally, everything...

Lots of Love, to everybody.....Russ x

RUSS - LIFE STORIES

Last month I wrote about the accident that put me in to Moorfields Eye Hospital when I was twelve years old and how I was put in to a very small bedroom/ward with a lovely gentle, elderly man called Mr. Maurice

Autobiography. cont.....

.....I remember asking the nurse if I could go to the toilet. She said, "No you can't go to the bathroom, I'll bring you a bottle". She came back and placed it in my hands. In the dark it was obvious what I was supposed to do with it - however, I couldn't see how I could pee in bottle while laying on my back - I remember that pee being best I'd ever had, until I handed the bottle back to the nurse, only for her to say it was empty. I'd missed the bottle and I realised I was soaked to the skin. I never got used to using a bottle over the many times I went in and out of hospital, although I did improve with practice.

I remember waking next morning after a good night's sleep. I had both eyes covered with hard 'shells' that had been bandaged. I pulled the shells away and looked out to see a beautiful summer morning. I glanced around the room to see the other bed was occupied by a man.....then a nurse came in and asked me how I was feeling? Also, she directed a few questions to Mr. Maurice, which broke the ice between him and me. I didn't know if he realised I was in the room because, from his body language, he appeared to be blind. We started a conversation and he was very softly spoken and gentle. The nurse could see I was lifting the bandage and looking around, she told me not to do it and that the eyes needed to rest. Doctors came and went - a nurse took my pulse and my temperature and then asked if I'd "opened my bowels", which was an expression I'd never heard before. In fact, I never opened my bowels again for another ten days.

Mum and Dad visited and were distressed to see me with both eyes bandaged. The doctors said they would be covered for five or six days because they needed to rest. There was a lot of bleeding in the eye and they said it would be quite a while before they could predict just how

badly injured I was. After a couple of days I was moved into a ward with another twenty males...the ward was called 'Swinbourne'. I was the only boy, a fact I didn't know for another six days. When the doctor suggested the nurse could uncover my uninjured eye, I wasn't prepared for the psychological trauma of having both eyes bandaged for eight days and I withdrew into myself. This was the first time I'd experienced treatment in hospital and I wasn't prepared for the number of people who suffered with eye problems. At last, I was allowed out of bed and I could walk around the ward and talk to the patients, most of whom had their eyes covered. I soon learned how I'd been taking eye sight for granted....I also learned about eye problems, like Glaucoma, Detached Retinas, Corneal Grafts and Cataracts etc....I saw men being prepared for surgery, being pushed on the trolley down to the theatre for surgery by two porters, they did look scary, clad in plastic cap, gown and boots. They pushed the trolley to the patient's bed, took two long poles off the trolley then pushed them in to the medical sheet, then hoisted the patient on to the trolley then rolled him away. I thought it very funny when I heard one man call the porters 'Burke and Hare' - [The infamous body snatchers of Victorian times].

GERMANY TOUR - IT'S GOOD TO BE HERE

I'm sorry to say the 'IT'S GOOD TO BE HERE ' tour of Germany has been postponed due to Corona virus. It's the second time, so, for you people who bought tickets, it's doubly bad.... However, a new tour has been arranged and I'm giving you the dates and venues here right now. It's 2022, so, some months away but I look forward to seeing you all then....Take care and be safe.

Lots of Love,

Russ

Nov 2022

01 - Munich / Muffatwerk

02 - Nurnberg / Hirsch

03 - Bensheim / Musiktheater Rex

- 05 - Aschaffenburg / Colos Saal
- 07 - Augsburg / Spectrum
- 08 - Augsburg / Spectrum
- 10 - Dortmund / Piano
- 11 - Bonn / Harmonie

