



(Banner by Sven Kramer)

A big welcome to our new readers.

After I posted the video of Russ guesting with Rainbow on my FB profile, a conversation about Russ's work just happened between our reader, Dave Williams, who has amazing knowledge about the work and times of Russ and Argent, and Scott Winter, son of Russ's friend, sometime song writing partner and band member, Chris Winter. I found the conversation very interesting so I asked them if I could use it in the newsletter and they both agreed. See it below. More good things followed from this and Dave will be writing some interesting articles for us over the coming months.

Last month, I included a large photo but several emails bounced back to me saying that the email was too big for the recipients mailbox or that the recipients mailbox was full. I took the photo out and sent them again without it. Only one, with message that the mailbox was full came back again. No large photo this time in the hope that everyone will receive this the first time. If ever you haven't received the newsletter by the end of the month, please contact me. If you received June's newsletter without the 'PHOTO OF THE MONTH', you had a mailbox problem. This sometimes happens with work related email addresses.
Sue

NEWS

On Thursday 10th August, Russ will be playing with the Trevor Horn Band at The Cropredy Festival 2017, Cropredy nr Banbury, Oxfordshire. He will be doing two of his own songs, backed by Trevor Horn's band.

<http://www.fairportconvention.com/>

THIS MONTH

Russ: *"As some of you know, I recently guested with Ritchie Blackmore's Rainbow at the 02. Ritchie mailed and invited me on stage for 'Since You Been Gone'. He said they played the song in 'F' and it changed key for the final chorus to 'G'. When I met the guys at the sound check, Ritchie said, "We start the song in the middle, then, after the lyric 'I'm here whenever you want', the song finishes there. I said, "How about the guitar solo?" - Ritchie growled, "Oh, I don't play a solo in that song" - "So, I'll be on the stage for one third of a song?" I said - "Yeah" said Ritchie.*

Anyway, it was fun, the guys in Rainbow were amiable and the crowd were very warm

Another old friend of mine came to see me, his name is Alan Wicket [Sticky] - Sticky came to the U.S. to tour with me in 1976, when I parted from Argent. He also played on the demo of a song I wrote called, "So You Win Again". It was recorded a few months later by Hot Chocolate and made it to number one in the charts in the U.K. Sticky was also with Steve Marriott's group 'Packet of Three' in the eighties....He's now with an American blues singer called Beki Brindle. They both arrived at my house a couple of weeks ago and played me some songs they're thinking of recording for an album. They asked for my honest opinion and I gave it...."Very good" I said....Beki's not just a 'Blueser' - She's a little Jazzy at times which gives her a different flavour. They asked if I had a song they could record and I believe I do and I intend to send it to them."

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

Russ: *"CHANGE' - has to happen....Sad when things are going great....But wouldn't it be boring if things just stayed the same...*

If you're off on your hols....I hope all is good. Be safe, be happy and I wish you well."

