



(Banner by Sven Kramer)

First, an apology... Dave's articles are very well received with plenty of feedback saying how much they are enjoyed. He has carefully produced the reviews in chronological order, linking one to the the next. I am very sorry that I messed this up! In January I included **Into The Fire** when it should have been **Barnet Dogs**. I am putting it down to post-Christmas brain fog! Many apologies to Dave, Russ and anyone else who noticed (and some did). We have his review of Barnet Dogs this month.

Arrangements for The RB Experience on 7th April are just about finalised. This will be an evening full of music and a lot of fun. We have readers coming from far and wide with quite a number flying in from far flung places. If you would like to come but have not yet accepted the invitation, it is not too late. Email me at this address and I will send you details and add you to the guest list. Please note, though, you can't just turn up on the night; you will need to be on the guest list to get in. Hopefully, some who are there will write a little about their 'experience' for the coming newsletters. I am really looking forward to meeting you all...some I know already but some are, at the moment, just names and I am looking forward to putting faces to them. This is all getting exciting!!!

Sue

A note from Dave... "A big shout out to Sue, without whom this newsletter wouldn't exist, so I'm sure you'll agree that the little mix up caused by jumping "Into the Fire" slightly earlier than planned is hardly a crime requiring our forgiveness. You can read the missing review this month, and if chronology is of particular importance, after you've read through it you can always revisit the January newsletter and read the ITF review all over again. Hey, if only someone would build a time machine! It's encouraging to hear that subscribers not only read my reviews but, apparently sometimes enjoy them. Surprising really, because even I think they go on a bit. I have said to Sue that I'm wary of taking up too much space, or being accused of hijacking the newsletter. That's never been my intention and I would be delighted if some of the subscribers contributed some articles of their own. I really enjoyed the contributions to Readers' Lives, where each month a reader posted a little bit about themselves and how they discovered Russ and his music. Unfortunately the submissions dried up, so it hasn't featured recently, which is a shame. Everybody has a story to tell, even if its only short, so get writing. Maybe you have questions to put forward? That would be great for starting discussions and a useful method of creating interaction between readers. In the meantime, I've still got five albums to write about, interspersed with some discussions of Russ's work on other projects, so that should carry things through until the dark nights return, or the lighter nights depending on where you live on our planet. That's what's great about the newsletter. It has the potential to bring together Russ Ballard fans from all over the globe. Talking of which, I look forward to the little shindig in Hertfordshire next month where no doubt I'll get to say Hi to many of you. Be gentle, I'm quite shy!! It should be a fabulous evening and I'm sure it will pass by in a flash. Let's have a great time!"

THIS MONTH

Russ: "I love the English Spring, to see buds form on the trees and the Snowdrops and Daffodils poke their heads above the soil is magical. It seems that this year it's appeared and just as quickly it turns to winter or Autumn again....this afternoon was beautiful, now the forecast for the weekend is bitterly cold and snow.....Oh help!

I sometimes write with my son, Christian....We spend an hour or so, coming up with a tune and lyrics, then I'll do a vocal and then we just put the tunes away and never bother to listen again. However, Christian came

in to my studio a few weeks ago and said "I've just listened to a song we wrote a few years ago, and it's amazing". I walked over to his studio and listened to it and I was knocked out when I heard it...."When did we write that?", I said...."2011", he replied. It's mad...I've been back and reviewed some others and I realise it's easy to overlook good songs.

I look forward to seeing you readers who will be travelling to Ware in April. We'll have some fun.....This is not something I've done very often - [arranging parties]. As it's also The Roulettes anniversary, I've been in touch with some friends who played a big part in our careers and they're coming, it'll be fun...

If you're travelling to Ware, I hope you have a good journey....For everyone be Happy and Peaceful..."

*Lots of Love,
Russ x*

QUESTION

After leaving Adam Faith and having worked independently as the Roulettes, why did they go back to being a backing group for Richard Anthony?

Russ: "When we left Adam Faith we did lots of one night stands, however, on occasions we were offered session work...The Unit Four (Concrete and Clay) was one, although that was before we left Adam. We were asked to do a couple of weeks as backing singers for a TV series called, 'Tale of Two Rivers'. The filming took place by the rivers Seine and the Thames. It was very light entertainment ...English artists...Marianne Faithful, Mark Winter and LuLu sang songs about London. One of the French singers was Richard Anthony and he chose to sing 'Concrete and Clay' - not knowing that Bob and I had played drums and guitar on the record, he complimented us on a faithful rendition. When we said we we'd

played on the original, he asked if we would like to back him on a tour of France, with occasional shows in Italy, Spain, Corsica and Sardinia...and, "Oh by the way", he said, "it will be between May and September and we will be based in St. Tropez". Also we will fly to the gigs in Richard's plane, a Piper Aztec...I wasn't too thrilled with songs that Richard was recording but the thought of being in the sun for four months sounded alright to me and, as it turned out, the other Roulettes felt the same...It was a great time, four unattached young guys jet setting around the Med. playing music, yes, "We'll have some of that". I look back on that summer with great fondness. Although I've been back to St. Trop. almost every year since, I never met Richard again..."