IT'S GOOD TO BE HERE

Russ's German tour was, of course, to promote his "It's Good To Be Here" album. Along with the CD there was a vinyl version of the album and a book. These were all available to buy from Music Glue. Carole put a reminder on Russ's Facebook page recently and several people said they hadn't known about the book and a few more sales were made. So here, for anyone who was not around early last year when they came out, is the link to take you to Music Glue where you can buy any combination of CD, Vinyl and book. <https://www.musicglue.com/russ-ballard>

	<p>Shop - Russ Ballard</p> <p>Russ Ballard - Shop. By signing up you agree to receive news and offers from Russ Ballard. You can unsubscribe at any time.</p> <p>www.musicglue.com</p>
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The brilliant photos for the album were taken by our own Sven Kramer. Unfortunately, the photo at the beginning of the book was incorrectly credited. It is definitely Sven's photo. Bob Smith no doubt takes excellent photos but we have no idea who he is!

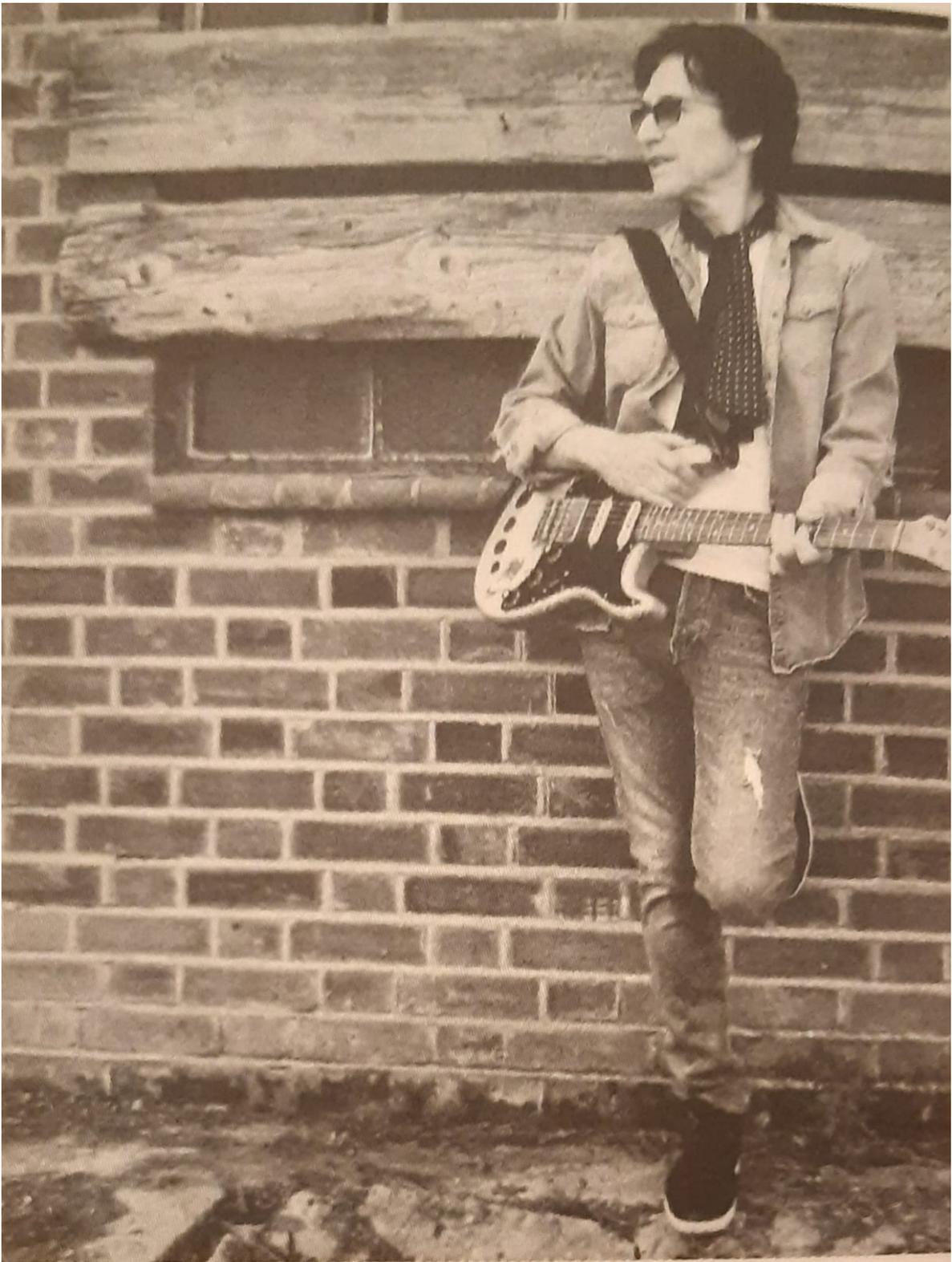
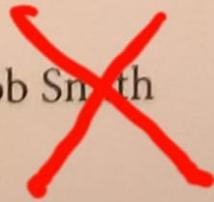