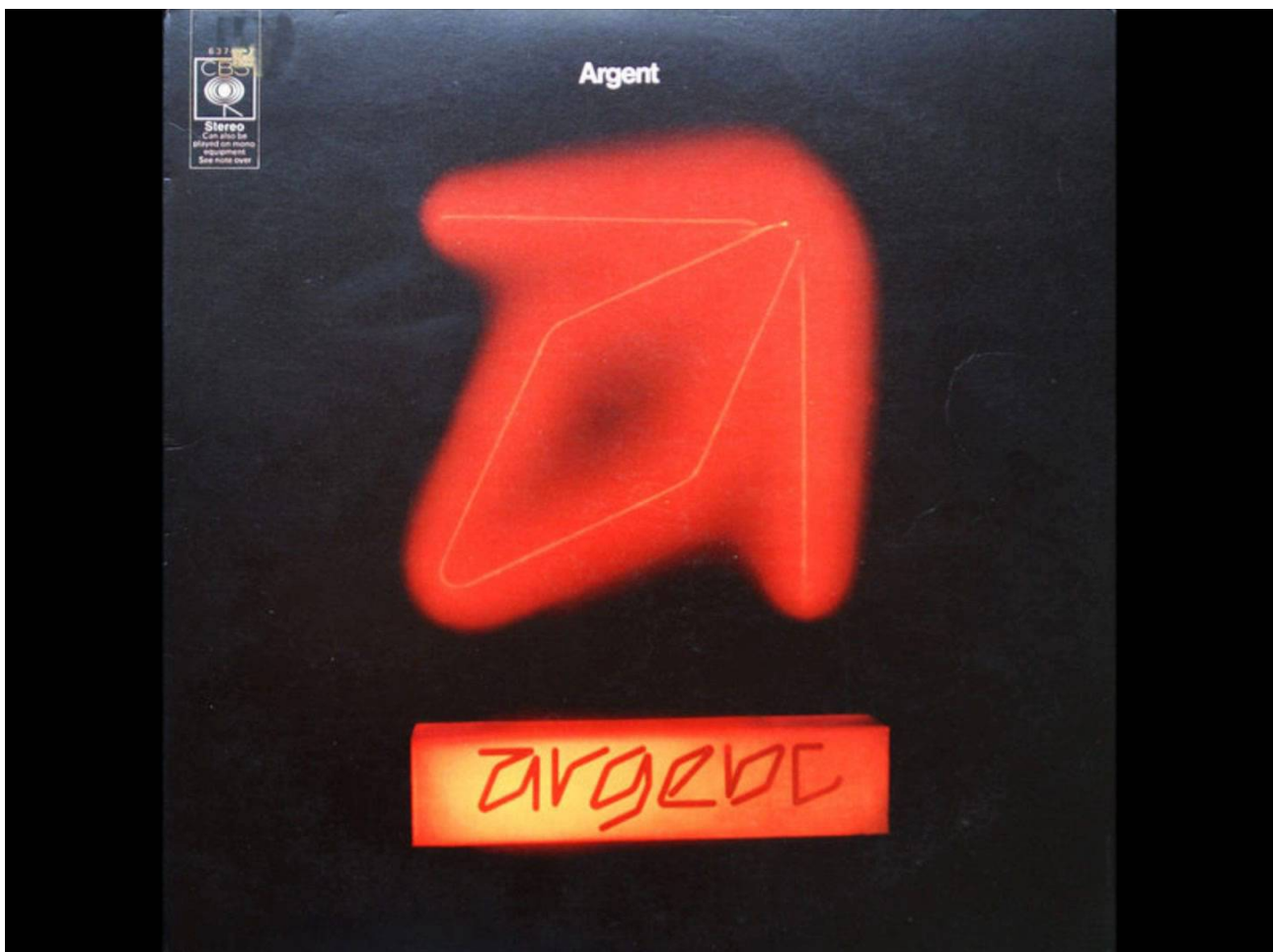
QUESTION

"Bring you joy" - what feelings to this song do you have? You aren't the composer of it, as I know. But when I listening to this song I couldn't understand about what things tell the words. It's really beautiful but either it's noble, or ironic in own nobility!

Russ: " 'Bring You Joy' - Rod Argent wrote this and played the piano. The song was pitched too high for me, I struggled through it anyway. I think it was a kind of Blues, Gospel idea....that's how I heard it. Really a deep love song, with a feeling of needing to give, not so much needing for oneself."

I listened to Bring You Joy on YouTube recently but it doesn't seem to be available as a stand alone track just at the moment, so here is a double helping of Argent. Bring You Joy starts at around 4:40. Well done with that last note, Russ!!

https://youtu.be/_Nd1qrdhKJo



Stepping Stone Bring You Joy - ARGENT

youtu.be

Artist: ARGENT Album: ARGENT Label: EPIC Year: 1969 Format: VINYL 33 rpm
Country: U.K. SIDE A 1. Like Honey Lead Vocals – Rod Argent Written-By – C. White, R...

FB CONVERSATION

Dave: I've stuck all my Russ CDs on a memory stick so I can play them in my car. The Rainbow gig has prompted me to play some RB songs. I just decided to listen to them all, first to last. That's 120 songs and I think I am at song 74 at the moment. The one surprise was that Book of Love created a much bigger impression on me this time around. There's a lot of power in that album that I hadn't previously picked up on. I'm also looking forward to The Seer because that stood out last time. It just goes to show....the later material stands up extremely well against the older material.

Scott: Nice to hear you mention the Seer Dave! That's obviously the album that I was so close to with my dad working closely with Russ on that album. I love so many songs on that album especially 'The Healer' and 'These are the times'.

Dave: Hi Scott. I listened to it today and it stands up well against the rest of his catalogue. An abundance of catchy songs. Not just the two you mentioned but also Stay With Me Tonight, Barenaked, Blue for You, King for a Day and the oddly titled Let's Vibrate. All great songs.

