



(Banner by Sven Kramer)

Welcome to all our new readers. Please feel free to join in.

Have you 'liked' Russ's revived Facebook page yet? There is only one 'official' Facebook page so you will recognise it from Sven's header. Thanks to Sven for making that 'cool' birthday 'card' for Russ, which we also shared with the FB page.

Christmas is coming! Why not buy yourself a present or put it on your wish list. See below for Tom's mugs. You just have to choose your album cover.

We have an interesting follow up to Dave's review of last month from Markus in Germany and Greg has found another interview Russ did for a different German magazine, which he has kindly translated for us. And, finally, a bit of Hot Chocolate you might not know.

Sue

## THIS MONTH

**Russ:** *"Thank you, everyone who sent me birthday greetings on Halloween 🎃*

*You know, it's great, songwriting. There are certain topics crying out to be set to music and 'Halloween' is one - in fact I wrote three, maybe four...certainly, I wrote two, called 'Born on Halloween,' one, a country song, and the other, a rocky song, 'I'm a Scorpio', was on my 'Third Stroke' album. I believe I've exorcised that idea now. It's been said, a poem can touch parts that words alone do not. But with the added element of*

*music, I'm sure a song can create change. Bob Dylan's 'Blowing in The Wind' & 'Times are a Changing' and Pete Seeger's 'We Shall Overcome' spring to mind as inspirational. The best thing in my life, apart from family and friends, has been writing and playing live...and then hearing the audience sing along, usually in the chorus....they're magic moments!*

*Have a wonderful November - Shop early for Christmas - Oh help!  
Love, Russ x"*

## QUESTION

With regard to the **Book Of Love** album, Track 4 , **When You Sleep**, and Track 9, **Just Like Me** . The more I hear these tracks I feel there are two vocalists . The notes within the album mention J Krishnamurti and Hudson Smith dialogue from "Questioning Krishnamurti ". What is the background to this. Are there two vocalists on each track? Can Russ clarify ? Also Russ as a child, Ashley Halliday is listed in the liner notes .

**Russ:** " 'When You Sleep'. - The idea - I'm on a Psychiatrist's couch being put into Regression ...The Doctor is saying, "Sleep", "Go to sleep" - "Tell me what you remember?" Then I reply....."I can see a face in the distance, too far away really to say, if it's beauty or beast". - Krishnamurti speaks the words - "You must be a light to yourself" - "And to be a light to yourself, you must deny every other light, however great that light might be"

Hudson Smith spoke "It's as though we are prisoners, straining at the bars of the cell" - "The doors of the cell are open".

I wanted a young boy to read the - "People say you're a wise man - Where can I find Love?" piece. It was suggested I use ASHLEY, and she read it very well, however, as the words were supposed to come from me (as a young boy), I slowed the voice down to make it more like a boy. When the man says "You must look for a great light, known by many names - You'll find it in the Book of Love" - Then I'm on the journey- looking for the Book of Love....Each song being another sign post on the journey.

*I don't know if this helps....I did try, in the songs, to impart things that had affected me in my life....*

*Going back thirty years ago I started reading more Krishnamurti, Ramesh Balsekar - and they inspired Book of Love - It was a Labour of Love, actually."*

## LETTER

From Markus Linten

Attached you find an explanation for this statement of the October newsletter: „There is an interesting video on You Tube that describes the recording process for this track plus a bit of an oddity that is new to me and may have been a European television appearance, as its clearly mimed with a bunch of unfamiliar band members <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ce8ukm3rjpc>" [Sue: this is from Dave's review of 'The Fire Still Burns']

„The Fire still burns“-appearance must have been from August 1985 in the German TV show „Känguru“ featuring the famous comedian Hape Kerkeling. Russ must have met Agnetha from Abba in this show – can he remember this? If I were him, I’d never forget this ...J

### Running order of Episode 6

(on 22 August 1985):

Willie & The poor boys – "Revenue man"

Agnetha Falstkog – "One Way Love"

John Parr – "St. Elmo's fire"

Jaki Graham – "Round and Round"

Feargal Sharkey – "Loving You"

Double – "The Captain of her Heart"

**Russ Ballard – "The Fire Still Burns"**

Boland – "The Boat"

Phil Carmen - "On my Way to L.A."