Photo of Russ Ballard by Bob Smith



ABBA

ABBA have been in the news a lot recently with their new music and upcoming high tech show in London.

In 1982, Frida of ABBA recorded her first solo album called "Something's Going On", which became a worldwide success. The album was produced by Phil Collins, who plays drums on it. The single from it, "**I Know There's Something Going On**", written, of course, by Russ, topped the charts in Switzerland, Belgium, Costa Rica and France, where it was no 1 for 5 weeks. It also reached the top 5 in Germany, Austria, the Netherlands, Norway and Australia amongst others. In the United States, it reached no 13 on the Billboard Hot 100 and was the 20th biggest selling single in the US in 1983.

<https://youtu.be/p98PjtSfNWo>



[Frida - I Know There's Something Going On](https://youtu.be/p98PjtSfNWo)

I KNOW THERE'S SOMETHING GOING ON "I Know There's Something Going On" performed by FRIDA from the album 'Something's Going On' Music Internation...

[youtu.be](https://youtu.be/p98PjtSfNWo)

Some of you might not know that Agnetha also recorded one of Russ's songs? In 1983, "**Can't Shake Loose**" was a single from Agnetha's album, "Wrap Your Arms Around Me". It made the Billboard Hot 100 at no 29 and made no 23 in Canada. <https://youtu.be/m8WSL3L-5dY>



[Agnetha Faltskog - Can't Shake Loose](https://youtu.be/m8WSL3L-5dY)

Agnetha sings her fifth song from The Heat Is On Show. The show was part of a European tour that Agnetha made in 1983. post A...

[youtu.be](https://youtu.be/m8WSL3L-5dY)

FAN FAVOURITES

Liam Wilson

Ring of Hands, In Deep are my 2 favourite **Argent** albums.

As a massive Argent fan, since 1972, it is no surprise that my Top 2 favourite Russ compositions appear on both of these albums.

My 3rd favourite Russ composition, post Argent, is *The Fire Still Burns* title track from the album of the same name.

1. WHERE ARE WE GOING WRONG (ARGENT)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8aFWBSVw9qA>

"Where Are We Going Wrong" was, by 1971, one of Russ's most powerful compositions for Argent and featured on the band's 2nd album, *"Ring of Hands"*. This superb song appeared as the final track on Side 2 and really, it is so good, that perhaps it should have been the opening track on Side 1. The *Ring Of Hands* album was reviewed and described by Rolling Stone as "a masterpiece" when it was released. I couldn't agree more.

"Where Are We Going Wrong" showcases, inter alia, Russ's fantastic guitar playing, a superb Rod Argent piano solo together with a solid and an adrenaline filled bass & drum rhythm performance, underpinning the entire song, the excitement of which transfers easily to the listener. It's well worthwhile paying close attention to Jim Rodford's undulating winding bass-playing throughout, held together by Bob Henrit's classy drum patterns. Plus harmonies from Russ, Rod and Jim to die for.

