



(Banner thanks to Sven Kramer.)

They rocked Tokyo!!!!!! (thanks, Carole!)....the arrival of the Russ Ballard Band caused an earthquake on the day of their first gig. Well, maybe the earthquake wasn't their fault but rock Tokyo they did!

This was Russ's first visit to Japan and it was all very successful with many fans taking the opportunity to see their idol at Hatsudai the Doors.

Bob Henrit has written one of his famous journals about his, Russ's and the band's experience and he is very kindly letting us put it in the newsletter first. This is the closest you will get to being there with them and a great look behind the scenes! This is a long one...so we will spread it over a few newsletters. The first instalment covers the preparations and the journey to Japan.

We have a few new readers from Japan as a result of the Tokyo gigs so I would like to welcome them and say that their contributions to the newsletter will also be very welcome.

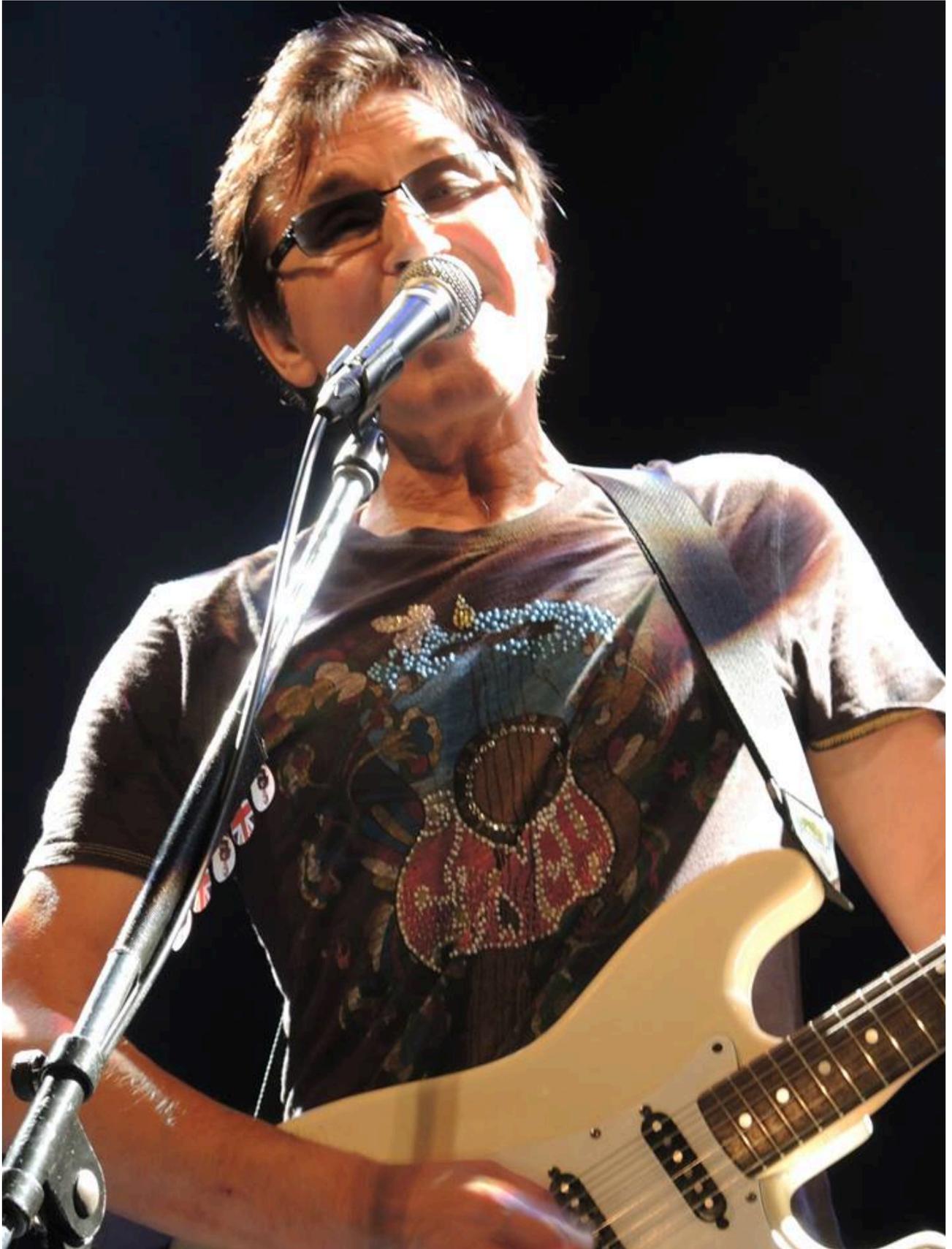
Good news for Russ's fans in the US. Angel Joy Andis is looking for promoters who would be interested in booking Russ to play in the South West.