Scott: But for me that album was being made in the early days of them having formed a working relationship. I remember my dad coming home and playing me sections on the piano of various songs as they were being worked on. Yeah, I like Vibrate as well! And 'Stay with me tonight'. (Both total Russ).

Dave: And of course they also wrote the Eurovision song No Dream Impossible for Lindsay. I was so proud watching television when the song was voted to represent the UK.

Scott: Yeah me too, I was lucky enough to be there with them for the 'Song for Europe' show when it was picked by the public. Did you ever hear 'My Boy' that they wrote and released for GMTV's tot idol? Quite a cute pop song. And 'Hope' for the South African World Cup. But I still really love 'I don't believe in Miracles' which my dad used to play to me on piano (as an example of a song he really loved) before he ever met Russ.

Dave: Wasn't aware of My Boy. I must look that up. I enjoyed Hope but I know there was some sadness when the guy who was due to sing it at the 2010 World Cup died from Meningitis. Very sad. I was listening to Miracles yesterday and thinking how much I now prefer RB's version to Colin Blunstone's hit version that preceded it. Whilst you can't fault Colin's voice, you can feel the sentiment in the lyrics a lot more when Russ sings it. It's well documented that Russ was rather down at the time he wrote that song so I suppose that's why there's more expression. Equally, when he emerged from this period with songs like God GRnRTY and Winning, they sound so uplifting.

Scott: Did you ever hear the album Russ wrote and produced for Robert Hart (The album was also called 'Robert Hart'), That's where the connection with my dad first started as Robert introduced them. A favourite of mine was 'I don't want to be here when you're gone'. Another song I love of Russ's is 'Treat her right'.

Dave: Yes I have the singles Robert Hart released. One of them was called Running Man, I believe. Treat Her Right...great song. I think it was another Record of the week that sadly didn't get anywhere. I have a theory why this kept happening. I think the radio listeners had cloth ears and kept thinking it was Russ Conway 😊;)

Scott: Yeah he is a good front man and good rock vocalist. Yeah, that album started them working together.

Dave: Two Silhouettes, Scott.... remember that one? I used to have radio alarm clock that woke me up to Terry Wogan. One morning the radio came on and a song was playing. I thought Hang on, I know that voice. It sounds like Russ Ballard. And of course it turned out that it was. I hadn't been aware of the new single being released. Those good old days when, unless you bought Sounds, Melody Maker, NME or Record Mirror you often didn't know what singles or

albums were about to arrive in the shop. Anyone remember when they used to have that review of new singles on Friday night on radio One? I think Russ sat on the panel once. Forgotten what it was called but definitely not Jukebox Jury ;)))

Scott: For me, as a lover of rock music, where he's really special is blending commercial (catchy or anthemic) songs with rock, both of which are probably just natural to him. Where as so many people focus on riffing in a rock style and piecing a song over it, which rarely produces such classic songs or hits.

Dave: He has a knack of using hooks. I noticed this yesterday on The Fire Still Burns. He has little things going on in the background that stick in your head. Sometimes its a vocal pattern, sometimes instrumental. Your Time is Going to Come being an example.

Scott: You're right actually, so many times a writer can think a song is already catchy/hooky. Russ always tests out whether you can go further. This is something his son Christian has naturally adopted too, and it's a work ethic thing I guess, you start wit the talent, the inspiration etc. Then really put in the time and effort and keep experimenting. Russ can take a chorus that to my mind already sounded great, then add a counter melody, then a catchy guitar riff, then might say 'actually that might not be the chorus, it could be the bridge if we write an even better chorus after it!'. Sometimes I've known him get up the next morning and we can't quite remember what we had the day before. Russ will say 'It probably means it wasn't good enough.... let's start again '. I know I've learnt so much over the years, and part of the reason for sharing this with you guys is that I do want him to know how grateful I am.

