



(Banner by Sven Kramer)

Welcome to our new readers. Please feel free to be a part of this newsletter with your contributions. Thank you to everyone who has made a contribution this month, either directly or with ideas. We have a very exciting set list this month. Would anyone else like to send one in?

Russ has done a couple of interviews recently with more coming up so look out for those. He writes, below, about an interview in Camden. When he arrived at the studio he was spotted by a passing London cabbie, who happens to be a fan. See the photo in attachments. Is that cab driver a newsletter reader? Please let me know if it is you!

Have you got the new album? If not, you can find it on UMU Music. We have a couple of reviews below, which might help. If you do have it please send in your review of the whole thing or just your favourite track(s). Or just tell us what your favourite tracks are. We look forward to receiving them.

Sue

## THIS MONTH....

Russ: *"June was strange, weatherwise - It felt pretty cold, anyway, as I sit here, at the lap-top keyboard, the sun is shining brightly. While speaking to Bob Henrit a few weeks ago, he told me he'd received an invitation to Richard Desmond's book launch - I'd been invited too and as I'd already booked a car and a driver, I said I could pick him up on the way to Claridges, where the event was taking place....If some of you don't know the name, Richard Desmond is the owner of Express Newspapers which includes The Star and OK magazine....He was, until recently, the owner of Channel 5.*

*Going back to the 70's, Bob used to write drum reviews for 'International Musician', one of Richard's first publications. I met Richard sometimes with Bob...I do remember being at a 'Who' show in 1975 - [Sundown, Edmonton] -where we spoke a bit. Although Richard is one of the great businessmen, he's also a very good drummer and when you speak to him, you realize, he's crazy about drumming. About the time of Adam Faith's funeral, Roger Daltrey approached Richard and then myself, to be a part of a group to raise money for The Teenage Cancer Trust....Richard was in a good position to raise funds through his friendship with CEO's of the 'Movers and Shakers' of Industry.*

*To cut to the chase, eventually, we had permanent members...Greg Lake, Zoot Money, Simon Townshend and Steve Smith - We played together from 2005 to 2011 and along the way had many great guest artist with us...Robert Plant, Gary Brooker, Lulu, Elkie Brooks, Gary Moore and others.....Richard's book is a good read and quite inspiring, especially if you have dreams of becoming an entrepreneur. - The book launch was attended by many people who played a part in Richards career.....a good evening....and loads of champagne!*

*Another friend, David Courtney, phoned to say he'd met a friend of mine from years ago and maybe we could get together. When he told me it was Phil Wainman, my mind went back to the seventies, when his name was always in the music press, mainly as a producer of some great tracks, Sweet, Bay City Rollers and many others....Phil was also a mate of Bob H. so, we all got together at my local Italian restaurant - it's strange, when you get together after many years, it only takes minutes to be back where you were - I remember my Dad getting a little heated with me, when I was fifteen years old, I said, "I hate walking, I want to drive" - He said, "Don't wish your life away...While you're doing that, you're wishing mine away" - How true - He also said, "Life is short and sweet don't waste it" - Now he's been gone 37 years...How right he was.*

*I had an interview recently in Camden. It will be syndicated - The Presenter was Rob Jones and his questions were like nothing I've had before...."Who was the last person to phone you?" - "What is your Motto?" - Interesting stuff..*

*One of the questions was "What Makes You Scared?" - Which is a subject that is good for 'Thought For The Month' - FEAR and THE UNKNOWN!"*

## THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

Russ: *"As humans, we're very Fearful - It's been said that Fear is the opposite of Love and that Hate has its roots in Fear and that we fight and 'Strike Out', not when we hate but when we're fearful...I can see that.*

*I may have said this before, anyway, it's worth saying again...One of our big fears is the unknown....M.Scott Peck the author of 'The Road Less Travelled' - says in the book - We should - 'EMBRACE THE UNKNOWN' - That's where the growth is...He has a wonderful analogy, of a person walking on a path in a wood....Where everyone is walking, there is no growth, it's dead, however, if*

*we look to our right and left, there's growth everywhere...Ferns seven feet tall, Weeds, Bushes and thousands of insects and organisms....I thought about this after reading the book many years ago....What is Humanity's ultimate Fear? - Probably Death - So, if we, as Humans, are so afraid of the 'Unknown'...and the 'Unknown' is Growth...and if Death is the Ultimate Unknown....Could it be Death is the Ultimate Growth?"*

## IT'S GOOD TO BE HERE

Russ's new album is now available to download, in it's entirety, from UMU Music. Thanks to Irene and Joy for their reviews below.

Russ: *"It's been a buzz putting this album together - I felt probably more relaxed than making any other record...I couldn't wait to get in to the studio everyday" !!!!*

### THE REVIEWS

From Irene Enhardt

Following the Book Of Love

album (2006), like many I found myself wondering often in the past two years if and when Russ would be releasing a new solo album. BoL was a masterpiece and an album I'll never part with, but looking back in time it did take about 14 years before that baby was born. The album prior to BoL, also an excellent yet underrated album, was The Seer (1993). Some artists produce new albums every other year..and some obviously don't! So it was a long wait and when the news came out that "It's Good To Be Here" would be released I knew I wanted to have it.

