



(Banner by Sven Kramer)

A big welcome to our new readers. Please contribute in any way you would like (as long as it is Russ related).

Nobody will have noticed as we haven't had any new readers since this was done (we have since I wrote that) but to comply with GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation - in EU law) Sven has added a couple of opt-ins to the newsletter sign up on the website. These, basically say we will store your email address. We do anyway, of course, but it now has to be spelled out. I can absolutely assure you that your email address will be used to send you the newsletter and to contact you if necessary but it will NOT be used for any other purpose or passed on to anybody else without your permission. I am the only one with access to the email addresses.

This month, Dave reviews Russ's second self-titled album and we have a 'Readers' Lives' from Markus in Germany.

Sue

## THIS MONTH

Russ: *"I love this time of year, mainly for the long, light days. I happen to like the hot, sunny days too, although, I've noticed some people complaining about the heat....not me - we don't get many long, hot spells, do we? It seems when we look back, summer school holidays were usually hot and sunny, I wonder why? - because I'm pretty sure they were mainly cloudy and six weeks off school seemed*

*to last six months - my mum would say 'Time can't hurry, time can't stay, twenty four hours in a day'. She was great, my Mum...if I had stomach ache, she'd say 'Spring of the leaf' - if I sneezed in the summer...'Plum Season' she'd utter. 'The Old Wives Tale' was coined for my Mum - She'd have been burned at the stake five hundred years ago, she was a bit of a Witch, but a lovely one.*

*Three weeks ago, the President and vice President of BMG Music, visited me here....they're my publisher and wanted to hear the songs I've written and recorded this past year. They really like them and are working with me, helping to plan the next three years, musically. Watch this space!!*

*What else has been going on? - Alex Hepburn's single is being released this month. Christian, Alex and I wrote it...I think it's a great recording. Alex is appearing at the BST Festival in the next week, or so, she's been rehearsing like crazy the past two weeks and I think she'll blow them away there in Hyde Park... Bruno Mars is headlining.*

*Beki Brindle's album is ready, I wrote and produced the title song 'Blue For You'. She's a great artist with an amazing feel, particularly for the blues - a great guitar player too.*

*I wish you a great month - Enjoy the weather....if you're going away.....relax and - as the song says - "DON'T WORRY, BE HAPPY" xxx"*

## **BEKI BRINDLE-SCALA - BLUE FOR YOU**

Russ has mentioned working with Beki on this track several times in previous newsletters. You probably know Russ's version of Blue For You...it is on The Seer. Beki's version is awesome! The album will be out soon with pre-sales coming up. Here are the credits:

### **Blue For You (c) Russell Ballard**

#### **Credits:**

Vocals & Guitars: Beki Brindle-Scala

Bass: Russ Ballard

Keys: Russ Ballard

Drums: Sticky Wicket

Backing Vocals: Jo Griggs, Russ Ballard and Beki Brindle-Scala

Produced / Engineered by Russ Ballard

Mastered by Christian Ballard

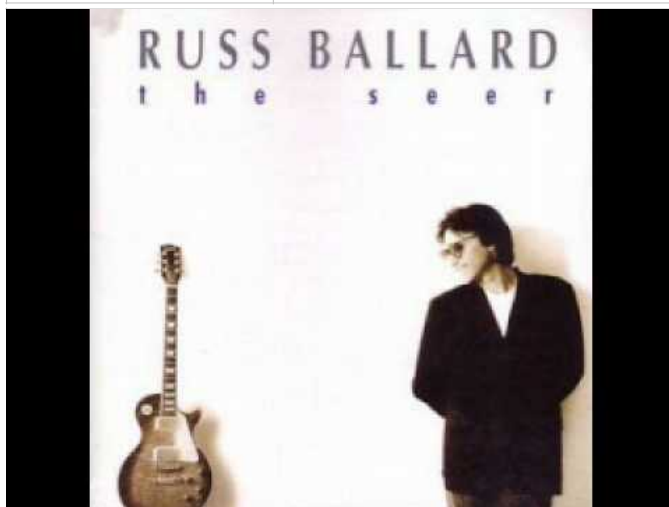
Recorded in Ware, Hertfordshire, UK

**From Beki:** "Russ is such an awesome person, besides being so talented and accomplished. Just a really funny, smart, personable and caring person! Great to hang out with!!!! Also, Russ is an amazing person to work with. So easy .. I loved working with him .. everything just fell together so naturally .. we had some great laughs as well! He's funny when we take breaks. He does surprising things such as playing piano and singing old standards!! He's just great.. besides all of his other talents, he could be "the piano player" in the nice restaurant! LOL (We would all want to eat there nightly!) Yeah, super down to earth and supportive .. great time and hope to work with him again in the near future!"

