



(Header by Sven Kramer)

Welcome to our new readers from the last month.

We have a lot of very disappointed people following the postponement of the European tour. Not least of all, Russ and his band. I have seen what has been going on to prepare for this tour and, believe me, an incredible amount of work has gone into it. Increasingly, countries are banning gatherings of over 100 people so, as I write, at least two of the gigs wouldn't have gone ahead anyway. The plan is to tour later when the madness has settled down and we will give you the information here, on the FB page and on the website as soon as we have definite details. As for the UK tour, it is wait and see. As of now, it is still going ahead but we will just have to wait and see how this virus progresses.

This month the newsletter is a bit "It's Good To Be Here" heavy. It was disappointing for many of us not to get the album on release date. I got mine eight days later. However, it was worth the wait, wasn't it? What a fabulous album! We have a review from Dave, in his usual knowledgeable style, in lieu of his article this month. Then we have reviews from various music magazines and websites. Not a negative word amongst them. Click on the links. There is some good reading there. It is interesting that people's favourites are well spread across the album. It shows that it's a good one! If you haven't bought this album yet, do it! You won't regret it.

Best wishes

Sue

## THIS MONTH FROM RUSS

*I was very much looking forward to doing the tour in Europe and meeting so many of you....It would have been a lot of fun. Sadly, it has been postponed, acting on a German government directive, because of the coronavirus. This is a big disappointment to us all. The band have been working very hard and have done a lot of travelling to get to rehearsals....We all agreed that it was sounding pretty damn good.... We had just finished the last rehearsal when we heard the news. I want to thank Bob Henrit, Mike Steed, Roly Jones, Claire Gordon and Marc Rapson for all their hard work. We are all working on putting all the preparation to good use later in the year.*

*Well, we've had the promise of spring here in East Hertfordshire....For a couple of days this past week, as I was running on a footpath adjoining the farm, I heard a woodpecker and a Lark - it was just the sound of beak on wood and tweet twiddle dee dee, dwit, dwit....but it made me feel good....Oh, Spring - the best time of the year for me....and summer is still a way off - after the early flowers and blossoms on the trees.....Anyway, back to Rock n Roll....My album, 'It's Good To Be Here', was released on the 21st February. I want to thank those who have sent comments, not only on the album, but also, I want to thank you for your patience if you're waiting for the book, which should have been part of the package....[it'll be with you in a couple of weeks]  
Enjoy the Spring - Stop and smell the roses!! Lots of Love, Russ x*

## FACEBOOK



I recently mentioned that this newsletter, the official Facebook page looked after by Carole and the website created by Sven are all connected and run by Russ's team on his behalf. If you put "Russ Ballard" into the FB search you will find the official page, easily identified by the profile picture above, but maybe other personal profiles in his name. These are simply fan profiles. Please be aware that **the ONLY place you will find Russ on FB is on the official page**. He does NOT have a personal FB profile. If you put a comment addressed to him on a personal profile, he won't see it.

**DAVE'S REVIEW OF IT'S GOOD TO BE HERE**

## It Really Is Good To Be Here

It's been a long time coming, but some things are worth the wait. **It's Good To Be Here** is **Russ Ballard's** 10th solo album and his first since his monumental **Book of Love**, which hit the record stores in 2006.



## Russ Ballard – It's Good To Be Here (2020) BMG 538594722

Fourteen years is a long time between releases and it certainly felt that way when I opened my latest purchase. As I glanced at the track list on the rear sleeve the buzz I felt took me back to the first time I set eyes on some of the previous recordings, particularly the two eponymous **Russ Ballard** LPs on Epic and EMI America, and my personal favourite **Winning**. Some of the tracks are not new to many of us, having previously been made available via download, but

so many of us wanted a hard copy release and thankfully **Russ** and **BMG** have obliged by making the new release available in both CD and 12" vinyl formats. Not only that, an accompanying book is available as an optional extra.

Unusually, this is the third CD I have purchased in recent days, all arriving around the same time and all released by **BMG**. It seems the company is snapping up some great artists. This review relates to **Russ** so I won't dwell on the other two other than to say they've tended to stay with the formula that brought them success back in the 1980s. **Russ**, to his credit, hasn't allowed himself to be pinned to any particular style.

**It's Good To Be Here** features some excellent sleeve artwork. Photographer **Sven Kramer**, himself a massive fan of the artist, has captured a youthful looking **Russ** with his iconic silver 'stratotelecaster'. Man and guitar have been wedded to each other for half a century now. I like to think of it as the Jose Mourinho of guitars. Not so much the 'special one', more the '**holey one**'. The rear cover and the inner artwork feature additional photographs taken by **Sven** again presenting the artist in a good light.