RUSS'S MUSIC HISTORY

By Dave Williams

Who let the dogs out?

Russ Ballard's solo recording career is quite widely documented and has been covered chronologically over recent newsletters. The appropriately named third LP, **At the Third Stroke**, was recorded in America using the very best session musicians from the west coast. The resulting album was a polished masterpiece, which despite further increasing his profile and following, failed to provide any chart action. No doubt this presented the artist with a dilemma. Should he concentrate on trying to crack the US market? Certainly, Russ enjoyed the experience of recording in America and planned to do so again for his next release.



Russ Ballard – Barnet Dogs (1980) Epic Records S EPC 83867

As stated above, Russ's recording career is quite widely reported, but whilst I've followed his career closely from day one, there have been two record releases that caught me by surprise. Out of the blue I happened to discover **The Seer** CD whilst on a visit to the Netherlands. There had been a long gap between this and the previous release **The Fire Still Burns**, and I was amazed to discover **The Seer** whilst routinely checking the Russ Ballard section. The other LP that caught me by surprise however was the 1980 release of **Barnet Dogs**. I came across it when

I was looking through those record shop adverts towards the back pages of the music papers. It was listed as an American import and, as was the way in pre-internet days, I duly sent off my postal order and waited patiently for the record to cross the Atlantic. I stand to be corrected, but I believe this long player was never released in the UK, and I think the same applies to Colin Blunstone's **Late Nights in Soho** album, which appeared around the same time, both artists of course being signed to Epic Records.

The **Barnet Dogs** album arrived within a few days and I was immediately drawn to the front cover. A futuristic drawing of a pack of menacing dogs similar in concept to the sleeve design for Nazareth's **Hair of the Dog** album. My first thought was that if the music matched the quality of the **Nazareth** release I'd be more than pleased. The sleeve notes made interesting reading. For whatever reason, Russ's plans to record in the States appeared to have been reversed. The album was recorded instead at Livingston Studio in Barnet, UK. Presumably the location prompted the album title, but I've never managed to establish much about the background to this recording. Russ was now working with John Stanley Media Management. The musicians used were familiar though. Guitarist Bill Roberts had featured in Russ's 1976 solo band, whilst bassist Dave Wintour had worked with Russ on Roger Daltrey recordings. Long term partner in crime Bob Henrit played drums on all but one track, appearing courtesy of Trident Management and Chrysalis Records to whom he was contracted as a member of the band **Phoenix**. Les Morgan played drums on the other track **She Said Yeah**. Richard Blanchard, also responsible for the inner sleeve design, added some backing vocals. With this much smaller working unit of musicians the expectation was that the music would have more of a live band feel, and possibly more guitar and rock oriented material. And so it proved to be.

Side One kicks off with **Rene Didn't Do It** and I had to restrain myself from cranking the volume up to a spinal tap setting of 11. This first track was exactly what I'd been waiting to hear from Russ. In your face power chords, screaming lead guitar, pulsating bass guitar with the tone turned up to give a twangy sound rather than a ground shaking low and super tight timing courtesy of Mr Henrit. It was obvious that this would sound great on the road and this proved to be the case when it was used as the concert opener on the 2016 live dates. At just short of three minutes, there was no time to catch a breath as the band launched straight into more of the same with **Ain't No Turning Back**. Another rocker heavily reliant on guitar with just a slight sprinkling of clavinet and some light

background harmony vocals on the chorus and bridge. Ten out of ten so far. A quiet one to follow maybe? The lyrics printed on the sleeve suggest the possibility; *“My reputation follows me everywhere I go, I’m a fool don’t you think that I know. Oh baby you know I’ve changed my ways, gone are my hell raising days”*. Not so however, as the chorus explodes with the people’s verdict; *“(he’s a) bad boy, a bad boy, don’t want that bad boy round here”*. Already it’s clear that this album is a change of direction from the previous three. Maybe they put something in the drinking water in Barnet?

Track four will by now be familiar to many. **On the Rebound** was released by Russ as a single in America and it reached No58 in the Billboard Top 100. Chart action at last. In fact the album itself crept into the Top 200 Billboard album chart peaking at No 187. **On the Rebound** was also released in the UK too, failing to chart but it was later covered by English rock band **Uriah Heep** on their **Abominog** album, being chosen for release as a single.

The closing song on side one represents a bit of a departure for the artist. For the first time as a solo artist Russ chose to feature a cover song. **She Said Yeah** was recorded by American artist **Larry Williams** in 1959. Larry is probably better known for his hit **Bony Maronie**, but over the years **She Said Yeah** has been covered by many of the greats including the **Rolling Stones**, **Paul McCartney** and **The Animals**. An inspired choice to close the first side, maintaining the style and energy of the preceding tracks.