Russ's own version...look out for Beki's....it is different!

<https://youtu.be/GyiVpR77rqA>

	<a href="#">Russ Ballard - Blue For You</a> <a href="#">youtu.be</a> From the Seer album
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## QUESTION

Has Russ any plans to write his autobiography – I'm sure it would be a fascinating read.

*Russ: "I have been working on my autobiography for a while now and I am about two thirds through it. I am hoping it will be finished before too long."*

## LETTERS

From Irene Enghardt

For Gordon Dickson this may perhaps be a little interesting. In the last newsletter he mentions “a strange one”, the unauthorised dvd (cd) “Inside Argent”. I have that one and actually have another dvd called Total Rock Review which is pretty much the very same in terms of content.

The funny thing is that Total Rock Review dvd is said to last 79 minutes, which would be 6 minutes longer than Inside Argent. However.. Inside Argent has “Lothlorien” included as track, and that one is not included on the credits of “Total Rock Review” dvd.

At the moment I can't play both dvd's to double check everything, but I remember I was surprised when I bought them that I found out they were actually similar and identical in content with the exception of that one track. Here's photos I took of both dvd's.



# ARGENT

## TOTAL ROCK REVIEW

"With Argent, we went on a year or 18 months longer than it should have. We should have broken up when Russ Ballard left."

### ROD ARGENT

This is the long awaited critical review of the classic line up of Argent in concert, on record and on film.

Drawing on rare television footage of the classic line up of Rod Argent, Russ Ballard, Bob Henrit and Jim Rodford performing live this is the definitive retrospective assessment of the career one of the most dearly loved bands of the progressive era.

This independent film features a team of leading critics and musicologists in a penetrating journey into the heart of Argent's music. Every album from *Argent* to *Encore* is reviewed and assessed. Hard hitting and forthright the critics pull no punches when it comes to discussing what worked in the music and also probes the reasons why sometimes it didn't. Maybe this was why the band never made it to the very top flight of the rock world.

Features classic performance footage and bonus material by the original line up including *Hold Your Head Up*, *God Gave Rock 'n' Roll To You*, *Liar*, *Rejoice* and more.

### BONUS FEATURES

1. Stepping Stone
2. Liar
3. Rejoice
4. Hold Your Head Up
5. Sweet Mary



Rod Argent on keyboards



Russ Ballard was the writing talent behind the band



Bob Henrit: legendary drummer



Bass player Jim Rodford is now in the Kinks

**EDITORIAL CONTROL:** This film is totally unauthorized and has not been approved by Argent, nor has it been authorized or approved by their past or present management.

**NB:** This DVD may highlight the limitations of the original film recording or the source material.

© Music Reviews Ltd 2005. Approx running time 73 mins. **WARNING!** For private domestic use only. Any unauthorised copying, hiring, lending or public performance of this DVD is illegal. **25880 02182 4**

## ARGENT

### THE DEFINITIVE CRITICAL REVIEW

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Features classic performance footage and bonus material by the original line up including *Hold Your Head Up*, *God Gave Rock 'n' Roll To You*, *Liar*, *Rejoice* and more.