"Where are we going Wrong" saw the band gel in 1971 as the ultimate rock and roll unit. It is just an incredible demonstration of band dynamics at playRuss's lyrics, Russ's magnificent guitar playing, the band's harmonies, Jim's bass and Bob's interactive drumming, that classy keyboard solo by Rod in the middle, ... the building up to the song's triumphant finale, via Bob's dramatic drum crescendo, culminating with that final scintillating reverberating guitar and bass chord from Russ and Jim. Did I miss anything?

Seriously, everything that they displayed on this particular track augured well for the future. And it was only 1971. However, I have often wondered whether Russ's lyrics on *"Where Are We Going Wrong"* were a portent of things to come in 1972/3, in terms of Argent's evolving musical direction.

Whatever. Crank up the volume and play it loud! An absolute classic.

2. IT'S ONLY MONEY - PART 1 (ARGENT)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m4eecVY4moU>

As an international bank manager, this for me, was always going to be my personal theme tune. They say "a shroud has no pockets". For me, Russ's lyrics perfectly encapsulate these sentiments in *Parts 1 & 2 of I.O.M.*

Whilst I love both parts of I.O.M, I always thought that this Part 1 version, rather than *I.O.M Part 2*, should have been the follow-up single to *GGR&RTY*. To my mind it had more commercial bite and had that " *je ne sais quoi*" element of mystery and drama to it, especially the thumping bass and electric guitar, bass + Hammond organ beginning. This electrifying and suspenseful introduction immediately grabs the listeners attention and sucks them right into a wonderful world of rock harmonies at their finest, whilst the band still maintains that driving, infectious and thumping rhythm, which was not so prevalent on *I.O.M Part 2*. Soon after this exciting intro, there follows an amazing musical interplay between Rod's keyboards and Russ's guitar playing . (If Carlsberg did guitar solos, in the middle of infectious rock songs, then Russ Ballard's solo on *I.O.M Part 1*. would be.....)

Suffice to say, in 1973, yet another rock and roll classic from the pen of Russ.

3. THE MAKING OF THE FIRE STILL BURNS (RUSS BALLARD - WITH ALAN FREEMAN)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fLzVx_xMOM8

There are few pieces of music which bring me to the edge of tears. This is one that certainly does.

Whilst I loved the *F.S.B* title track, as it originally appeared on the *F.S.B* album, this "*Making of FSB out-take*" adds so much colour to it. Context is everything and the story behind the making of *F.S.B*, as narrated by, in my humble opinion, the UK's greatest ever rock DJ, Alan "Fluff" Freeman, takes one on a musically emotive journey from Russ's country studio, via his notebook of lyrics, his creation of the original tune, then heading into the Abbey Road Studios, where he was faced with, inter alia, a technical world of 96 faders and other musical dials. This track takes the listener inside Russ's head on how *F.S.B* was envisaged, conceived and musically delivered. Listen how electronic cellos, harpsichord, Russ's Gibson Guitar, the effects of digital echo on Russ's voice and his chanting all weave together to form this remarkable piece of music. There are no words to describe how fantastic it was for me to experience the musical journey of *F.S.B* from embryonic beginning to its coming of age I defy you to listen to this and keep your feet still, and your eyes dry.

Each of the above 3 songs feature prominently in my "**Endorphin Producing Inspirational Songs Playlist**" ...to be played when I'm feeling either fed-up or coping with whatever the headwinds of daily life confront me with. These 3 Russ songs, for me, have the amazing ability to fire me up and get those coping-defences into action. All the more needed, during these challenging times.

4. ESPECIALLY MENTIONED: The entire *Book of Love* album. One of the finest concept albums I have ever heard.

But that is a topic for another day, as I could ramble on forever how much *B.O.L* has positively influenced my life and my career.

P.S the *Road That Has No Turning*, from the *Book of Love* album, has also brought tears to my eyes.....big time.