I'm reviewing the CD version, so everything is presented on one side only. The first track is called **My Awakening**. This song will be familiar to those who previously bought the download version, and the first thing I noticed was the improved sound quality of the new uncompressed version. The song takes up where **Book of Love** left off, the writer waking from a sleepwalk, coming out of the darkness and into the light. After setting the scene with a slow introductory build up the song explodes on the minute mark with those trademark power chords and the words '**this is my awakening, now is the time you bring me back to life**'. It's a solid enough opening song. **Time Machine** follows. As the first song to be made available when the download version was released, it received a lot of well-deserved attention. It has all the credentials of a hit single without sounding like any of his previous successes. The same can be said for **Kickin' the Can**. Chosen as the lead single this time around, it begins with a bit of tricky guitar 'riffery'. A programmed backing drum pattern then lays a foundation for **Russ** to deliver the lyric. Guitars and keyboards are kept low in the mix, which works well. The chorus is accompanied by power chords and backing vocal chants, enough to hook the listener.

Track four was not part of the original planned release. **Annabel's Place** is the second single from the new release and it's quite an eye opener. Introduced on piano, a sequenced synth phrase not unlike the one **Pete Townsend** used in **The Who** hit **Baba O Riley** is then triggered, no doubt to emphasise that the lyrics relate to the late 60s and the hippy era; "at **Annabel's place, she's still there with flowers in her hair**". The chorus has just a hint of **King Harvest's Dancing in the Moonlight**, or **Toploader** for younger readers, with a pinch of **So You Win Again**, but it's only a pinch. Blink and you'll miss it. It's a great song, deserving of radio airplay.

Every album needs a slow ballad to provide a bit of contrast. This comes in the form of **Wasted (The Last Ride)**, another quality song that could easily have found itself on **Book of Love**. This is followed by **Colliding**, which many readers will already have heard. The chorus particularly stands out on this one. However, the next track is the one that grabbed my attention most of all. **Tidal Wave** is aptly named. What a great new song and refreshingly different, almost 'Beatlesque' in places, which can't be a bad thing. **The First Man That Ever Danced** follows. After a couple of listens you start to realise just how infectious the chorus is. **The Misunderstood** didn't feature on the previous download album. It's a catchy, pacey number with piano and guitar solo and worthy of inclusion. I've a feeling that after a few listens this could become one of the most enjoyable songs on the album. **Proud Man** already received a lot of plaudits when it appeared on the previous version of the album and deservedly so. A slow-paced song with a story to tell, it brings the regular album to a close.

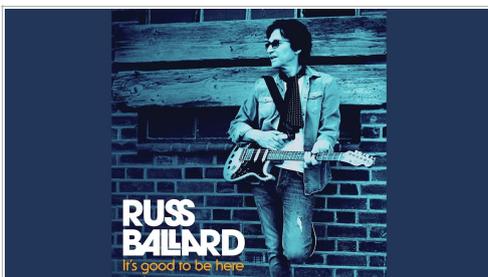
The final three songs are covers of hits written by **Russ** that were made famous by other artists. I always wanted to hear him perform a version of one of his most covered songs **New York Groove**, a hit for **Hello**. Well here it is, and I really like it. Gone is the harmonica and the backing percussion is a little less aggressive. It gets particularly interesting towards the end with some nice choral vocals. **Since You Been Gone** follows. I need to get used to this slow version. I'm a big fan of the original version from **Winning**, so this comes as a shock to the system. Of all the many cover versions, I've never heard anyone slow it down like this, but after only a couple of listens it's already growing on me, and that appears to be the opinion being expressed by others who've lived with it a bit longer than I have. One listen is not really enough to give a fair opinion, despite **Russ** having mastered the art of producing songs that get embedded into your brain after only a couple of listens then refuse to budge. The final offering is a version of the hit he wrote for **America, You Can Do Magic**. I only need one

listen to convince me that I like this better than the original. Nothing wrong with the original, I just find this version more adventurous. In fact, the word adventurous sums up this album. It never feels as though the record company has had an influence over the choice or style of the songs.

