



(Christmas banner with thanks to Sven Kramer)

Once again I would like to welcome new readers. It is wonderful that new people keep finding us.

Many thanks to our contributors this month. It has been really good to have more letters in the last couple of months. Thanks to Sven Kramer who, even though he has a very busy life just now, has taken the time to make us a fabulous new Christmas poster.

Exciting news....a few days ago Russ met up with Brian May to talk about doing some work together at some point in the future. (See attachment for Brian's tweet announcing this). More news from Russ soon.

There are events coming up, of course. Plenty of tickets to buy...An Evening with.... followed by the tour. Tour dates were in last month's newsletter with all the links you need for buying tickets. Please let me know which gigs you are going to. It would be good to say hello.

I hope you have a wonderful Christmas and I am looking forward to hearing from as many of you as possible in the new year.

Sue

THIS MONTH....

Russ: "The past weeks I've been playing guitar...in fact, I've spent more hours playing guitar than I've done for many years. When I was fourteen to sixteen years old I would practise three hours a day then I turned professional and started to write songs, so I neglected the guitar a little. Also, I played piano more while writing...The only downer is, guitar players have to change strings and the more I play, the more regularly I have to change sets...and I play three guitars [Four including Bass]. There's nothing like music to lift the spirit and when there are shows on the horizon, it's even more of a buzz and an inspiration to play...and play!"

I'm conscious of 'An Evening With' that's coming up in January and I had to decide what songs I'll be performing. Also, keeping in mind I'm playing solo, so the songs will have to be adapted for more of an acoustic set....Mike Read will be chairing the show at The Leicester Square Theatre and he came over two weeks ago to discuss ideas....Peter Ross brought Mike over and, after spending a couple of hours in my studio, we drove in to Ware to have lunch, where we talked about everything from Jeremy Corbyn to West End Musicals and how music has changed in forty years...I was a panelist on Mike's BBC Music Quiz programme, Pop Quiz - that was 1978 - I thought then that Mike knew a lot about Pop Music and who sang, wrote and played on hits of the sixties and seventies... We will, I'm sure. have some fun and surprises on January 20th..."

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

Russ: *"I was watching a video where the presenter said; 'There's been a war somewhere in the world for the last 3,000 years....and here we are, Humans still killing each other - [Only with different weapons]."*

The interesting Hypothesis he offered was, perhaps there's no psychological evolution in time...He suggested that, although humans develop wonderful, positive things, as they do in science and Technology etc..they haven't evolved to find a way to live peacefully together....Maybe, psychologically, what man was 3,000 years ago, he still is, and that is what he will stay.....I guess we can change ourselves and be a 'Wave in the ocean' - I hope so."

Russ: *"I want to wish all my Newsletter Friends a Great Christmas and a Happy and Healthy New Year...Let's hope it's more peaceful!"*

AN EVENING WITH RUSS BALLARD

This is coming up very soon now...20th January 2016. A great deal of work has gone into this show and it looks like it will be a fun evening. Mike Read is hosting the chat. Christmas present idea??? You can buy tickets here <https://leicestersquaretheatre.ticketsolve.com/shows/873542737>

TRACKS OF MY YEARS

Russ will be on Ken Bruce's Tracks Of My Years during the week beginning 11th January 2016. For those of you not in the UK, Ken Bruce has a show on BBC Radio 2 on weekday mornings 9.30 - 12.00 GMT. Tracks Of My Years is usually on at about 11.45. Every day Ken plays two chosen tracks with an interview about the choices, and other things, between the two tracks. So, during the week, you will hear 10 of Russ's chosen songs. You can find Ken Bruce here <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006wr34> It is possible to download Tracks Of My Years to a phone or

tablet and the instructions can be found in that link. You need the BBC iPlayer Radio app in order to do that.

YOUR QUESTIONS

One thing I'd like to ask Russ. His full name is Russell Glyn Ballard. His dark hair and colourful complexion always make me think of places like Wales, his name has incredible links with Wales, Glyn being a Welsh form of Glenn and Ballard being a Welsh surname (It is said it hails from Welsh "ap-Allard", meaning "son of the fox"...); I'd like to ask him whether these connections with Wales are true and, specifically, whether his dad or granddad or whoever was a Welshman.

Russ: *"Very astute to see the Welsh connection. Glyn is Welsh...I think it came from my Mother's Brother, Terry - While in the army, he was stationed in Wales...met and married a Welsh girl called Esme. I remembered my Mother saying Terry suggested Russell and I assumed he or Esme suggested Glyn. I had no idea that Ballard is a Welsh name...maybe we do have ancestors there."*

LETTERS

From Gianmaria

Aye, I've already had the pleasure of writing to Russ some 5 years ago or so on his MySpace page, he quickly replied, I was really happy about that. I'd LOVE meeting him, I'm the typical 'hero-buster' when it's about music, I've had moments of sheer luck when I got to meet Stewart Copeland backstage in Rome (I won't tell you now how I managed to get in there, too long...), or Gerry Beckley and Dewey Bunnell of America at the back exit of an auditorium still in Rome (that night I had planned it oh so well, wasn't sheer luck), I've had the luxury of entertaining myself with the mighty Chris Squire (bless him) and that incredible gentleman that goes under the name of Rick Wakeman, just outside a tennis court (where? In Rome, obviously! :-p), I've spoken quite a lot to Steve Hackett, Tony Levin, Gary Brooker, Carl Palmer, when I met them after their gigs in a local club that used to be very fashionable until about 5 years ago.