In Russ we trust,
Liam

RICHARD'S RAMBLINGS

Keeper Of The Flame

There are many Argent songs where guitar and keyboard compete, provoke and encourage each other. Less obvious, but nonetheless equally critical to the underlying strength of a piece, is the teamwork of the rhythm section - Rodford and Henrit push and restrain on many songs. However, on Nexus there is one song where their power and technique mesh together in near perfection. "Keeper of the Flame" is an Argent/White composition. Russ's haunting voice provides the lead vocal with Rod offering a worthy harmony support. From the off, after a short organ intro of a few bars, Rodford and Henrit shift straight through the gears as they bite and snap at each other in a real tour de force example of inventive bass and drums playing for the song. Rodford, for once, resisting the temptation to underplay, sets his guitar settings to attack and uses the full range of his considerable technique throughout. Henrit, inspired by his bass mate, puts his drum kit to the setting marked AK47 and his playing responds with matching wit and guile. A truly great performance from two rock heroes. Although there are plenty of recorded examples of these two, this particular piece perfectly captures the powerhouse nature of their long partnership.

R.I.P. Jim.

Keep on rolling Bob

Richard Westwood

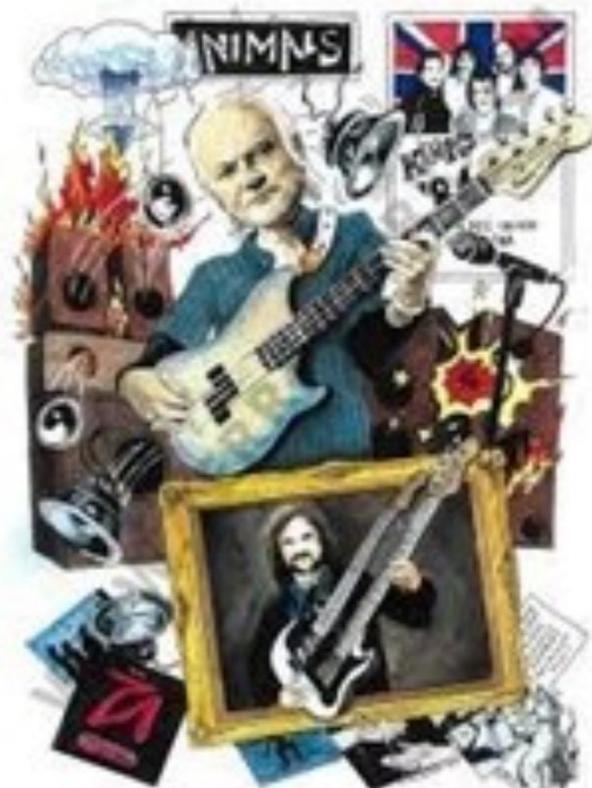
June 2021

PODCAST

Back in November 2020, Dave did an interview for the newsletter with Chris White. Sven and Ian have followed this up by inviting Chris to be the subject of their latest podcast for Russ's website. You can find this podcast, along with all the others, here... <https://russballardmusic.com/podcast.html>

ACE OF BASS

By Dave Williams



Cover photo (left) by Steve Rodford. Drawing (right) by Terry Quirk

Jim Rodford – Sideman

An exciting piece of news appeared on 14th August, on the **Voices of Russ Ballard** Facebook group. Ian Street announced that the much-rumoured autobiography by Jim Rodford is now available for purchase. I wasted no time in ordering a copy from Amazon (other booksellers are available, as the BBC would point out). It costs a pretty penny for a paperback, but I was happy to part with 'the readies' bearing in mind I feared this piece of work might never see the light of day following Jim's untimely passing. Whilst Jim didn't get to complete his memoirs, he managed to cover a god percentage of his years in the music business, and friends and family came forward to fill in the gaps and provide their own thoughts on the man and his music, which I actually found equally fulfilling.