### Bonus features

- Music case studies
1. Liar
  2. Rejoice
  3. Hold Your Head Up



Rod Argent on keyboards

Russ Ballard was the writing talent behind the band



Bass player Jim Rodford is now in the Kinks



Bob Henrit: legendary drummer



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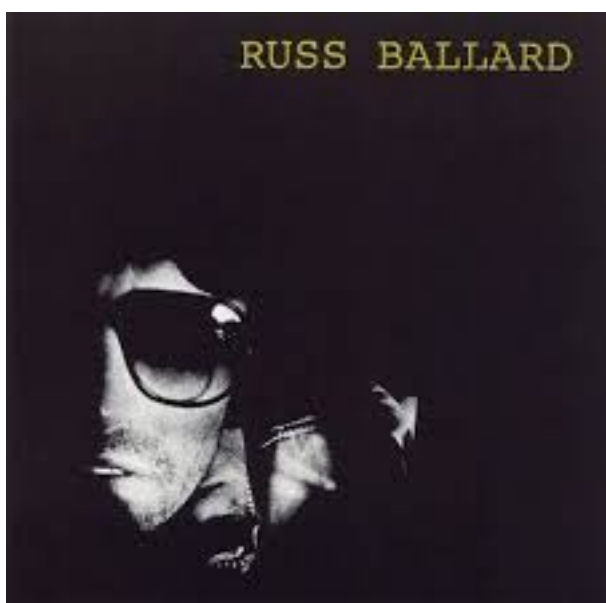
## RUSS'S MUSIC HISTORY

By Dave Williams

### **New management, new label and new music - Russ rings the changes!**

With the **Barnet Dogs** apparently confined to the history books, very little appeared to be happening from 1981 with regards to **Russ Ballard** the recording artist. Even diehard fans must have been wondering whether he'd called time on his recording career to concentrate on writing and production. Undoubtedly there was a lot of activity away from the public eye as this was the period when he wrote songs for the better-looking half of **Abba** as well as new songs for **Rainbow** and **Hot Chocolate** to follow their earlier successes. There was also talk of Russ joining John Verity and Bob Henrit in their post Argent band **Phoenix**,

which might have happened had their third album had not been shelved. Russ, Bob and John did work in the studio together, the latter having set up his own recording studio and beginning to make his mark as an engineer and producer. In fact, JV played on some of the demo versions of songs written by **Russ** that went on to become hits. But three years after his previous release, **Russ** re-emerged once again as a recording artist with a new record, new management and a new label.



### **Russ Ballard (1984) EMI America EJ 2401331**

Awoken early one morning by my clock radio, a song was playing on BBC Radio 2 and it caught my attention. Two silhouettes standing by the window. Hmm, that singer sounds like Russ I thought to myself. Another verse further down the line and I sat up in bed. No, that seriously does sound like Russ. As the song faded out the legendary Irish presenter Terry Wogan confirmed that this was indeed a new single by **Russ Ballard**. I was excited hearing he'd returned to recording, and also guessing that this would also mean a new album could soon follow. Over the coming days I managed to get hold of a copy of the single, and on the back of the sleeve were those magic words "from the EMI America LP RUSS BALLARD". A new label too. I remember thinking that a move to EMI America might be a positive one despite Epic having always given Russ plenty of press coverage. Sometimes it's good to make a fresh start.

The cover design is minimal yet effective. The musicians are limited to four; Simon Phillips on drums, Mo Foster on bass, Greg Sanders on keyboards and Russ on vocals and guitars. Interestingly, Mo's first ever hiring as a session player was the recording of Russ's **Can't Let You Go** by **Barry Ryan** in 1971. He claims he was so naive he turned up at the studio with sandwiches and a flask. Simon Phillips's career is well documented, having toured with bands such as Toto and The Who filling the shoes of two drumming legends, Keith Moon and Jeff Porcaro, both sadly no longer with us.

Four songs feature on each side of the vinyl, Side One kicking off with **I Can't Hear You No More**. Opening with a few bars of drums from Simon Phillips, the leading track is a slow-paced rocker, quite laid back in fact. On first hearing I found it a bit pedestrian by his usual standards, but soon grew to love its strip backed bareness and of course, as is tradition, the song soon became embedded in my brain. After its fade out ending, the next song follows in the same style, with a drum roll opening and a similar pace. **In the Night** features harmony vocals on many of the lines, some prominent lead guitar from Russ and some nice organ and strings filling the background. Mo Foster's rhythmic slap bass playing also gives the song a lift. The aforementioned **Two Silhouettes** follows. Chosen as the first single, it gained lots of airplay without making the charts. However, the next and final track of side one would prove much more successful. **Voices** gained attention after it featured in an episode of **Miami Vice**. It was also promoted heavily on the BBC2 TV programme **No Limits**, interestingly alongside **America's The Border**, another of Russ's songs. It remains one of his most popular songs and actually managed to make a brief entrance into the lower reaches of the UK Top 100.