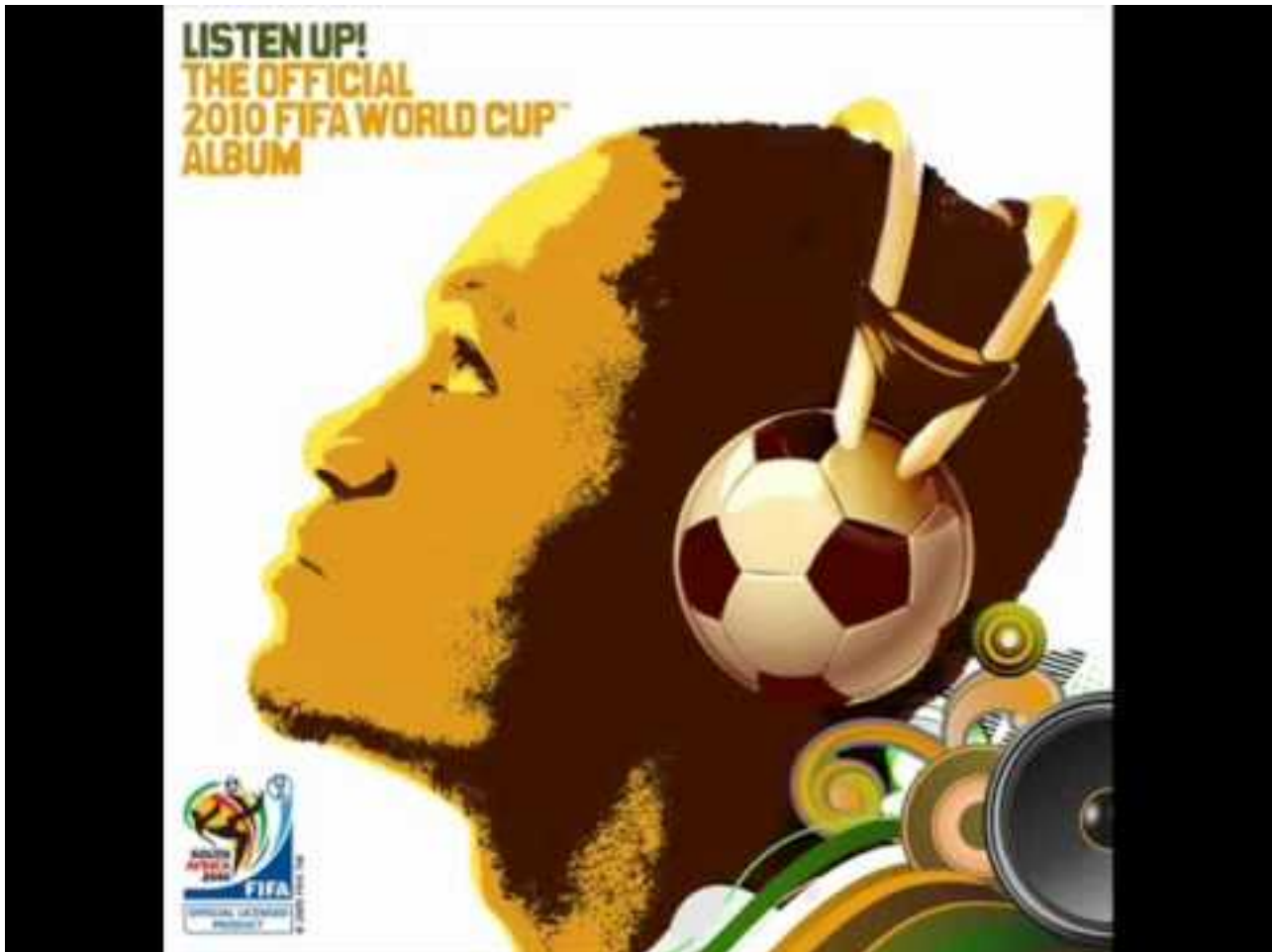
Dave: I can well imagine Russ getting up next morning and saying "it probably means it's not good enough. Let's start again". Always looking for perfection. I know he used to say he'd write and record around 20 songs then pick the best 12 for his albums (exact figures are there or thereabout). I bet the rejected songs are way better than some of the offerings that other artists put into the record shops! The Waitrose of songwriters 😊;)

RECORDED BY OTHERS

This is the song mentioned by Scott and Dave above, written by Russ and Chris Winter for the opening ceremony of the World Cup in South Africa

in 2010. It was recorded by 35 year old Siphiwo Ntshebe, who was chosen by Nelson Mandela to sing it at the opening ceremony but he, sadly, died of meningitis two weeks before the event. The song includes speaking vocals by Nelson Mandela.

<https://youtu.be/XU1uhmHY-IU>



Siphiwo Feat. Message of Hope from Nelson Mandela
-- Hope

[youtu.be](https://youtu.be/XU1uhmHY-IU)

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