Leinemann – "Mein Tuut-tuut"

Source: <https://www.abbaontv.com/1985/description-kangaru-iwontletyogo.html>

**Russ:** " I think this came from an Italian TV show, I don't remember the title.... At that time, we we're traveling from Germany to Italy to TV shows. It could be any one - I think I wore the same shirt too. I remember the keyboard

*player, however, I don't remember his name...I certainly know the other guys, we've been friends for many years...The bass player is Nobby Dalton, who had then just left the Kinks and the drummer is Mike Richardson, who, not long after, played drums for me when I produced Elkie Brooks' "No More The Fool" - He recently left her band after thirty years."*

## RUSS MUGS

**Our reader, Tom McNamee** puts album covers on mugs. If you need a Christmas present for a Russ fan or just for yourself, this is ideal. You surely need a Russ mug, and these are to be recommended....I have some. Tom is kindly offering a discount to newsletter readers until Christmas. You can order a mug for £3.99 (Instead of £4.99) + £3.90 p&p to UK = £7.89 (1st class Royal Mail). Tom ships worldwide. If you are outside the UK, email Tom and he will give you a postage quote. Newsletter readers can order directly via Tom's email. Don't forget to tell him you are a newsletter reader and which album cover you would like.

Tom's email... [tmcn146@aol.co.uk](mailto:tmcn146@aol.co.uk)



Tom does lots of album covers. Here is his FB page. <https://www.facebook.com/Collectable-mugs-175125019239579/>

## RUSS'S MUSIC HISTORY

By Dave Williams

## The magic of vinyl

The arrival of the CD, or Compact disc to give it its full name, in the early 80's heralded a new era in sound reproduction. What advantages it promised. No more background hisses, crackles and pops, no more 'needles' sticking or jumping, no more damage from scratches and no more having to walk over to the hi-fi after 18 minutes to turn the vinyl over to enable the listener to hear the other side. We soon came to realise that CDs can indeed jump, freeze and get scratched as well as becoming stuck inside the CD tray. Worst of all, it soon became apparent that the excitement of buying a new recording was greatly reduced. It used to be a thrilling experience taking that shiny black record out of its sleeve for the very first time and listening to side one whilst reading the sleeve notes and lyrics. That was completely possible with a 12 x 12-inch sleeve, not at all as readable when the same text was compacted into the size of a CD booklet. But another thing we lost was the artwork of the actual record label, which held a fascination of its own. From my earliest sightings of my parents' 78 r.p.m. records on Decca, Phillips and Capitol through to the singles and albums of my own record buying years from the plain designs of Pye and Warner Brothers to the eye-catching designs of Apple, Vertigo and the handwritten designs used by the Fly label, you could often associate an artist with a particular label. Think of **The Kinks** and you immediately associate them with Pye, early **Sinatra** with Capitol, **Queen** with EMI, **The Beatles** with Apple, **Status Quo** with Vertigo and so on. It's quite exciting to see some of the classic albums adorning the supermarket shelves as part of the vinyl revival. Wouldn't it be great to see the return of some proper dedicated Record Shops.

**Russ Ballard's** name would feature on many different record company labels of course. His songs were widely covered during the golden age of vinyl, so his moniker would frequently appear in brackets under the record title. One label that carried both an eye-catching design and frequent appearance of **Russ'** name was that of **RAK Records**. I personally associated the label with **Hot Chocolate** but the company, formed by record producer **Mickie Most** in 1969, carried a wide roster of successful acts from **Peter Noone and Herman's Hermits** and **Julie Felix** through to **Cozy Powell**, **Smokie** and **Suzie Quatro**. The label was instantly recognisable with the image of an approaching sailing ship.

The most well-known and most successful association between Russ and RAK was the No.1 best seller **So You Win Again** by **Hot Chocolate**. But there were other RB songs covered by Errol Brown's band, including **Losing You**, and at least

one album track in **Gotta Give Up Your Love**. **Kandidate** were another RAK signing that achieved success with songs written by Russ. **Don't Wanna Say Goodnight** and **Let Me Rock You** reached No.47 in 1978 and No.58 in 1980 in the UK respectively. Ironically in between these, they released two of their own self-penned songs that achieved higher chart positions; **I Don't Wanna Lose You** and **Girls, Girls, Girls**. Who knows? They might not have achieved this success had Russ not paved the way with that first hit.







Another band signed to RAK were New World, who had hits on the label. They would go on to record a couple of **Russ's** songs, **I'm a Clown** and **Do It Again** but by this time they had moved on to join EMI.

## INTERVIEW

Translated from German by Greg Zimmermann

This interview was conducted by Dirk Zumpe for German music magazine "Rockpower". It appeared some time around the release date of "The Seer" in 1993.