*l-r: Labels for Two Silhouettes and its b side Living Without You; outer sleeve designs for Two Silhouettes, Voices and I Can't Hear You No More.*



Side Two begins with A **Woman Like You**. Instrumentally, the song maintains the style established on previous tracks, but there's a lot more going on, particularly with the hook. The same can be said for **Day to Day**. Both of these songs could potentially have become hit singles, especially the latter. Next up is my personal favourite **Playing with Fire**. It has everything as far as I'm concerned, great lyrics, an infectious chorus, a punchy bassline, lots of lead guitar over a sequence of melodic chords played on electric piano, with an organ playing some melodic lines at specific points in the background. One of the album's highlights in my opinion. The album closer is **The Last Time**. Again, backed by a melody based around prominent piano chords, it's a strong song and highlighted by some excellent guitar playing from Russ towards the end.

It's worth mention that an extra non-album track was made available as the B side of Two Silhouettes. **Living Without You** is heavily reliant on acoustic piano, tells of the loneliness and heartache following a relationship break-up, and is notable for prominent saxophone and guitar solos.

Unlike many of Russ's previous albums, this one has been harder to review because the songs are not as diverse as on previous works. That is not to be taken as a criticism. I quickly came to realise that this is a good thing as the album is clearly more focussed and may well have been intentional. At the time of its release, AOR (adult orientated rock) was particularly popular and this release fits firmly into that category. Russ is capable of taking on different genres of music, but when a multitude of styles are featured on an album it must make it difficult to pinpoint a target audience.

The production on the album is of a high standard. Like the sleeve, its uncomplicated but very much to the point. Piano chords are used to great effect, and the bass and drums are solid without obstructing the listener from hearing everything that is going on around them, such as strings. The vocals are clear and precise. If you consider that **At the Third Stroke** was a classy record in terms of the calibre of the players, I would say this one is equally classy because of the production. All in all, a pleasing first offering under the new management team of **Russ** and **John Stanley**.

So how did the music press react? Well, rather badly judging by Garry Johnson's review in **Sounds**. Whilst acknowledging Russ's previous achievements as a songwriter, he awarded the album just two stars. He was critical of the cheap TRB (Tom Robinson Band) style sleeve design and described the eight songs as being "soundalike slices of the "most bland and laid-back US "FM" AOR known to man". He added that Russ "certainly doesn't believe in variety", which left me questioning whether he'd heard any of Russ's back catalogue. I could find very little to agree with in his savage assessment, especially when he described **Playing with Fire** as being "insipid". But it's all about opinions and another Johnson, this time called Howard, was much kinder describing Russ as "the main man" when it comes to writing "musical tapestries of contemporary magnitude". However, both Johnsons did pick up on the lyrics, with all but one of the tracks based on relationship breakdowns. That has never been a particular issue as far as I'm concerned. Trusted classic rock writers were more enthusiastic with Malcolm Dome in particular giving the record his full approval. Whilst the album sold reasonably well in the US, and **Voices** remained in the Italian singles charts for six months, the record did far less well in the UK and at the time Russ said he was unhappy with the way the UK label just ignored the record. Ironically whilst Jonathan King was promoting **Voices** heavily on his BBC2 TV show, I can't recall the BBC radio counterparts giving the song much support on their airwaves. Maybe that was down to lack of plugging from the record company. Fortunately, other parts of the world were more appreciative of the song's appeal.

Finally, what about cover versions? So far, I've managed to stumble across seven cover versions of **Voices**, most notably by **Chuck Negron** who, as a member of **Three Dog Night** is no stranger to singing Russ's songs. Stopping short of saying I don't like it, I feel it lacks the drama and suspense of the original. The vocal harmonies on the chorus are too overpowering for my liking. Again, it shows how the simplicity of the original allows the song to breathe. Sometimes less is more. On the other hand, if you want to hear a heavier rendition, look up the version by **Wonderworld**. If that doesn't get the neighbours banging on the wall, call up the version by **Cydonia** and watch as the roof caves in above you.

The only other song that appears to have been covered is **In the Night**, tackled by Kiss's **Ace Frehley** who previously achieved success with **New York Groove**. Frehley slightly amended the title to **Into the Night** whilst sticking closely to the music of the original.

For those who don't already own a copy of this second self-titled **Russ Ballard** album from 1984, don't be deterred by the unnecessary and unfair opinions of Garry Johnson. Grab yourself a copy.

## READERS' LIVES

### Markus Linten

My name is Markus; I live near Bonn/Germany with my family and work at a research institute for vocational education and training.