Inside the book, there is a brilliant colour drawing (shown above) by Terry Quirk, designer of The Zombies' Odessey & Oracle LP sleeve. Interestingly I must have written quite a lot about the O & O album, because my PC spellchecker now automatically flags up 'Odyssey' to be incorrect and offers Terry's misspelling as the correction, but I digress. In his sketch, Terry managed to incorporate Jim using his Fender modified double neck guitar, as well as a sunburst Fender mustang. Also featured are minute but exact replicas of some of the album sleeves including the debut argent LP, Ring of Hands, in Deep and Nexus, plus a little note that includes a tag that states "Have bass, Will travel", a reference no doubt to the fact that Jim loved playing so much that he rarely turned down an invitation to play, whether it be joining The Animals and Friends on a UK tour or joining up with some local musicians in a local pub in St Albans.

I haven't read all of the book yet, besides which, I don't want to spoil things for those who are planning to buy it. I can tell you that I found his account of his early years particularly interesting, particularly the stars that he rubbed shoulders with. It amazed me that he played 1200 gigs in the space of four and a half years with the Mike Cotton Sound. That would surely not be possible today.

Argent lovers will be pleased to learn that just under 30 pages are dedicated to his time with Argent, followed by a few pages covering his short spell with Phoenix. He then talks about his official offer to join The Kinks on 12th August 1978. Sadly, due to his passing, Jim's memoirs come to an end shortly after. Such a shame that he didn't get to share more about the 18 years he spent working with the volatile, but incredibly talented Davies brothers, not to mention the reformed Zombies.

The story doesn't end on Page 204 though. There's a further 80 pages featuring tributes from family members and friends, the former including his sister Paula, sons Steve and Russell, as well as three of his granddaughters, and most importantly his beloved wife Jean. Tributes from colleagues include contributions from Rod Argent, Mike Cotton, Colin Blunstone, Mike Berry, Bob Henrit, John Verity and Mick Avory. I got a lump in my throat reading the family tributes, and it's clear to see that they already miss him so much. I've yet to read what his 'work' colleagues have to say, but one thing is for sure. There won't be a bad word said about him. That's fitting, because in the conversations I had with him over the years, I never heard Jim speak badly about anyone either.

Sideman – The Jim Rodford Story, now on its second print run, is available to order. Printed by Amazon, the ISBN number is ISBN 9798543873090. With Christmas not too far away, order now to avoid disappointment.

SONGS OF PRAISE

Want to hear why Richie Blackmore recorded *Since You Been Gone* and *I Surrender*? Want to know why he prefers these songs over some of his Deep Purple classics, such as *My Woman from Tokyo*? Who was the Rainbow member that really didn't like *Since You Been Gone*? Answers can be found on this YouTube clip. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z3JfmyR8o_g Skip forward to 24.33 to catch Ritchie's thoughts 'straight from the horse's mouth'.



["I LIKE MY MOODY IMAGE" 1983 INTERVIEW WITH RITCHIE BLACKMORE ON HIS CAREER IN DEEP PURPLE & RAINBOW](#)

Ritchie Blackmore of Deep Purple and Rainbow talks about his life and career in a programme first broadcast in 1983. He talks about how he first started, session work, Starting and working with Deep Purple, and the forming of his own band Rainbow, and working with Ronnie James Dio, also chats about playing up to the image that is portrayed of ... www.youtube.com