### RUSS BALLARD – Not His Last After All...? (1993)

Hits right off the assembly line are Russ Ballard's trademark, but so far, he's had the least success with those songs he recorded himself. No wonder then that the successful composer and producer likes to keep out of the limelight. Or does he? With his new album, "The Seer", his first in eight years, the man is coming out of

his shell once again. The record label promotes the album as his “last”, but Dirk Zumpe has learnt differently...

“Not that I know of”, smiles a good-natured Russ Ballard as we meet in his lovely country home. “On the contrary - I’m itching to do more records!”

So this isn’t his last album after all? God knows he certainly doesn’t need to do it. As composer and producer, he’s had more than 200 singles in the US Top 100, he’s well beyond 40 and avoids publicity (read: the stage) whenever he can. But here it is: his new album that needs to be promoted. “I had to do this album because there was just too much on my mind that I had to get out.

His dilemma, if you want to call it that, is obvious: He records a song, it does nothing. Someone else records the same song, it turns into a monster hit. This is exactly what happened with “God Gave Rock’n’Roll To You”, his farewell song with Argent some 20 years ago. Then KISS come along and have a worldwide hit. The funny part of the story: Russ Ballard and KISS have never met personally. “The deal was made via my publisher. I had nothing to do with it.”

There are topics, however, that you can’t sell to other acts quite as easily. A good example is the song “The Healer”, based on personal experiences. The official press kit says it’s about Russ Ballard’s personal destiny, but Russ himself tones it down. “It’s a true story, yes, and it happened in my surroundings. The doctors had already given up all hope, but then a so-called faith healer entered the scene and saved the person in question.”

There’s a central theme to his new album: “Blue For You”, “Stay With Me” or “These Are The Times” are about stories that Russ Ballard lived through personally. It’s worth pointing out that a lot of new material had to be left off the album. Russ Ballard is back in his studio to write songs for others. Little Angels, Magnum and Bad English are some of the more renowned clients who have ordered songs. Singer John Waite was there recently to go through new songs with Russ. So, it looks as if there is no time to promote “The Seer” properly. Or what about, as was the case with his previous effort, “The Fire Still Burns”, live dates? “As I said”, Russ grins, “I’m really itching again...”

## **DAVE'S COVER QUEST**

**From Dave Williams**



Whilst writing my articles I've discovered scores of versions of songs written by Russ, some well-known, others less so. It started to become something of a quest to discover as many songs as possible. There's lots of material out there and I thought it might be nice to share some of these discoveries with readers. Here's this month's offering:

#### No.4



#### Gotta Give Up Your Love by Hot Chocolate

**Hot Chocolate** began their recording career in 1969 on the **Beatles'** Apple label. A year later they moved to Mickie Most's RAK Records and found instant success with the hit 45 **Love is Life**. From that point onwards, they achieved notoriety for scoring a chart hit in every year between 1970 and 1984, all written by band members **Errol Brown** and **Tony Wilson**. Wilson left the band in 1975 to pursue a solo career. There must have been something in the water that year! Something good of course. Errol Brown continued to write the hits. All that was lacking was a No.1 hit. It was their 15th hit that finally reached the top spot, and as everyone knows, the 1977 chart topper **So You Win Again** was written by our very own **Russ Ballard**, a milestone for the writer as well.

Further hits followed for the Chocs, including **Every 1's a Winner** and **No Doubt About It** before they turned to Russ again in 1981 for another of his songs, **Losing You**. Chosen as a single from their album **Class**, it failed to produce the same level of success. By now the Great British public were being wooed by new wave music featuring upcoming artists such as **Duran Duran**, **Spandau Ballet**, **Human League** and many more. With their pedigree, **Hot Chocolate** were more equipped than most to weather the competition provided by any punk or new wave upstarts, be they angelic or otherwise.

Interestingly though, there was another of Russ's songs featured on the **Class** album. **Gotta Give Up Your Love** is very disco orientated. I'm comparing it to former **Supremes** singer **Mary Wilson's** 1979 solo single **Red Hot** and thinking it

could possibly have achieved similar status on the Northern Soul circuit. Then again, I've got two left feet so what do I know? I wasn't aware of this song, despite its release as an A side on 7" and 12" vinyl in the Netherlands. The Dutch know talent when they see or hear it! A link below takes you to a video posted on You Tube. Errol Brown looks cool and laid back as usual, but I can't help wondering why guitarist Harvey Hinsley is missing his G string, and before you get too excited or alarmed, I'm referring to his guitar!! Take a look:

<https://youtu.be/gU-NA5kLVvA>

As a footnote, I feel the world is a sadder place following the loss of Errol Brown to cancer in 2015. I'm glad I managed to catch one of his live performances. His music lives on.