L-R; *On the Rebound* – Uriah Heep single, Russ's version plus it's b side *Riding with the Angels*, and Samson's cover version on RCA.

Being a vinyl release, to hear side two it was necessary to “flip” the disc over. Rather like the old days when we had to walk over to the television to switch channels or adjust the volume...or worse still to bang the top of the set, in order to stop the picture rolling. What were those knobs called? Oh yes, horizontal and

vertical hold. The two knobs were inconveniently placed out of reach on the back of the TV so you had to stretch your neck to see the effect your knob twiddling was having on the screen picture. Something to bear in mind when we tell the younger generation that “those were the days”!

So, onto side two. Just four tracks here, the first of which is called **It's Too Late**. A tale about a repentant love cheat and the victim offering no forgiveness; “*Let the one who cheats be the one who pays, It's too late*”. How many of us have been there, either at one end or the other, and who was it that said it's better to have loved than never to have loved at all? Regardless, this is another prime rocker with lots of anger in the lyrics accompanied by aggressive power chords and a great two note guitar solo fading the song out. Next up my personal favourite **Feels Like the Real Thing**. When I first heard this song, I was already on a high having heard the previous tracks, but hearing this song had me reaching for my air guitar, well actually in my case it was air drum sticks, but I'm not sure they exist! Whilst I love the melodic slowies such as **I Don't Believe in Miracles**, **Treat Her Right** and **Venus Shine Your Light**, I just happen to enjoy a bit of rock music and this album was providing it by the bucketful. I always suspected that Russ had this in his locker, the heavier sound that is, not the bucket! More so the next song. Seriously, what can be said about **Riding with the Angels**? It sounds like someone took a sledgehammer to the Shangri-La's Leader of the Pack. No surprise when this song was picked up for release by heavyweight (literally) British rockers **Samson**. Their cover release made the UK charts reaching No 54 in 1981, and I believe I'm right in saying that future Iron Maiden frontman, and fully qualified Boeing 747 pilot, **Bruce Dickinson** was their lead vocalist at that time. I say I think I'm right, but Samson featured no less than 31 musicians over the period 1976 to 2002, after which they disbanded following the death of guitarist Paul Samson through illness.

Barnet Dogs concludes with the song **Beware**. A cautionary song about the dangers of becoming romantically linked to the stunning model who steals attention as she enters the room. Not a situation I'm ever likely to lose any sleep over, and in my case **I Don't Believe in Miracles** might be more appropriate. As far as the song is concerned, it's another great rocker to close the album.

Barnet Dogs is a very lean recording in a production sense, very rock oriented with a live feel. No surprise then that so many fans cite it as their favourite Russ Ballard album.

YOUR STORIES

From Gail Harvey

Here is my Russ story. Almost sounds like the song LOL. I was working at a Ramada cocktailing and the Bar band took a break. I think I was all of 19 at the time. This was just a couple miles outside of Woodstock New York. Well all of a sudden a band started to play and my back was turned to the stage. It was Hold Your Head Up and I wheeled around! There stood Russ and the rest of the fellas he was touring with! I think I might have gone into shock! I pushed a little cocktail waitress out of my way and walked over to the far back of the bar so that I could wait on them LOL. Well they were there a night or two, not playing ever again, getting ready to embark on their first American tour of the Eastern United States. Russ's solo without Argent. Lovely fellows all. I quite fancied a particular band member and the feeling was Mutual. His name shall go unnamed. He invited me to the lake place in Woodstock where they were going to play first. Then it was off to New York City to play the bottom line and My Father's Place on Long Island. The unnamed individual invited me to go so off I went! Had an absolute ball, I remember one time riding down the elevator of the Mayflower Hotel stark naked, not just me, everyone except for Russ, he was staying at another hotel. It was an absolute blast and I thoroughly enjoyed my time with them. I believe Sticky Wicket was playing drums at the time and Dave. I admire Russ for everything that he has done throughout the years and so many folks are not even aware of it, at least not here in the states. A fun time was had by all I must say. Thank you for letting me share, Gail 

RECORDED BY OTHERS

Uriah Heep is an English rock band formed in 1969 and was one of the top heavy metal bands of the early 1970s. Twelve of their 25 studio albums made to UK Album charts. Their Album, Abominog was released in March 1982 and reached #56 in the US charts. They are still touring today.

<https://youtu.be/Cc8UJS3GMoY>

[Uriah Heep - On The Rebound \(from Abominog\)](#)

[youtu.be](#)

BUY THIS ALBUM TODAY!!

From Uriah Heep's comeback album, Abominog, this is, "On The Rebound," featuring Mick Box on guitar, Peter Goalby on vocals, Lee Kerl...