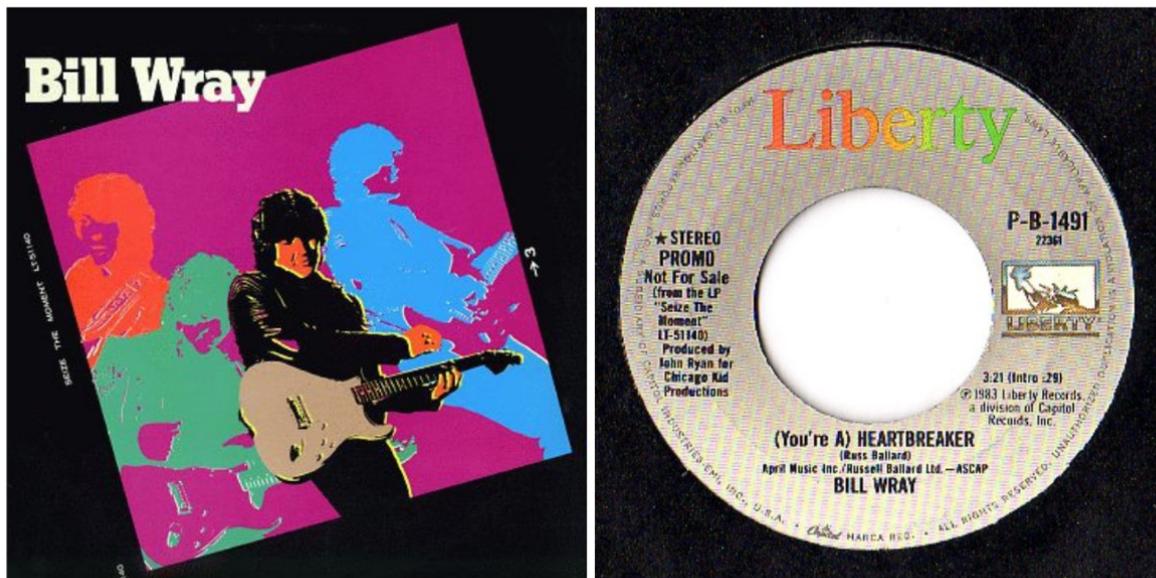


While you are there, wind the video back to 23.24 and hear Ritchie talking about the ghost of Chopin at the Chateau Herouville, the very same ghost that was mentioned by David Courtney in the March 2021 newsletter.

DAVE'S COVER QUEST

September's cover quest is courtesy of Sven. I'd got this listed, but I thought it was the same "Heartbreaker" that was recorded by Olivia Newton John, which featured in a previous newsletter. Sven sent me a link to the song, and I discovered it's a very different song altogether, and well worth a listen.

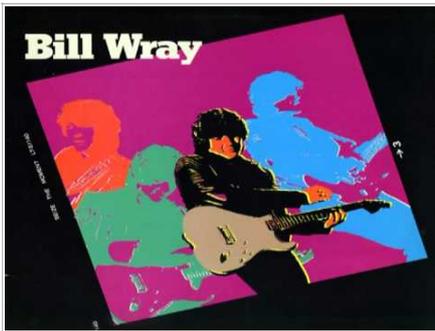
No.36



(You're A) Heartbreaker by Billy Wray

Inspired to make a living out of Rock and Roll after meeting Elvis when he was a young boy, Louisiana born **Bill Wray** recorded and performed between 1976 and 1983, releasing three albums. The last of these was called **Seize the Moment**, from 1983, and the opening song is this Russ Ballard composition **(You're a) Heartbreaker**. If you particularly enjoy the songs on Russ's self-titled 1984

album, the chances are you will like this Bill Wray tune, as it's in the same AOR genre. <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=74rxkp8qa3I>



[Bill Wray - \(You're a\) Heartbreaker \(](https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=74rxkp8qa3I)

[YouTube](https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=74rxkp8qa3I)

"Seize The Moment (1983)"

[m.youtube.com](https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=74rxkp8qa3I)

Bill, brother of fellow musician / composer Jim Wray, opened for many major acts as a performer, including Toto, The Kinks, Bachman Turner Overdrive and Foreigner. However, he is probably better recognised as a songwriter than an artist and performer. Diana Ross, Little Feat and Emmerson, Lake and Palmer are just a few of the artists that Bill has provided songs for. Bill also composed all twelve songs for the soundtrack of 1979's Brooke Shields film, Tilt.