With **It's Good To Be Here**, **Russ** has gone full circle. It's virtually a one man show, as was his first solo album **Russ Ballard** released a staggering 45 years ago. He did have excellent input on the mixing side from his son **Christian Ballard**, who continues to build his own reputation in the industry as a leading engineer and producer. **Christian** also assisted with some of the drum programming. **Russ** covers all the other instruments. I only have one disappointment. I mourn the omission of my favourite track from the original download version of the album. **Free From Your Hold** is as heavy as an elephant and carries the kick of a mule. I just love it. But then I still have it from first time around, and instead I have the new songs, so it's actually a win-win situation.

I'm not sure whether any songs from the new album will feature in the forthcoming shows, but I'm so glad we now have this long-awaited album in physical form. It might not be totally new to those who purchased the mp3 version a while ago, but there are enough new songs to make the purchase worthwhile, plus the sound quality is better. **Russ** continues to write songs almost every day. I genuinely hope that we are treated to some of these songs in the future because he demonstrates here that he still has the passion to try new territory and isn't content to recycle old ideas. **Tidal Wave** is a shining example. His music is still relevant. There are a few others who could take a leaf out of his book.

<https://youtu.be/u3qY5c20Z6Y>



## [Tidal Wave](#)

Provided to YouTube by Absolute Marketing International Ltd Tidal Wave · Russ Ballard It's Good to Be Here © 2020 Russell Ballard Limited under exclusive lic...

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

ALBUM REVIEWS FROM ELSEWHERE

## Get Ready To Rock

This link also has a link to a radio programme with David Randall, which is not relevant to Russ. The interview with Russ referred to took place in 2015 and was re-broadcast on 20th February 2020. The listen again link for the interview, which refers to the original 2015 download version of IGTBH is below the review link. The review is current and good.

[http://getreadytorock.me.uk/blog/2020/02/album-review-russ-ballard-its-good-to-be-here-2/?fbclid=IwAR3a7FLexf6fn3dG\\_pJWC8pkQKcSYGey8pbP30nf3RXIbGtt8HdUfJXnQ](http://getreadytorock.me.uk/blog/2020/02/album-review-russ-ballard-its-good-to-be-here-2/?fbclid=IwAR3a7FLexf6fn3dG_pJWC8pkQKcSYGey8pbP30nf3RXIbGtt8HdUfJXnQ)

### [Album review: RUSS BALLARD – It's Good To Be Here](#)

Share the post "Album review: RUSS BALLARD – It's Good To Be Here" FacebookTwitterGoogle+LinkedIn On Thursday 20 February at 22:00 GMT Get Ready to ROCK! Radio replays a two-part special when David Randall chatted to Russ Ballard about his long &hellip; <http://getreadytorock.me.uk/blog/2020/02/album-review-russ-ballard-its-good-to-be-here-2/> >Continue reading &rarr; [getreadytorock.me.uk](http://getreadytorock.me.uk)

<http://getreadytorock.me.uk/blog/2015/07/album-review-russ-ballard-its-good-to-be-here/>



[Album review: RUSS BALLARD - It's Good To Be Here - Get Ready to ROCK! News | Reviews | Interviews](#)  
[Get Ready to ROCK! News | Reviews | Interviews | Radio](#)

**Review of album by Russ Ballard called It's Good To Be Here. [umumusic.com](http://umumusic.com). The recent return of Russ Ballard – initially with Argent (reforming in 2010/13) – has been one of great rejoicing and relief.**  
[getreadytorock.me.uk](http://getreadytorock.me.uk)

## Rockland

[https://www.rockland.fm/rockland-soundcheck-vom-21022020?fbclid=IwAR3za\\_jelqPFKjki00A\\_Erl3Hc-aCmAxTF0qvpljLRQfXtEiNbcqxGmaeAo](https://www.rockland.fm/rockland-soundcheck-vom-21022020?fbclid=IwAR3za_jelqPFKjki00A_Erl3Hc-aCmAxTF0qvpljLRQfXtEiNbcqxGmaeAo)

## [ROCKLAND Soundcheck vom 21.02.2020](#)

H.E.A.T. und Russ Ballard

[www.rockland.fm](http://www.rockland.fm)

[Musikreviews.de](http://Musikreviews.de)

<http://musikreviews.de/reviews/2020/Russ-Ballard/Its-Good-To-Be-Here/>

## [Russ Ballard: It's Good To Be Here \(Review/Kritik\) - Album-Rezension \(Pop Rock\)](#)

[Musikreviews.de](http://Musikreviews.de) - Metal und Rock - Album Reviews, Kritiken, Interviews, News

[musikreviews.de](http://musikreviews.de)

### LETTERS

#### From Ronnie Pollock

Signed cd arrived today.

