



(Banner by Sven Kramer)

What a diverse lot our readers are. We have more men than women (64% men). Most readers don't tell me anything about themselves but I know that we have readers from at least 15 countries. From those I have a good correspondence with, I know that they come from all walks of life. Recently, Russ met up with one of our readers who works, I guarantee, in a much grander place than the places where the rest of us spend our time! Russ met him at his place of work. Thanks to both for telling us about it...and in such an entertaining way...it is much appreciated!!
Sue

THIS MONTH

Russ: "The madness goes on - What else can you call waking up around 4am, then, turning on radio 4 and listening to The World Service , getting up ten or fifteen minutes later, then running for half an hour in twilight....arriving home, then making a cup of tea and going into the studio - Surely a Gentleman of my age should know what it's like to write a song and put it down in a studio....but that's how it is and how it's been for many years and it's probably just as strange to people that I wouldn't want it any other way - Madness or no Madness - mInd you, I never slept well when I was a kid....I used to play football for Kings Road School on Saturdays, so, I would go to bed the night before to get plenty of rest but I was always so excited and full of adrenalin that I stayed awake all night....Yeah, that is crazy, isn't it!!

Had an interesting day last week....Bob Henrit and I were invited to The House of Lords - I'd never been there before, so, I didn't really know what to expect....You might be wondering how we were invited, well, it happened in March, when we played The Stables, at Wavenden...in the audience that evening was a certain Gent named Nigel Jones...Lord Jones of Cheltenham, to give him his proper title - I spoke to him after the show that night and he invited both Bob and myself...it turns

out that Nigel has been a fan of ours since the sixties....Well, who would have believed it!! - Getting in to The Lords ain't easy going, there's plenty of security, it's a bit like getting through airport security....you know, after checking our names on a list, it's mobiles, belts and keys in to the tray which then goes in to the x ray machine....I think it wouldn't have been so easy had I been wearing my usual jeans and T shirt....this day I was wearing a tie....I was told I wouldn't get in without one, so, it had to be. Bob and I were met by Nigel...What a good Guy he is! - Tall, quiet-ish and down to earth...he could be a Harley Street Consultant, or, a Lawyer....Nigel said, "Would you like a tour" "Yes please", I said. Bob had met Nigel before so he'd had the Grand Tour....I thought it was amazing, every step - look up, sideways or down, everywhere History...."Red carpet....Lords" - Nigel smiled and we looked down....We turned a corner in to another corridor, "Green carpet, Commons"Oh yes, that's familiar to me....I happen to be a PMQ's Junkie, so I didn't feel such a stranger. Outside the Lords Chamber, above the doors, Nigel pointed to a painting...the familiar figure of Henry V111 and as I looked closer, the six paintings next to him were the Wives....Relationships are hard....one is difficult, but six!!! - Oh dear! I told Nigel that I met Seb Coe & Mike Parkinson years ago, at Tel's (Adam Faith's) house, then, low and behold Seb is in front of us...Nigel couldn't resist introducing us...Seb remembered the day and asked if I still saw Jackie - He said it's twenty three years ago, crazy! After the tour, we had lunch in the Restaurant....Nigel had invited Baroness Featherstone....What a great choice! - She, like Lord Jones, is relaxed and comfortable and is soon telling us stories of Everyday Parliamentary People....Oh, I think I'll stick to music...It's better than work....Nigel, if you happen to see this...Thanks so much, you're a great host and thank you for lunch....Next one's on me...at my Local Indian..."

[See attachments for photo of Russ and Lord Jones at The Stables. Photo by Gary Cadogan]

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

Russ: "Paradox, Humour and Change....They say these are the three laws of the Universe....'Paradox' being something that doesn't make sense but appears to be true....Yes, that certainly sums up my life....'Humour' - I suppose it's a saving Grace that we can laugh at everything and anything....and - 'Change' - I think it's the fact Spring is here, that made me think of 'Change' seeing the flowers, blossoms, Birds and Bees doing their thing...on the surface, it all looks much like last year and the others before....but all the cells in the leaves, flowers and Baby lambs have changed.....It never fails to amaze me."

