



(Banner by Sven Kramer)

We have another busy newsletter this month. Settle down with a coffee and enjoy a good read.

Dave's article this month is about the covers that came out of the album, *Winning*. So much from one album! Our reader's profile is Greg Zimmermann. Another interesting read. Several readers have said they will write their profile for us but not actually sent it to me. I hope to get some more in the next month. Just follow the questions Dave and Greg have answered in theirs. We are waiting to hear from you.

Do you need a Christmas present?.....for yourself? Have a look at Tom's mugs. I have some; every fan should have one. At least one!

Great news about Russ's new website. It should be live on the day this newsletter goes out so you will be the first to see it. Please let us know what you think...you can send your observations and comments to this email address and I will send them on to Sven.

We have a surprise coming up!!! Look out for an extra email from us....coming soon. The subject line could be 'Invitation'.

Sue

THIS MONTH

Russ: *"Oh well, another Halloween bites the dust...a little poignant for me because, as it's my birthday, I'm a year older - but I keep telling everyone 'It's only a number'. I want to thank everybody who sent birthday wishes, it's always gives me a comfort feeling.*

I received a question from Priscilla....she asks what legacy do I believe Tom Petty leaves...

(**QUESTION:** Unfortunately, legendary american musician Tom Petty passed away this month, in October. This fact hurt me so much...my question - what do you think about his creation and about him as a composer, performer? And what does Tom's Petty music mean for the rock'n'roll industry today and for you? In your opinion.)

I think Tom Petty had that simple RnR heart, almost a throw back to the original Rock and Roll especially Buddy Holly....just like B.H. Toms music is simple, country/folk rock.... I don't know anyone out there who will replace him. - [Just a side note on T.P.- I remember, not so long ago, when Tom told a story about the time Roy Orbison died....He said George Harrison phoned and said, "Ain't you glad it's not you?" - Oh dear, now they've all gone.]

Tom Mcnamee is a news letter reader who puts album covers on coffee mugsso, if anyone is interested in a beautiful mug with the 'It's Good To Be Here' picture, Tom's your man, I believe he's also has a 'Winning' mug, with my mug on it.

Also, my dear friend Sven Kramer has produced a website for me. You would have seen Sven's photos on these newsletters, he is brilliant, and it's going 'Live' as I write....I believe....."

WEBSITE

From Sven Kramer

It must have been around April this year, where I thought about a website for Russ and his music. Actually, all I had was just an idea for a website-logo and nothing else. The intention of creating a website around the logo came during the process of creating it.

So I started a little playing around with the first drafts and tried to decide, which categories a website like this should include. A hard task, as the very first idea was making this a fan project. Some days later I teamed up with dear friends to discuss my idea as I needed some help of both. You all know them very well: Sue and Irene. Both were a massive help with great input and ideas and so it's about time to shout out a big thank you for your help and support. It's good to have friends helping you with decisions and being very critical in terms of design and content.

One night, as I was working on some bits of the page I made the decision to let this be an official project/page instead of „just“ a fan project, so I dropped Russ a message and rose the curtain for him. Let's say the answer was something like „It's good to be back in www“.

Unfortunately everything took longer than expected but... better late than never. Discover the new russballardmusic.com website and let us know what you think - we all are curious to hear your thoughts. Are there any mistakes in it? Have we missed a solo concert date? Of course we also love to hear things like „Whoopee, great, beautiful, marvellous“, haha.

The page will grow over the next couple of months and all input is highly appreciated and I personally would love to see you share the page or give it a link on your page.

There is a saying „Do what you love to do and what makes you happy“ and this is what I did with the website. It was/is great fun to me so I would love to stop this tiny little story with my favourite quote.... everything exists in limited quantity - especially happiness!

Cheers,
Sven“

MUGS

Here is the link for the Russ mugs made by Tom Mcnamee...

https://www.facebook.com/pg/Collectable-mugs-175125019239579/photos/?tab=album&album_id=1533332133418854

This takes you to his FB page where there are details for ordering. Tom ships worldwide. If you are outside the UK, email Tom and he will give you a postage quote. Tom's email... tmcn146@aol.co.uk



LETTERS

Love, love, LOVE the review of "Winning". In my mind, there is absolutely NOTHING wrong with this album. Every riff, every note, every lyric, every nuance...perfect. I play it whenever I'm down and always hear something new and fresh!