I was so lucky.

Yet I never met Russ. Being an Italian (with Scottish ancestry) and living in Italy made it hard for me to get to Russ, hope he'll come over one day.

I've read many things about him and his adventurous life, especially the things he wrote himself on his website, and after reading that I felt proud of loving him as a person. Let alone the fact I actually set my foot into music also thanks to his writing: I'm talking about the early '80s, I was mad about Phil Collins, I bumped into "I Know There's Something Going On"... as well as I was mad about America and I bumped into "You Can Do Magic" and "Jody", and then the "Your Move" album... I was 10, I was already fit for music, everything was magic to me back then, and Russ made it that magic. I didn't even have much time to wonder who this Russ Ballard bloke was, because one year later he topped the charts over here with "Voices", he came to the Festivalbar in Verona (my dad's hometown...), now Russ had a voice and a face too... since then, I never stopped my long journey into his musical world, the Internet made it even simpler than ever, I suppose now I know almost about anything he's done...

My 'madness' brought me to collect pics from Waltham Cross, I wanted to explore the places where Russ had grown up, and when I'll have another chance to come to England, I'll do it on my own feet, so Hertfordshire please welcome me soon...

I already know he's a massive Spurs fan, he told me 5 years ago. ;-)

Thank you, Sue. :-*

Gianmaria

From Ian

I wanted to share with you something. You know that the Frida album has been re-released as a box set? Well it just arrived and I am lucky to have one of a limited edition of 2000 (personally signed by her too).

I have pictured it for you. It has a heavyweight vinyl 7 inch version of IKTSGO with it...fantastic.

But it gets better. I was reading the brochure enclosed and she talks about Phil and how she got the inspiration to record it. Anyway, I have sent you a photograph of it but she says -

"When I put Russ Ballard's song in the CD player, there it was! The song I had longed for."

"It captured me totally and made the journey so much easier after that"

"In hindsight, the only thing I regret is that I did not turn to Russ to have him write some more material for me!"

Wow....I have goosebumps!

Ian

The photos are in attachments. Sadly, this special box set sold out immediately and the only ones available are resales. The CD/DVD is available by itself. http://www.amazon.co.uk/Somethings-Going-Frida/dp/B015NOMN3E/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1448195016&sr=8-1&keywords=frida+something%27s+going+on+box+set

RECORDED BY OTHERS

In Ian's letter, he writes about the re-release of Frida's album. So here we have the other half of the ABBA female team....Agnetha Faltskog recorded Russ's Can't Shake Loose, which was one of the singles (in North america) from her first post-ABBA solo album, Wrap Your Arms Around Me, in 1983. .It reached #29 in the Billboard Hot 100 chart and #23 in the RPM Top 50 singles chart in Canada.

<https://youtu.be/m8WSL3L-5dY>

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Dr. Brian May @DrBrianMay · 5h

A day of exploration with [@kerryjaneellis1](#) and ace rock songwriter Russ Ballard. We have plans ! Bri



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When Mia and Görel approached me to suggest a box release of Something's Going On, I thought – Why? But the more we talked about it and the more I thought about it and played the CD for the first time in years, I finally gave in thinking – Why Not!

33 years ago, 1982, my life had changed radically. Benny and I had divorced. I had moved out of our beautiful house in Lidingö and moved into an apartment in Stockholm. On my own and not sure where life would take me now, I let Phil Collin's album "Face Value" comfort me, especially the song "In The Air Tonight". I loved everything about it and when my promotor Thomas Johansson suggested to me that I record a solo album I said yes on one condition, that Phil would produce it.

So very nervously I embarked on a new journey. Overwhelmed by the amount of songs being sent to us when the news of my and Phil's collaboration came out, totally confused to which songs would fit me as a solo singer, having for 10 years only recorded songs written and produced by Benny and Björn, it was pure joy and a great relief to put Russ Ballard's IKTSO into the CD player. There it was! The song I had longed for. It captured me totally and made the journey so much easier after that.

In hindsight, the only thing I regret is that I did not turn to Russ to have him write some more material for me!

To all my loyal and wonderful fans, a humble and heartfelt Thank You.

To Phil, Daryl, Mo, Peter, Phenix Horns, thank you for giving me the joy of singing with such brilliant musicians.

To Hugh and Paris for getting us onto the right tracks.

To all songwriters of this album, a respectful thank you.

To Yves Poyet for capturing my 1980s looks.

To Görel, Mia and Thomas for friendship and patience with the old Lady :-)

And to everybody else involved in the completion of this box, Thank You!

Love You All