I have an apology. Previously, I have referred to the band's bass player for Tokyo as Stuart Marchant. His name is Stuart Ross. Sorry Stuart!

Sue

For videos from Tokyo of God Gave Rock & Roll To You and an excellent performance of Little Queenie see the UMU Music Facebook page...

<https://www.Facebook.com/pages/UMU-Music/203647439819957>



(In Tokyo)

FROM RUSS

I was offered the chance to go to Japan [and Australia] - in 1975, when my publisher, Island Music, suggested I could spend two weeks in each country, appearing on radio shows, giving newspaper interviews etc...I was having some success song writing and they thought it would be good publicity but I declined the offer.....Christian was only months old and I wanted to be around to see his development. When a few months ago, Tetsuya, out of the blue, asked if I'd like to play Tokyo....I thought, "If I don't go now, I will probably never go". I phoned Bob, Steve and Chris W. and they all said "yeah".

After going to Japan, there's still so much I don't understand....as well as the language. The customs are confusing to me.....I tend to hug people after a personal conversation - [whether friends or strangers] - I did the same to the locals in Japan.... men and women. Both sexes had that - "I shouldn't be doing this, but it feels quite nice" look.... The bowing of the head as one person passes another, is a nice custom.....I walked from the coffee shop to my room, - [on the 23rd floor] - I payed my bill, the waiter bowed graciously, - as I passed the reception desk, the man and woman behind it smiled then bowed...I approached the lift, another lady of the staff smiled, said something I didn't understand and bowed twice. - As I walked to my room I saw two chambermaids, they stopped vacuuming when they saw me, and in unison, both bowed.....I felt like the Queen.

The girls I met appeared to be quite emotional and tearful....very feminine, though.

I expected to see buildings packed close together and they were. Cartoons are everywhere, on billboards, advertisements on adult menus....on skyscrapers.....I wonder when and how that came about?

Early on the Monday morning I was awake - I heard a deep rumble, straight away, I thought, - "Is this an earthquake?" - I dressed, ran in to the corridor, expecting to see people....strange, not one person there. After a minute it appeared to calm down, although, after three minutes, I noticed the cord on the hair dryer -[placed on the wall],- was still moving from side to side. They have one a month....this was the worst for three years, they said.

The two shows were a lot of fun and the audiences were great and very polite. In Europe people don't need to be asked to sing or respond in songs, they just do it. The Japanese listen with smiles on their faces and when asked to sing they're as loud as anybody.

The only drag about doing one or two shows is, you feel you're just starting to sound good then it's all over.

It's a wonderful feeling, hearing audiences sing your songs....tunes I wrote 35/40 years ago, when many of the people there weren't even born....It really makes it all worth while.

I'd like to thank Tetsuya and Izumi for inviting us to Japan. They took us out to eat every evening, that was kind.

I'd like to pass on something I said to the audience on the final show....If you like, this can be a 'THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH'.....Just after Chris sang 'HOPE' I said, "WE MUST BE THE CHANGE WE WANT TO SEE IN THE WORLD", because, we are not separate from each other. Wherever you live in the World - Psychologically, You are me and I am you - I know we look in the mirror and see a different image and we have different names but inside we all suffer, we have our pain and sometimes anger, we all laugh sometimes..and cry - whether you're from Europe, Africa or America you, like me, will have your history, your memory, your culture and your conditioning...I believe we are linked....We don't learn this at school, which is a shame.....anyway.....with all it's problems it's still a wonderful life!