I was born in 1966 and Russ's first appearance for me was in April 1976 when I was 10 years old. I bought my first single ever: Star Studded Sham (Hello), written by Russ and a number 17 in the German charts. However, my first single should have been "New York Groove" some months before, but the single was simply sold out everywhere. By the way, Hello was the 'top act' on the TV show "Disco 75" on December 6<sup>th</sup> (can be compared to TOTP).

My passion for music began in the middle of the 70ies. As a little child, I snapped up the tunes of quite famous pop songs like Popcorn, Sugar Baby Love, SOS or Mama Loo (my elder brother possessed these singles 😊). But when I heard that stamping sound of "New York Groove" in autumn 1975, I was really captivated! I was not the only one who was enthusiastic about that song. NYG became the most successful song of 1975 in the radio chart show "Discothek im WDR" with Mal Sondock. You should know that this radio show was the most famous radio show in Germany; all the stars from that time like Sweet, Smokie, Rubettes, Kenny, Hello and others were quite often guests on the show.

I also appreciated Hello's following track "Love Stealer" written by Richard *Myhill* („*It takes two to Tango*", 1978) and Phil Wainman. Again Russ was responsible for the next single called „Let it rock" (number 24 in Germany).

As I got to know two years ago, when a new compilation of all Hello albums in Europe and Japan was published ("Hello – The Albums"), is the fact that Russ, already in 1971 – the guys just became 15 years old and Russ was 25(!) –

composed their first professional recording “Can’t let you go” and their debut single “You move me”/“Ask your Mama”, released in April 1972.

In 1977, the story of my ‘Russ-Ballard-experience’ could have ended. However, by coincidence some years later I heard his song “On the Rebound” that was presented in a radio chart show. And I must admit: this song is gorgeous, full of power and somehow reminds me of Russ's great Eurovision Song Contest contribution “No dream Impossible” some 20 years later.

I became curious and – when visiting a major city like Cologne – bought “Barnet Dogs”. Step by step I came to know that Russ wrote a lot of songs for others like “So you win again”, a number 1 in UK or “Since you’ve been gone” that is still a real Rainbow-classic in Germany. And when Frida recorded “I Know There's Something's Going On”, I felt somehow reverential.

In 1985 Russ presented his album “The Fire still burns”. I was really thrilled: the songs were fantastic (especially “Hey Bernadette”), and Russ became well-known in Germany. I’m sure that every German fan of rock music knows “Voices” from his previous album.

I don’t know when it was – and there is no hint on Russ’s website: in the early 1990ies I joined a concert of Russ in Cologne. I saw and listened to the musician who had not only written all those great glam rock songs, but was a fantastic singer and guitar player as well!

I already told, previously in the newsletter, that in 2016 (exactly 10 days after my 50<sup>th</sup> birthday) my wife and I joined a club concert of Hello’s guitar player Vic Faulkner near Cologne. During a break I took the opportunity to have an autograph and talk to him: about the ‘glam years’, his relationship to the others and of course about Russ.

Moreover, in April this year the wheel has come full circle: Hello’s singer Bob Bradbury presenting “New York Groove” together with Russ! Incredible!!!

Apart from Russ, my favorite rock band is Kayak from the Netherlands. You can betoken their music as symphonic rock. Kayak has existed for more than 45 years and has just published a new record called “Seventeen”. It is worth listening to their songs for instance on youtube. Their greatest hit is “Ruthless Queen” from their number 1 LP “Phantom of the Night” (1978).

This is my story about Russ, his music and his compositions for others. I'm looking forward to his new CD this year or next year, especially to a new version of Voices. And I hope it will be possible to buy this one in Germany ...

And maybe, Russ will do some gigs in good old ....

Best wishes

Markus

## RECORDED BY OTHERS

Of the other versions of Voices that Dave mentioned, this is the one I prefer. Look the other two up on YouTube and see what you think. This is by Wonderworld and was released on the album "Wonderworld" in 2014.

<https://youtu.be/NrrzV6lsdVY>

[Wonderworld - Voices](https://youtu.be/NrrzV6lsdVY)

[youtu.be](https://youtu.be/NrrzV6lsdVY)

Voices by Wonderworld from the album Wonderworld Released 2014-10-01 on Key Music Listen/download this album on your preferred music service: Spotify: <https://open.spotify.com/album/1234567890>

