

RUSS BALLARD

*for the first
time in 40 years*

UK-TOUR 2016



Wednesday 20th January

LONDON

LEICESTER SQUARE THEATRE

Sunday 31st January

GIANTS OF ROCK FESTIVAL

Tuesday 8th March

MILTON KEYNES

THE STABLES

Friday 11th March

HRH AOR FESTIVAL

Saturday 12th March

DERBY

THE FLOWERPOT

Sunday 13th March

WOLVERHAMPTON


ROBIN 2

Friday 18th March

LONDON

NELLS JAZZ AND BLUES

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This has been a busy and exciting month so this newsletter is concentrating on gigs! Mostly "An Evening With", which turned out to be a hugely successful evening with Brian May, Rick Wakeman and Kerry Ellis joining in the fun. The theatre was sold out and full of Russ's friends, family and loyal fans. If you weren't there, keep reading and Russ, Gordon, Richard and Brian will tell you all about it. See attachments for Gordon's photos. You can see lots of other photos through Russ's FB page. <https://www.facebook.com/RussBallardMusicOfficial/?fref=ts>

Of course, the rest of the tour is coming up very soon. Sadly, the gig in Devon is no longer happening but there is now a London gig. Sven has made a great tour poster...feel free to share. I am sure those who were at Leicester Square and Minehead will have bought their tickets for at least one full band gig. Links for buying tickets are below....just in case you are within reach of a gig and you haven't got yours yet!

Sue

TOUR MARCH 2016

Get your tickets here!

Tues 8th March - Milton Keynes, Stables http://www.stables.org/Whats_on/Event/Russ_Ballard

Fri 11th March - Gwynedd HRH AOR Festival <http://www.hrhaor.com/line-up/friday-line-up.html>

Sat 12th March - The Flowerpot, Derby http://www.rawpromo.co.uk/gig_guide.html

Sun 13th March - Robin 2, Bilston, Wolverhampton http://www.therobin.co.uk/whats_on/?m=201603

Fri 18th March - Nell's Jazz & Blues Club, W Kensington, London <http://www.seetickets.com/event/russ-ballard-and-his-band/nells-jazz-blues/948950>

THIS MONTH

Russ: *"January has been a different kind of Month...everything led to two live performances - The first was 'An Evening With' at Leicester Square Theatre in London, and the second, a show with my group at a festival, called 'The Giants of Rock', that took place in Minehead....Peter Ross suggested I should perform a show where I talk about my career, a Q and A part interspersed with songs and stories. I contacted Brian May and asked if he would like to come on and play some songs in the second half. He said he would and also suggested his great friend Kerry Ellis would also like to sing...We rehearsed at Brian's house, deciding on 'Since You Been Gone' 'Hold Your Head Up' and 'God Gave RnR To You' - I played acoustic guitar while Brian took the solos on electric.. I hadn't talked to Brian for many years, the last time was at an after show party at the Apollo Hammersmith. He'd just played a show where he'd performed 'Since You Been Gone' - I was told before hand he was singing my song in his set and was asked if I would like to see the show and also go to the after show party. He had Cozy Powell on drums that night and the set was great - Brian and I chatted for a while...Where do the years go? - Back to the 'Evening With' - Brian phoned after our rehearsal and said Rick Wakeman was 'up' to play at our gig, so, there we were...Kerry, Brian, Rick and myself...with Mike Read, who agreed to Chair the evening. Leicester Square Theatre has a good atmosphere and seats four hundred people....We were told the venue was sold out ten days before the show, Rick had learned the tunes, Mike had his questions prepared and we were ready.*

The audience greeted Mike and myself very warmly. We sat in our armchairs and chatted about my life in the music business from my first groups, like Norman Eddy and The Imperials, Rick Nickel and The Rebels, Buster Meilke and The Daybreakers, on to Adam Faith and The Roulettes, The Unit Four Plus Two, then my three years with Argent. I told Mike much of the inside information..One Night Stands in the sixties, Weeks in Variety, Summer Seasons...touring, and stories of meeting people like Noel Coward, then weeks later The Beatles...I played and sang some of my songs and finished the first half with 'So You Win Again' . Peter Ross the Producer of the show came in to my dressing room to say it was going great....The second half, Mike invited the Audience to ask questions and I was knocked out to see the first questioner was an old friend from my childhood....After twenty minutes I introduced Kerry, Brian, Rick and on percussion my dear friend Bob Henrit...The audience stood up and we Rocked and Rolled. Kerry and Brian shared vocals on 'Since You Been Gone' , then, I sang 'God Gave RnR To You' although, the crowd joined in on the choruses with was great. Finally, 'Hold Your Head Up' which Kerry sang Beautifully....We left the stage quite elated and it was felt by everyone that it was a great success...I was a little annoyed that I left out some great stories that I intended to tell, but, 'hey' it was a great night!