Admitted, I am a rather old fashioned traditional kind of music adept. If there's an album what I love most is to have it in a "physical" way, as cd or vinyl. Something to hold in one's hand so it did require a bit of getting used to the fact that this album (in every sense "solo" if I can say that) would be released via UMU music on a strictly subscribe-to-download basis. It may have become the new way of the world, like it or not, to me mp3 isn't something you can touch with your hands.. Also I had a feeling that many of Russ' fans would have similar feelings, being of "that generation", so in a way it was something to overcome. Having said that, once all tracks have been downloaded I can safely say that though it's true that you can't touch an mp3, it is also true that mp3 can touch you. I have no regrets and for me it was worth the long wait.

"Kickin the Can" is a song to fall in love with immediately, as I did. Specially if you're as impressed with his Book of Love album as I was. It has a strong riff and beat and has both finesse in the use of guitars as it has an aggressive drive. Should make a great stage song too, one to stomp and clap too.

"My Awakening" and "Colliding" also immediately resonated strongly with me. Together with "Kickin the Can" and "Proud Man" they are my absolute faves. Some excellent guitar solo's in these tracks and a heavy beat that I Love!

"Time Machine" grows more on you each time you play it. Ever so slowly it has a mesmerising effect and the melody just sticks in the head and won't leave.

"Where were you" feels like a very unusual Ballard song. It has a very sad and bluesy feel, recorded in a rough and uncut, unpolished way (though I'm no expert!) with lyrics that can break a heart. As the song ends.. the only sound left is the lonely chord of a Hammond organ..

"First Man That Ever Danced", has a jubilant pop-rock feel. It's about being in life's treadmill ("..if I win the rat race I'd still be a rat..") but finding love makes you feel like the first man that ever danced. "Free" has a heavy beat that emphasises the message of being liberated, free, from whatever hold you find yourself in (work/career, a person, a relationship). Both tracks should also do well on stage.

If you've ever reflected about friendships, loves that were lost because of this thing called "pride"(ego), and find yourself down and lost then "Proud Man" is the song to play and feel the blues there. This song, for me, really stands out in its own way as it's the closest to Blues that Russ has ever put on record, as far as I know. I really would love to hear him do this more often in the future.

The acoustic re-make of the classic "Voices" is something you have to play loud and preferably with headphones on. It's almost a psychedelic experience!

So, what will be the next thing to look forward to and no doubt also worth the wait? Live shows! It's been too long!

From Angel Joy

This album from Russ Ballard does not disappoint. Maestro is back to what he does best.

"Russ Ballard's" tenth studio album, titled "It's Good to be Here" brings the Maestro back to what he does best, raw gritty Rock and roll with soaring melodies and a dash of ever present angst thrown in. This album represents a first on several fronts. First of all, the 2015 album is only available through UMU Music, and second, having been released in several stages during the first half of 2015 is available online only. This has caused some disappointment in a few hardcore CD and vinyl enthusiastic types. However, once listened too on the first go I am confident that the quality of music more than makes up for it. The opening song, "Voices" a purer remake of a 1984 classic hit for Russ creates a spacey ambience.

Each song has plenty of ace guitar work and driving Rock and Roll melodies and almost epic sounding choruses. It comes nine years after the initial release of his magnum opus "Book of Love" also re released for purchase at UMU in 2015 for those who missed its first release.

This body of work may take some getting used to, for some perhaps. The single "Time Machine" stands out as a masterpiece, and everyone will find their own songs that resonate with them. Strong vocals and melodies this album will surely satisfy a real music lover, especially a Russ Ballard fans! Highly recommend!"

### GRAHAM BONNET BAND

The Graham Bonnet Band has released a new two track EP, My Kingdom Come. The title track was written by Russ about 6 years ago.

You can hear My Kingdom Come and buy the EP here. <https://www.reverbnation.com/grahambonnetband> Also available on Amazon.

For a review of the EP: <https://roppongirocks.wordpress.com/2015/07/10/review-graham-bonnet-band-my-kingdom-come-ep/>

### BBC RADIO BERKSHIRE

At the end of June, Russ did an interview for The Phil Kennedy Show at BBC Radio Berkshire. There is no broadcast date as yet but here is a link to the show if you want to look out for it. Hopefully, in the next newsletter I will be able to give you a link for "listen again".

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p02vkc1j#auto>

Russ sent out an invitation through his Facebook page, to meet him at the gate of Radio Berkshire before the recording. Did you go? If so, please tell us about it.

### QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

This is a short video in which Russ answers a couple of questions from a Russian fan.

<https://youtu.be/GPJdgrzjGDU>

## YOUR QUESTIONS

I read in Bob Henrit's book about Russ' difficulties towards the end of his tenure with Argent (nervous breakdown). Is his song "Breakdown" ( from "Into The Fire") dealing directly with that particular time in his life?