"Winning" is Russ B. at his best!

I'm playing the first self titled CD in my MINI right now. "Loose Women" always brings a smile and makes me drive a bit faster than I should!

Love Russ then, now and always!

Signed,

Marsie the FanGirl in Kentucky, USA

READERS LIVES

Greg Zimmermann

A bit about yourself: Mum and dad were both living and working in London. When dad, a Swiss, proposed to mum, there was also the question of where to have a home in the future. It was decided to move to Zurich, so that's where I was born and still live. I'm married to a lovely woman, and I have a lovely daughter.

I studied economics, which I never finished. Instead, I took a job in a bank, dealing with mortgages and loans. It's what I still do.

I used to play in bands in school and continued to do so in later years. I was the singer, more often than not the only guitarist, and I also provided the band with songs I'd written. I would have loved my band, The Austin Fire Ants, to achieve world-wide fame, but it was not to be. I put it down to too little talent and too little single-mindedness. There were gigs every once in a while, but it was never enough to be educational.

What are your earliest memories of music? Music was always there. Dad had acquired many singles and LPs in London, as well as a turntable. I have memories of me as a five year old boy, lying on the floor in front of the turntable and listening to whatever I could get my hands on - which was, among others, Elvis Presley, Louis Armstrong, Glenn Miller, Fats Domino, Frogman Henry, Mr. Acker Bilk. I soaked it all up. At that young age, I loved every kind of music.

As I got a little older, groups like The Beatles, Sweet, T. Rex and Slade started creeping in. I still thought that "Hound Dog" was absolutely perfect, but I did move away from the

likes of Armstrong and Miller. Music was just a wonderful thing, and I enjoyed it with dad in the early days - until puberty kicked in...

What type of music appealed to you in your formative years? I abandoned jazz and schmaltz and completely went for rock'n'roll. Glam rock was a big thing for me, but I also enjoyed groups like Smokie.

When I was ten years old, one particular memory stands out. It was the schoolyard, and a boy who was a year or two older than me put a cassette player on the ground. He winked at me and said "Now listen to this". What came on was "Roll Over Lay Down" by Status Quo at full volume, and I loved it immediately. It was so exciting! The supervisor didn't think so and made us stop the racket.

From Quo I went on to KISS and Deep Purple and Led Zeppelin, and then followed punk. Punk was fun for a short while, but it lost its appeal very quickly.

What was the first record you ever bought? My aunt took me to Woolworths of all places and let me choose a record for Christmas 1975. It happened to be "Trouble" by Sailor, their debut record. I thought the blokes who made up the group were wonderful characters, had a great image and very catchy songs.

Later on, nearly all of my pocket money was spent on records by Smokie, Bay City Rollers, Slade and Suzi Quatro.

When did you first become aware of Russ Ballard's music? It was in late 1978.

From a young age, I always liked to read the credits on the record sleeves, and that's how I came across the name "Russ Ballard". It was on Ace Frehley's first solo album, while he was still in KISS, and the song of course was "New York Groove". At that point I had no idea who this Russ Ballard was.

And then, in 1980, I went to a local record shop and checked out the new arrivals. There was a record entitled Barnet Dogs by Russ. I remembered the name, I liked the cover, I liked the photo on the back, so I took the record to the counter and asked the bloke to play it. I went to one of the turntables, put on the headphones and waited. "René Didn't Do It" blasted at full volume, and I nearly cried with joy. It was perfect, it was exactly what I was looking for in music. I bought the record on the spot and have remained a fan ever since.

<https://youtu.be/BsUesuBl6cQ>

[Rene didn't Do It -](https://youtu.be/BsUesuBl6cQ)

[Russ Ballard](https://youtu.be/BsUesuBl6cQ)

[youtu.be](https://youtu.be/BsUesuBl6cQ)

From the Barnet Dogs album

Your best Russ Ballard moment? Easy: Meeting Russ Ballard in person! I totally agree with Dave: Russ is a true gentleman and a wonderful human being.

There were also two gigs I was fortunate enough to have attended: They were both in Germany, in 2007 and in 2010. The first was in a small club, the second was part of a festival. The fact that Russ opened his set with “René Didn’t Do It” knocked me out.