Russ x

Russ Ballard Tokyo May 2014

1. Rene'
2. It's My Life
3. Dream on
4. I cant hear you no more
5. In the night
6. Fire still burns
7. Hold your head up
8. Hope
9. Playing with fire
10. Two silhouettes
11. Hey Bernadette
12. Time
13. Time is gonna come
14. On the rebound
15. God gave mr to you
16. Voices
17. Since you been gone

Encore;

Little Queenie

To Kazumi
With love,
Russ Ballard
To Kazumi
Have Christmas
SSS
She Rocks
x
xx



(Goodbye Tokyo)

FROM BOB HENRIT

Konnichiwa Japan - Part 1

As it happened the culmination of my seventieth trip around the sun was to be spent on a plane heading 6000 miles around the world to Tokyo. This meant, to keep on with those numerical metaphors, since I was heading east I'd actually be getting my shortest birthday ever. With a time difference of eight hours I think that means a sixteen hour day for me? But whilst your sympathy is always welcome, since the lovely Ricki and I

were heading to South Africa at the end of the year to celebrate the auspicious event properly, it's unfortunately somewhat ill-deserved on my part.

The reason for the this activity as you will hopefully have guessed by now was because RGB was doing some gigs in Tokyo with Tetsuya, the guy from Vinyl records Japan, who normally puts the Zombies/Argent conglomeration on in Japan and I was going along to aid and abet him on drums. I wasn't the only aider and abettor because Steve Smith and Chris Winter were also going but Bob Skeat and Jim Rodford were whizzing around America with Wishbone Ash and The Zombies respectively. Mark Griffiths was out with The Rutles (and coincidentally would be in Japan just after us) and Chris Childs was doing either Thunder or The Union. So we needed a bass player and Stevie Smith discovered Stuart Ross who was another member of the Bournemouth Music Massive! He looked impossibly young but fortunately wasn't and he looked like a skinnier member of the Rodford clan. He was actually 40 something but you'd never know. I had a very slight problem with Stuart because during our very first conversation he let slip he wasn't always a bass player - he was actually a bloody drummer! (This turned out to be a very good thing from an intuition standpoint.)

After our initial get together in Ringwood at Stevie's studio where Stuart acquitted himself better than the rest of us with songs he'd never played before, rehearsals would take place at Russell's place a couple of days before we flew to Tokyo. But before that we had the not so inconsequential matter of Japanese work permits to contend with. This began with forms to be filled out to send first to ASS in Germany who sent them on to Vinyl records in Japan who then produced 'Certificates of Eligibility' which then had to be taken to the Japanese Embassy in London along with passports and visa application forms. Since I was the only one with a London postcode (and a freedom pass issued first by Ken Livingstone then Boris Johnson) I was ideally placed to nip into town (no pun intended) and drop them off. This was permissible provided I had a separate letter of permission from each of the guys (more of this later) to act on their behalf. I tubed to Green Park and walked up Piccadilly

towards Hyde Park Corner and the Embassy of Japan, which, because they were doing work on the outside of the beautiful building was completely obscured by hoardings. I wasn't fooled by this disguise and was soon negotiating my way through the usual x-ray machines and body scanners we've unfortunately become used to seeing since 9/11. Fortunately I didn't have to take my new Converse Hi-tops off and was soon standing at the top of a marble staircase where a nice lady sitting securely behind an old-fashioned bank-teller's window showed me where to go next by holding up a photograph. I was instructed to pick-up a number from a complicated machine before hurrying to wait my turn. Even before I got to sit down and look around my number was called and I was instructed to present myself at 'Booth Number 1'.

The inscrutable, but pleasant young lady behind the bullet-proof? glass took my wodge of papers and passports and perused them thoroughly. I held my breath knowing there was a slight mistake in Chrissie Winter's application form relative to how long he was staying in Tokyo. But not to worry it seemed a day or two either side of your return ticket didn't matter and the young lady, having pronounced herself satisfied, issued me with a receipt to pick up five passports complete with work permits in four working days. That was it and all done in less time than it takes to get through the check-out at Tesco's. The only trouble was the Japanese girl behind the counter said she was sorry to be *pedantic* (honestly) but the letters I had with me from the guys said I had their permission to drop the applications and passports off, they made no mention of picking them up. So they needed to be amended before I came back to retrieve them on the 28th. - Rules is rules!