Russ: *"With 'Breakdown', I was touching on that at the time - and also including a breakdown in relationship, that many people go through....At first I wasn't going to include that song, but the tempo was good and it had a good 'feel'.*

*As you mention Bob's book...I want to say, he was a rock through that period - You certainly get to know who your friends are at those times....It must have been hard for him sharing a room with me."*

<https://youtu.be/CEcV9dNwdSw>

## RECORDED BY OTHERS

You might have seen on Russ's Facebook page recently, The Pointer Sisters and their best known Russ track, Someday We'll Be Together. Here is another of Russ's songs performed by them...Come and Get Your Love.

<https://youtu.be/GfyucuJMvjw>

The Pointer Sisters are an American R&B girl group that achieved mainstream success during the 1970s and 80s. Come and Get Your Love is from their 1978 album, Energy.

This song was also recorded by Roger Daltrey.

## IDEAL SET LIST

From Ian Street

So here's my set list....it's an Argent set list so it's a bit different but still features Russ heavily ...

Argent set list for 2015 tour to celebrate the 40th Anniversary of the release of "Encore"

(Support to be provided by The John Verity band)

## Set 1

Intro to be played as band are backstage / walk on in darkness...

"voices" from 2001 a space odyssey soundtrack gradually building and then fading into a brief chorus of "voices" by Russ (recorded). Then finally builds to the crescendo sound from "In Deep" in between "Be glad" and "Christmas for the free".....

1/ Jim and Bob start off the small piece from "Pure Love" on "All Together Now" (the band used to start with this) leading to Rod's keyboards before Russ launches into.....

It's only money parts 1 and 2

2/ Sweet Mary

3/ Be Free

4/ Liar

5/ Rejoice

6/ Pleasure

7/ I don't believe in miracles

8/ Rod's solo (piano only) spot.....Medley of "home"/"baby don't you cry no more"/"time of the season "/with full band to join for "she's not there "  
"

Interval

Set 2

1/ Tragedy

\*2/ Jim's solo spot.....performing "Trapeze" as a tribute to the late John Grimaldi

3/ Bob's drum solo during "Thunder and Lightning"

4/ Keep on Rollin

5/ Russ acoustic guitar spot featuring Bob seated at front of stage on percussion ( and Jim too?) Medley...."Concrete and Clay"/"No more the fool"/"So you win again"/"I surrender"/and the full band join for "Since you been gone"

6/ Dance of Ages

\*7/ Hold your Head Up

8/ God gave rock and roll to you

(\* John Verity guesting on vocals/guitar)

Some rationale from an Argent fan.....

-it would be great to recreate the superb way the band used to enter the stage rather than just walk on. It used to feature "voices" from the 2001 A Space Odyssey soundtrack...then build from there...



- solo spots for all four band members to showcase their considerable individual (as well as collective) talents
- Rod and Russ to have opportunity to perform medleys of some of their favourite more popular compositions
- some old songs like "thunder and lightening" (listen to the studio version..great drumming from Robert so perfect for his solo), "tragedy" (long overdue), and "pleasure" will sound great
- "trapeze" gives Jim the chance to perform his brilliant contribution to "circus". Maybe the number could be reworked if felt appropriate.
- two sets with an interval to accommodate the new longer set (and the fact that the guys need a rest at their age!!!!)

## FROM YOU

Thanks to Yumi, in Japan, who has sent an article she has found from Melody Maker on 11th October 1980. It is a review of the Barnet Dogs album. See the attachment to read the article.

To unsubscribe from these email newsletters, please reply to this email and ask me to remove your name.



**RUSS BALLARD: "Barnet Dogs" (Epic EPC 83867).**

**T**HIS is the album I've been waiting for Russ Ballard to make. At long last the man has made an LP full of meaty rock 'n' roll and it's a helluva change from the melodic ballads of his previous releases.

"Barnet Dogs" is not only the name of the album — it's also the name of Ballard's new band. He's pulled in his old Argent mate Bob Henrit (drums), plus Dave Win-tour (bass) and Bill Roberts (guitar). Much of the album's strength comes from the tightness and quality of these guys, as well as Ballard's powerful compositions, his voice and guitar work.

Ballard went Stateside a few years after he left Argent and naturally he's picked up a few influences. One of the most obvious is the strutting guitar intro with solo voice and sudden punctuated drum attack — a trick the Cars used effectively on their debut album.

Ballard uses the same idea on "It's Too Late", "Beware" and,

to a certain extent, the album's first cut — "Rene Didn't Do It". A storming start to the set.

"Ain't No Turning Back" — a relentless rocker concerning a teasing woman — pushes the adrenalin further. The subject might be old hat but the song is delightful.

"Bad Boy" has a strange construction — white reggae verse

jumping to heavy metal chorus. It's an odd mixture but one of the album's tougher cuts. Ballard also uses an old trick from his Argent days — slow bottleneck down the fretboard. A straight lift from the instrumental section of "Hold Your Head Up" but nice to hear it again.

"Riding With The Angels" is a nice piece of driving rock.

Slightly familiar guitar riffs mix with some newer ones, vocal hooks abound and there's a frantic middle eight.

Could we have this one as the UK single please? And if you're about it Epic, get Ballard and the boys over here quick — I want to see how these Barnet Dogs bite live. — PAUL STRANGE

MM October 11, 1980