Favourite Russ album? That would have to be Barnet Dogs, with Book Of Love a close second. Barnet Dogs rocks from start to finish, it’s infectious high energy rock’n’roll and quite simply the type of music I’ve always enjoyed the most. Book Of Love seems very much thought out, with special attention given to the lyrics. A very personal and touching record that I love dearly.

Recent experiences: See Your Best Russ Ballard moment!

For the future: More music and gigs (and hopefully meetings!) with Russ Ballard! As It’s Good To Be Here proves, he still has a lot to offer.

RUSS'S MUSIC HISTORY

By Dave Williams

Cover Stories – Part One

Last month we featured a review of “Winning”, the 1976 LP release that spawned so many cover versions, the biggest of which was Rainbow’s version of Since You Been Gone. Russ was getting plenty of airplay on the radio as a solo artist, but chart success continued to elude him. Much was happening on the songwriting side though. Besides Ritchie Blackmore, plenty of other artists were dipping into the Russ Ballard lucky bag in the hope of providing their own careers with a leg up. As a sequel to last month’s review we thought it might be interesting to pick out some of those covers. There are lots that we know of, and quite possibly several more that we don’t yet know of.

First off is the title track itself, **Winning**. Nona Hendryx was no stranger to fame, having achieved chart success as a member of the all-girl trio LaBelle. By 1976 the girls were struggling to maintain their earlier success which included the single Lady Marmalade and the LP Nightbirds. All three had different ideas on musical direction and things came to a head at a show in Baltimore on December 3rd, Nona wandering off the stage and locking herself in the dressing room. After 14 years together, Patti LaBelle took the decision to disband the group rather than put their longstanding friendship at risk. All three went on to record solo, Nona being the most experimental, tackling several different genres. Her eponymous debut album was released in 1977 on Epic records and the first single chosen for release was Russ Ballard’s Winning.



left to right: Winning by Nona Hendryx; Winning by Santana; Born on Halloween by Suzanne.

Sadly, the song failed to chart, but interestingly it was picked up by Santana with a UK music paper journalist stating in his review that the song that had been “a flop for the writer in 1976 is now shaping up to be an American monster and maybe even a UK hit”. It went on to reach No17 in the US Billboard chart where it spent a healthy 11 weeks. For the UK, it was third time unlucky.

As the Beatles’ Apple label began to wind down in 1974, George Harrison set up his own label Dark Horse and Ringo Starr decided to do likewise. Following a suggestion from John Lennon, he christened the label Ring O’Records. Starr never recorded for the label himself, and had little or no involvement in the venture which ran from 1975 to 1978. Very little evidence of its existence remains but one of its early releases was another cover from the **Winning** album. **Born on Halloween** was the debut release from a 23-year-old New Zealander called Suzanne. From the age of 13 she had experienced chart success in her native country in partnership with her sister. The duo even scored a No1 hit with a cover of Russ Ballard’s **Can’t Let You Go**, better known in the UK as a hit for Barry Ryan. Moving to London in 1972, Suzanne soon established herself as one of Britain’s most in-demand back-up vocalists. Her debut solo release in the UK was produced by Russ himself but chart success didn’t happen and despite a follow up cover single penned by Smokey Robinson, a proposed album was apparently shelved. Ring O’ Records quietly disappeared, probably not helped by the later release of a novelty version of Ging Gang Goolie by Dirk and Stig a.k.a. The Rutles. Suzanne went on to work with several well-known names including Cat Stevens.

Of course, Rainbow weren’t the only artist to record and release **Since You Been Gone**. The same song saw chart action a year prior to Rainbow’s release when Illinois based rockers Head East reached No.46 with a version heavily based on Russ Ballard’s original. Simultaneously the South African all-girl group Clout