I'm used to these normally prolonged negotiations taking place in the American Embassy or various African, Indian and Chinese Embassies and thought, with those painful experiences in mind I'd made a big mistake, I hadn't brought a thick book with me to while away the time. However I didn't need it because within fifteen minutes of entering the embassy I was heading back to Green Park and the Victoria line to home. All I needed to do now was refresh my memory of Russell's songs before the rehearsals.

To rewind slightly I wasn't sure that I'd actually filled in my form correctly because having scoured my old passports I discovered I'd been there a couple of times with the Kinks and filled in those dates. It wasn't until I was walking up Piccadilly to the tube that the penny dropped and I remembered I'd actually been to Yamaha when I was working with Arbiter. Had I transgressed, was I going to fail the work permit test on a technicality? I pacified myself saying since I wasn't actually working when I was there for Arbiter I was safe. I'd last been in Tokyo in 2000 when I'd been demoing what I thought was one of my really good ideas: marching drums you could carry without keeling over from exhaustion. It's no secret around the world that marching drummers are 'bulked up' just so's they can carry the instruments without fainting. So I adapted Arbiter 'Flats' drums for these purposes and everybody loved them – especially the little girls in Japanese high schools to whom I went to show them. Before this they'd been staggering under the ridiculous weight of conventional marching quads and bass drums.

But I digress. On the following Monday (the 28th for you pedants, there's that seldom-used word again) I found my way up to town on the Piccadilly line with the 4 newly corrected letters giving me permission to pick up the passports. I experienced a slight frisson of concern when the security guy standing outside the main doorway asked me for ID. I had a moment of panic telling him I had none and my passport was inside the building hopefully with a newly applied work visa inside it. Resignedly he asked me for the receipt I'd been issued with for the passports. I retraced my steps from four-working-days before through the same x-ray machine as before as did my bag, wallet, and brand new, still largely unfathomed Blackberry given to me as an early birthday present by my lovely daughter. Immediately after this the same cheerful lady who'd shown me where to go before, produced the same photo of the doorway I had to go through just in case my memory had failed over the past few days. Seeing only two people in front of the tellers I happily picked up my ticket from the huge machine and looking at it more closely I thought my luck had run out – it was numbered 846 and all the numbers on the screen to be served were in the 100 series. I retraced my steps to the cheerful lady with the photograph who assured me there weren't 700 people in front of

me all hiding somewhere else. I'd be called very soon. And I was, before I had a chance to sit down my number was up and I was standing in front of 'Booth 1' and the girl I'd delivered my papers to before. She greeted me warmly and having been already recognised as having been there before by all the staff wondered just how many people were actually interested in looking to work in Japan. (With beer as we discovered, selling for at least 12 quid a bottle perhaps it wasn't such a good idea financially to live and work there!) The visa girl looked through the guys' letters of permission' and looked at me quizzically when she counted only four of them. I explained I didn't think I needed to give myself permission to pick up my own passport and she laughed Orientaly behind her hand. I handed over £100 for the visas stowed them safely in my bag and retraced my steps to green Park station. All we had to do now was routine the songs and take Virgin's big silver Airbus to Narita.

We all gathered at RGB's to accomplish the first of those tasks and man-hugged each other before first having a necessary cup of tea then getting down to the serious business of rehearsing. It all went well as we sifted through the songs and examined the arrangements to see whether anything needed improving. As it happens we didn't change anything on purpose but if we veered off slightly new boy Stewie stayed with us which was very reassuring. We'd done well over half the stuff before Steve rushed off to a gig with Robbie McIntosh and the rest of us relaxed with yet another cup of tea before calling it a day. I forgot to say that earlier, *comme d'habitude*, Denny had laid on some sandwiches which went down rather well. Steve and Stuart were staying with me so we arranged to travel together to final rehearsals the next day.

The next day we ploughed through the songs we hadn't played the day before then went through the whole lot again, timing them to ascertain whether we had enough. We were as ready as we were going to be. After we'd packed up, Denny provided us with the usual libations and we picked up various documents, worked out a schedule for getting to London airport and set off back to our respective families in Enfield, Bournemouth and Bristol. The day after next we would meet up at Heathrow.