After 'An Evening With' my focus was on 'THE GIANTS OF ROCK' - it was a festival held at Minehead and I was booked to play there on 31st January - I arranged two days rehearsal at Steve Smith's studio in Ringwood. Steve has played keyboards for me for the last twenty years. His studio is well equipped with amps, drums and a great PA system. I drove to Bob Henrit's house in Enfield and Bob said he would drive my car, which suited me well. ...We had two good rehearsal days with the other guys in the band, Chris Winter on guitar and Stu Ross on bass and we all felt we were ready for the

gig... I believe the event lasts two or three days...When I saw the line up, it featured some of my friends, Gary Brooker [Procol Harem] - Steve Harley, Wishbone Ash and John Verity, I was looking forward to chatting with them again, however, I was told Procol were playing as I arrived and by the time I was shown to my chalet dressing room I was told Procol Harem had finished their set....Then I was told Steve H. had played the night before....I did see Bob Skeat from Wishbone Ash, but he was just about to leave, so, we didn't have time for a good natter.

We played at three o'clock in the afternoon. I was a little nervous as I took the stage, however, my nerves disappeared when I felt the warmth of the audience...They sang along with most of the songs...It's those moments when I realize how much I've missed playing 'live', anyway, I have shows in March and I'm really looking forward to them....Milton Keys Stables 8th - Gwynedd HRH AOR 11th. - Derby Flower Pot 12th - Wolverhampton Robin 2 13th. - Nell's Jazz and Blues Kensington 18th...Maybe I'll get to meet some of the people with whom I've corresponded over the years, I hope so....Bob, Steve, Chris, Stu and I will have two more rehearsals 3rd & 4th. of March. We need to add three more songs to the set - at Minehead we only played one hour, on the 'gigs' we'll play at least an hour and a half.

We've booked a nine seater coach for the 'tour', it's always fun traveling together, hearing the stories, old and new is great...You know, Bob Henrit and I have so many, going back to our days with Adam Faith and The Roulettes, , Unit Four Plus Two , then Argent...we've been known to have the guys laughing for two and three hours....long enough to get to Manchester.

If I don't see you at the shows I'll let you know how it all went at the end of March.

*Lots of Love,
Russ x*

AN EVENING WITH....

First, some great videos from the evening with thanks to Ian, who flew all the way from Dubai for this show!

So You Win Again

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k2uti_64SAg&feature=youtu.be

Since You've Been Gone

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BFI6JV7U7bs>

Hold Your Head Up

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=inRTsEq0RVM&feature=youtu.be>

From Gordon Dickson

Just thought I would drop you a few lines with my thoughts on last night which you may have already had feedback on. Theatre was packed and many of Russ's friends of many years standing were there, even two of the original Roulettes .

Q& A with Mike Read was excellent and Russ had some great memories to share . Questions from the audience were quite limited and although I had my hand up several times , was not able to ask Russ anything. He played a brilliant I Don't believe in Miracles although he did say Colin's version and voice was better !

Kerry Ellis , Brian May and Rick Wakeman appeared in the second half with Bob Henrit drumming along on a tea chest. Since You've Been Gone was first up with God Gave with Hold Your Head Up to finish. Super night but new album on cd still failed to materialise !

Being only four rows from the front , right in the centre gave me a brilliant view and I am sure I got a personal wave from Russ at the end.

From Richard Westwood

With my friend Terry Biddulph, I attended the Leicester Square Theatre event. It was a special evening. The low key entrance Russ made at the beginning did rather set the tone for his self-effacing personality. When he spoke about his early years as a professional with The Roulettes and a little later with Unit 4 + 2, he revealed both his joy and his mis-givings and it had the strength of complete authenticity. Russ worried about The Beatles and The Stones being "cutting edge" in comparison to his own "all round entertainer" role in The Roulettes. Yet The Roulettes were in fact almost one of the first bands especially formed to back and enhance an established star in Adam Faith. As previously written about, I saw The Roulettes twice live and they were musically right up there with whatever was around. They had strong material, a professional sound, two great singers in Russ and Mod Rogan, an exciting drummer in Sir Bob Henrit and very strong presentation. Russ mentioned playing alongside more famous acts at the NME Poll winners concerts and although I remember reading that Adam Faith was not too happy about following The Rolling Stones I bet The Roulettes considered that their professionalism and musicianship would serve them well in such situations.

At no time in the evening did Russ brag about any of his many career accomplishments. Nor did he especially name drop, other than many references to Cliff Richard and The Shadows. His answers to the question about songwriting pay checks were revealing and funny and sort of charming. I have no idea what Russ earns from song royalties and it's just his business (and the Inland Revenue I guess!) so his musings about £50.00 for his first pay check and considerably more for an American hit were appropriate and said without a hint of bragging.

The musical parts of the evening were sometimes astonishing - Russ on his own doing short takes from Adam Faith, Unit 4 + 2 and his own songs, were just wonderful. At a concert by The Zombies a couple of years ago Rod Argent introduced "I Don't Believe In Miracle" as one of the greatest love songs ever written and it surely is. Mike Reid's sensitive probing of Russ as to how he came to write the song and then Russ performing the song was the highlight of the evening. As Jim Rodford often says after a performance, "What a song!"