"Anyway...back to The Studio...I've been very inspired this past year and I'm working on four songs at the moment - I hope I'll get them finished and mixed and on to CD before long....Thanks all....Have a great Spring....Peace and Love R."

FROM LORD JONES

Most of the time parliamentary duties are pretty tedious stuff. Fortunately to break the monotony you occasionally have a day which you

will remember for a long time. Shaking hands with Mr Gorbachev was one of those. Speaking in Arabic to Yasser Arafat was another. Visiting the remote island of St Helena ranks high on the list, as does meeting Mpule Kwelagobe, Miss Botswana 1999, who had just been crowned Miss Universe. Being shot at observing elections in The Gambia is best forgotten.

But meeting two of my boyhood heroes for lunch is right up there at the very top of the list. Ever since I heard the intro to *The First Time* back in the early 1960s, I knew I was listening to something special. Following the careers of Russ Ballard and Robert Henrit through the good times and the bad was fascinating, sometimes thought-provoking but always interesting. These two gave us rock and roll. They knew everyone in the industry - except Elvis who had left the building. As I met them at Peers' Entrance at the House of Lords I noticed Russ was wearing a tie. He wore a tie for me! More probably Bob (known in these parts as *The Brigadier*) told him they wouldn't let him in otherwise - not true as Brian May had turned up a couple of weeks earlier looking as, er, how can I put it, as distinguished as ever.

A short tour and then lunch in the Peers' Dining Room with Lynne Featherstone, who as a minister in the last government had piloted the Equal Marriage Bill/Act through the House of Commons. I had previously sent Bob a signed copy of her book *Equal Ever After*. He admits he has not yet read it (too much time spent practising stick-spinning I expect). But he says he will give it a brown paper cover and make a start, although he won't take it to church.

I was grilled over the EU Referendum. Stay in was my advice. Russ recalled gloomily that in the early days it took ages crossing international borders because the pantechicon containing all of their equipment had to be thoroughly searched by customs officials. I wonder what they made of Russell's holey guitar or Bob's gong.

"Why did you go into politics?" asked Russell. "Well," I replied, "I'm a rebel, and as you know, once a rebel, always a rebel, be a rebel till the

end." "I like it," smiled Russ. "We used to play it," added Bob helpfully, his mind going back into the mists of time.

We planned re-releasing *Bad Time* and renaming it *Good Time* - it wouldn't need many changes of words. I suggested a couple of song titles for Russ to work on - *How long has this been going on?* about the Panama papers and tax evasion, and *Morning, Noon and Night* as I have just been put on the High Speed Rail (HS2) Select Committee to hear 821 petitions from people who don't want it anywhere near them. This is likely to be very tedious for months and months and months (which could be another title for a song).

Inevitably Paddy Ashdown turned up. He had met Bob previously and told his children and grandchildren. He says his street cred shot up immediately. "A Roulette - you met a Roulette!" they gasped. "Yes," replied Paddy, "and he was a Kink too - but not at the same time."

The boys in the band left to wend their way back to their respective homes. Was it in a Tesla electric car? You will have to ask Russell.

YOUR QUESTIONS

I love the lyrics to 'God Gave Rock n Roll To You'. Did Kiss ask Russ's permission to change them?

Russ: *"Kiss changed the first and second verses, which made sense for the USA - I can't remember being asked, it seemed obvious to change the words for the film.*

I wrote the song while feeling particularly positive & I wanted to express that "If you're young you'll never be old, music can make your dreams unfold" - Turned out to be true."

The last live performance (and what a good one!) of God Gave Rock n Roll To You by Argent. The Waterside Theatre, Aylesbury, 2nd June 2013. I have a suspicion that many of our readers were at this gig...I am glad I was! This is an excellent video...thanks, Ian!

<https://youtu.be/PcYkQgv0vtE>

RECORDED BY OTHERS

As it is Eurovision month, here is a reminder of the UK entry in 2001. No Dream Impossible, performed by Lindsay Dracass and written by Russ and Chris Winter. Those of you who went to one of the gigs in the tour will have seen Chris Winter in Russ's band. He was the very talented, multi-instrumentalist over on the right of the stage.

<https://youtu.be/a34PmRiL-z4>

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