Friday May 2nd was my actual birthday and the night before had been spent celebrating it in the bosom of my family at a gastro pub on Hertford Heath. I had always thought it belonged to Jamie Oliver's dad but was told by the knowledgeable driver who took us to the airport it wasn't true. Number One grand daughter had stayed with us the night before so packing was a complicated business. Everything I put in the case was eventually taken out and replaced with what Elesa wanted to put in Teddy bears, Iggle Piggles, hair curlers, duvets, nappies, that sort of thing so by the time I was ready to hastily zip up my pull-along because the people carrier was outside, I had no idea what was in it. I had to change notebooks to write the journal because I couldn't find the one I'd started in and assumed she'd decided I didn't need it and taken it out!

We were loaded into the people carrier chatted our way to Heathrow and in a very short time we were there. (The last part of that sentence is not normal certainly for the Friday of a Bank Holiday weekend!) we drove up our very own ramp into the Upper Class check in section where Ladies in red cheerfully greeted us and gently pushed us towards security. Here a very funny thing happened: the queue was about twenty people long but led directly into the sumptuous upper class lounge. We were told we could use the fast track which would save us time. We deliberated and eventually set off away from everyone else deep into the bowels of Heathrow whereupon we were able to pass through security after only a twenty-five minute wait! Were they trying to tell us something? Had we been having too much fun?

Much later we got back to the Virgin Clubhouse, guided Stewie in by mobile phone and began to celebrate my birthday – first with Mimosa then we went for the real thing. No not 'Coke', the sparkling liquid produced by squashing grapes near Rheims - Champagne. We were served several times by a very personable and obvious 'Scouser' who really thought she'd lost her accent because she'd lived in London for two years! Food was available although we didn't really go for it rightly suspecting that as soon as the plane lumbered into the air they'd be feeding us and plying us with even more alcohol. Happy Birthday to me!

Once on-board, (having turned *left* through the door), we stowed our hand baggage, were instructed how to operate our beds and all the other groovy things we had at our disposal and took off for Tokyo.

Russell and I were opposite one another in our pods but not close enough to hear one another properly so we had to sit on the footrest part of the other's bed to converse; simple and effective but not particularly elegant. Then we had serious decision to make about food – and with it being my biggest birthday so far - drink. The young lady looking after us told me she normally works in Upper Class on flights to America but had engineered this Japanese trip because she wanted to take her dad to Tokyo. He was a retired footballer who looked like Roy of The Rovers, had played for Southampton and had had a hip replacement. She must have told him who we were because as we stood up to leave the plane he came over to shake our hands. She brought the food: crab and Hamburger for me which I chose because I could. RGB's vegan meal was delivered to him I didn't see what it was but it was evidently delicious. Over cheese and biscuits (not suitable for vegans although the port supplied with them certainly was) you probably won't be surprised to hear we spoke of 'Life and the Universe' and might possibly have touched on the 'Old Days'. By now we were getting to grips with the entertainment system which may well be called Vera – Virgin Entertainment something, something for crossword addicts. I was tempted to watch "Despicable Me' because Elesa would like me to but instead decided to watch firstly 'American Hustle' then 'The Wolf of Wall Street' both of which get Five stars from me. The end of the Di Caprio film coincided with breakfast which was rather convenient. (There were great many other films to watch like '12 Years a Slave' and 'Dallas Buyers Club' but I thought I'd save them until the trip back to Heathrow.)

It was 11.10 gmt and we still had another couple of hours to go.

In the fullness of time (at 12.45 to be exact) we landed and after eventually passing through immigration were met by the promoter, Tetsuya and another guy to whom we were never introduced, but who drove the people carrier the 40 minutes or so to the Shinjuku Prince

Hotel. We were evidently early and couldn't all check-in so wandered off to people-watch and drink what turned out to be the best coffee we had in Tokyo. An hour or two later we took possession of our rooms and immediately failed to find all the heavily disguised places where we were to stow our gear. Japanese hotels are part of the minimalist movement and because they don't expect you to bring anything with you their mind-set seems to be they won't bother to provide anywhere to put it. In the event what appeared to be a piece of mahogany effect particle board fixed away from the wall had a slight gap behind it with a rail where you could hang your jacket. Otherwise there was space for a couple of t-shirts on each side of the bed and a soupcon more under the swivelling television.



(Arriving at the hotel - photo by Vinyl Japan)

Much more about the idiosyncrasies of Japanese television in the next thrilling episode.

And so to eat.

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