The part of the night where Russ was joined by Brian May, Rick Wakeman and Kerry Ellis was enjoyable enough but a bit of an anti-climax for me after such a strong show between Mike Reid and Russ. From my point of view, I would have liked that Russ was joined by his top mate Bob Henrit for some more chat and stories but that's just me maybe.

I am hoping that Russ will make this an annual event. I would drag many more people to the next one rather than just poor old Terry! My wife could come and see for herself just what all the fuss has been about. My children too - after all, many of the songs of Russ Ballard have been a part of their lives as well as mine.

Russ, thanks for a wonderful and memorable evening.

Regards,
Richard Westwood.

From Brian Barry

I might have been one of the first to get tickets for Russ's first solo UK gig, but I was one of the last into the Leicester Square Theatre. The queue outside went on forever, but it did give me the opportunity to chat with the camera crew outside, who it appeared were going to be filming the show.

Once inside there was a perceptible atmosphere that people were here for a good night. A little bit of eavesdropping on conversations confirmed that point.

Various covers of Russ's songs made up the pre-show playlist. A good reminder, as if it was needed, of just how versatile his song-writing has been over the years.

We settled down in our seats, and Mike Read came out and did his introduction, before Russ came sauntering on stage to a very appreciative round of applause. You felt then that this was going to work out just fine for him, even if he did seem slightly nervous and had to mess about with his mic at the start.

A chronological list of anecdotes through Russ's early band days was only enhanced when he pointed out the other Roulettes in the audience. He played a Roulettes number with his acoustic, and it didn't take much cajoling to get the rest of the band out of their seats to sing backing vocals.

A lovely part of the proceedings was the realisation that so many school friends of Russ's had turned out to see him. He was able to name a section of the audience individually. It's quite something to think all these people have kept in touch and are still friends after so many decades. I don't know why there was never such a genre as the "Cheshunt Beat," because it had so many musicians

Noel Coward, Cliff, The Beatles, Mort Shuman, Irving Berlin and many others featured in Russ's stories. I thought it was noticeable that Russ seemed much more comfortable chatting when he had a guitar in his hands.

It was interesting to hear his philosophical take on life (and death) too. Quite an inspirational speaker if I may say so.

He moved to a keyboard for a gorgeous version of "I Don't Believe In Miracles," and a stripped down, sing-a-long rendition of his number one hit for Hot Chocolate, "You Win Again". He seemed delighted that everyone sang along too. That was only the first half.

After a little break, we had a bit more chat with Mike and Russ, mostly about his later career, before the Q and A section. I did admit to having an A4 sheet of paper with a list of questions, but despite knowing I could question Russ for hours given the chance, I knew better! Other questions from the audience brought out insights into Russ's song-writing techniques, and working with different musicians. All very fascinating.

Then it was time for the "Russ Ballard and friends" part of the proceedings. Onto the stage came Rick Wakeman, Brian May and Kerry Ellis. Another surprise was having Robert Henrit join in, providing the backbeat with a Cajon (a drum kit in a box). Oh, and the promise of things getting LOUD.

It was amazing to hear "Since You've Been Gone" being played with a guitar that sounded like, er, Brian May! "Hold Your Head Up" gave Rick the chance to Prog out on keyboards. "God Gave Rock and Roll To You" would never fail to please really, would it? Russ could only look back on tonight and think surely, "Well that worked!" He was of course very generous

with his time for anyone who waited behind to meet him. He chatted, signed stuff and had loads of photos taken with anyone who asked.

What a taster for the tour in March this was. As if we weren't looking forward to it enough!

YOUR LETTERS

From Gianmaria

Oh, Russ, what you said about the media and how they push hard on tearing people apart is such wisdom from you... you often speak about these human issues, and you often get straight to the point, the way I like it. This is one of the reasons why I keep following you as a fan and a human being.

Now there's a world of people who are bred and born under such horrible and inhuman regimes, especially down in Africa, the media won't talk about these dictators and who feeds them, they'll talk to us about how bad it is those people keep 'invading' our shores... they're simply trying for a better life, their own is unbearable, I'd defy anyone and try and live down there, we're all too comfortable in our 'civilised' societies... and the media won't help. Our national culture doesn't help at all. Rivalry is good as long as it's a game we're playing, after which we're only human beings and we should keep remembering that time after time before we open our mouths and complain about 'the stranger'. That's what I think.

Anyway, I also wanted to thank Richard for sharing his memories here, it must be so touching to have been around Russ and the Swingin' London for so long, bless you 'laddie'! ;-)

Cozy's touch... oh Russ, how we love it, don't we? He was not just powerful but, as you say, he was immensely precise and his shots sounded like a fist in our bellies because he really 'dug in', aye.

Cheerio! ;-)