featured the song as an album track. This is the same Clout that had a No.2 UK hit with a song called Substitute that same year. Another version that tickled the lower reaches of the Top 100 across the water was Cherie and Marie Currie's version. Cherie had found fame as a member of The Runaways and after leaving, joined up with her sister releasing two singles this being one of them. It peaked at No.96, which surprised me because I'd been under the impression it had gone much higher. Others include the Brian May Band, and how ironic that the late great Cozy Powell is featured grinning on the sleeve, given that he was in Rainbow when they released their hit version and was quoted as being opposed to Blackmore recording it. Graham Bonnet was the lead vocalist with Rainbow at that time, and he went on to record the song in two subsequent bands, Alkatrazz and Impellitteri. Crossing into other genres, star of stage and screen Michael Ball recorded the song as did the London Symphony Orchestra for their classic rock collection album. Company of Snakes featuring former members of Whitesnake and Finnish singer Pentti Hietanen also produced worthy covers. However, the strangest version I've heard so far is by a Japanese band called Hi Standard. It's best described as a punk rock version. Speeding along at 90mph rather than 45rpm, it most likely picked up a ticket as it passed under the radar.

Not only has the record been recorded and released by other pro artists, but many very respectable versions can be found on You Tube by cover bands and entrants on talent shows. For an excellent cover version seek out the Dutch band System Pilot. It is modelled on Rainbow's version.



left to right: Sleeve designs for Since You Been Gone by Crash Kelly (album), Rainbow, Clout, Cherie and Marie Currie and The Brian May Band.

Other notables include Roger Daltrey's **Just a Dream Away** on his McVicar soundtrack album. Russ made changes to some of the lyrics to fit in with the script. Because of this, it's a pleasantly watered-down version in a country style compared to the original by Russ himself, and is in sharp contrast to the anger filled single **Free Me**, also written by Russ, that became a UK Top 40 hit.

It's amazing what can turn up during research. I was aware that Bay City Rollers featured a cover of **Are You Cuckoo?** on their three-track maxi-single You Made

Me Believe in Magic. I was somewhat surprised to turn up another version however by Ian Mitchell + Rollers. The album on which it features is described as unofficial and judging by the slightly offensive name of the record company that doesn't surprise me one bit. Ian Mitchell was born in Northern Ireland and joined the Bay City Rollers in 1976 at the tender age of 17 years old as replacement bassist for Alan Longmuir, who'd presumably outgrown his tartan trousers. The only Roller born outside of Edinburgh, his stay turned out to be brief, lasting just 7 months and presumably his recording of Are You Cuckoo? formed part of his next project.



To conclude, there's one more single worth highlighting from this period. This is from Russ himself. In between the release of the *Winning* and *At the Third Stroke* albums, Russ released the single **Some Kinda Hurricane**. It wasn't featured on either album and was produced by Phil Wainman, who was responsible for The Sweet's catalogue of smash hits. One reviewer described the release as "nearly the record of the week", which was probably a fair assessment. Unashamedly commercial with a trademark killer chorus, it did not have quite the same longevity of *Since You Been Gone*. Nevertheless, I really liked the song, and had it been released a little earlier, might have given Russ the break he was hoping for. However, by this time music was going through a period of change and punk rock was about to arrive on our doorstep, sweeping away a lot of what had gone before it. *Some Kinda Hurricane* was apparently the forerunner of a planned tour by his new band. Sadly, it didn't chart and family commitments resulted in the tour being delayed...but only by 40 years! Not that it wasn't worth the wait of course. True to form, *Some Kinda Hurricane*, was picked up and recorded by another artist, Peter Criss from Kiss, a band who've covered enough Russ Ballard songs to create an article of its own. In subsequent years Russ would go on to receive more songwriting credits for work recorded by others. We will cover more of these songs in future instalments of Cover Stories.

The information contained within these articles is not necessarily the opinions of the newsletter administrator or Russ Ballard himself. Any statements are made in good faith and checked for accuracy as much as possible. However, mistakes can happen and it is not the writer's intention to offend or mislead anyone. Please feel free to raise any issues with the editor and if a correction or apology is necessary or appropriate this will gladly be offered. Similarly, if you would like to comment on, or offer additional information to these articles please feel free to do so. Your contributions are always welcome.

RECORDED BY OTHERS

As mentioned by Dave....Roger Daltrey - Free Me

<https://youtu.be/wgllL0ih6wY>

[Free Me! ~Roger
Daltrey from McVicar
\[HQ\]
youtu.be](#)

Free me! Cant you hear that's
what I say! Free me! Anyhow or
anyway! I hear a voice Call in
the night, Push on the brain,
Fades with the light, And I've
seen...