This album is a bit like Winning, I feel, in its general sound, in as much as it is not full of pop commercial material, rather more depth to songs that need two or three plays .Some artists albums you grow tired of quickly but not this one as some clever studio work going on. Some song signatures do relate to previous albums here and there but every artist has a style and that is no surprise.

A great achievement and obviously a labour of love again from Russ. Great he is still firing on all cylinders, inspiring and welcome addition to my collection. I await the book with interest as I have always admired Russ's work and tried to follow his career ever since Roulette days in Bridlington, where he inspired me to buy sunglasses to look cool!

Ronnie

### BOOK OF LOVE IN POETRY

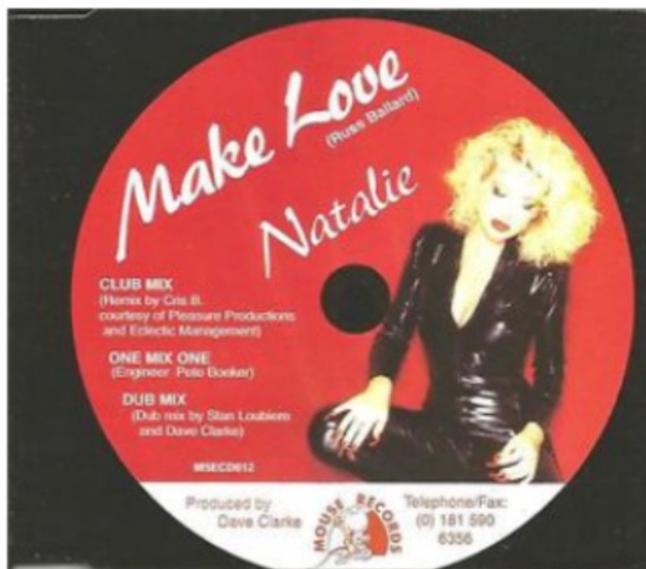
Last month we had an article from Eddy Bonte about his radio programme on poetry in which he included two tracks from Book Of Love. I wasn't able to add the recording of the programme to the newsletter but Eddy has now given us a way via Mixcloud. This programme is in Dutch and we have a number of readers in the Netherlands. For an explanation of this programme, see the February newsletter.

[https://www.mixcloud.com/Radio\\_68/radna-fabias-habitus/](https://www.mixcloud.com/Radio_68/radna-fabias-habitus/)

## DAVE'S COVER QUEST

### Dave's Cover Quest No.20

Whilst writing my articles I've discovered scores of versions of songs written by **Russ**, some well-known, others less so. There's lots of little gems out there and I thought it might be nice to share some of these discoveries with readers. His music knows no bounds and can be found all around the globe. We start 2020 with a song that has been hiding from me for (at least) 26 years.



### Make Love by Natalie

I don't think I can take credit for discovering this. It was more a case of it finding me. I was looking on You Tube for some information I need for a future feature. As the Russ-unrelated song I was watching ended, this one popped up. This happens all the time on You Tube. One song ends and another begins. However, my ears soon twitched when **Make Love** by **Natalie** started to play. Unmistakably **Russ Ballard** influenced, and a glance at the credits proved to be the case.

Sadly I can't provide any reliable background information on **Natalie**. There are too many global performers under that name, and I was unable to establish a definite link to any one of them, so best say nothing rather than get it wrong.

Maybe RB can enlighten us? I did manage to establish that **Make Love** dates back to 1994 with **Dave Clarke** credited as producer. The background vocal chants sound very similar to those used on **Lindsay D's No Dream Impossible** and **Russ's** voice is clearly evident repeatedly singing 'Baby baby do you want to make love'. There are a number of different mixes of the song, including 'club' and 'dub' mixes, '**Deep House**' and '**One Mix One**' mixes and even a "**Royal Family**" version. **Cris B** is credited on one of the mixes so presumably Russ's son was heavily involved.

I love the choppy synth riff that forms the backbone of the song, and on the 'straight' version, just to avoid any lingering doubts, there is a dead giveaway trademark **Russ Ballard** solo towards the end. Play the different versions a few times and you'll soon grow to like it. Well, at least I did. A lot!

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YegNymE6Oio&list=OLAK5uy_IAs0D3k6tVaM_hjP1-Y3DVx85rylgFG7c)

[v=YegNymE6Oio&list=OLAK5uy\\_IAs0D3k6tVaM\\_hjP1-Y3DVx85rylgFG7c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YegNymE6Oio&list=OLAK5uy_IAs0D3k6tVaM_hjP1-Y3DVx85rylgFG7c)

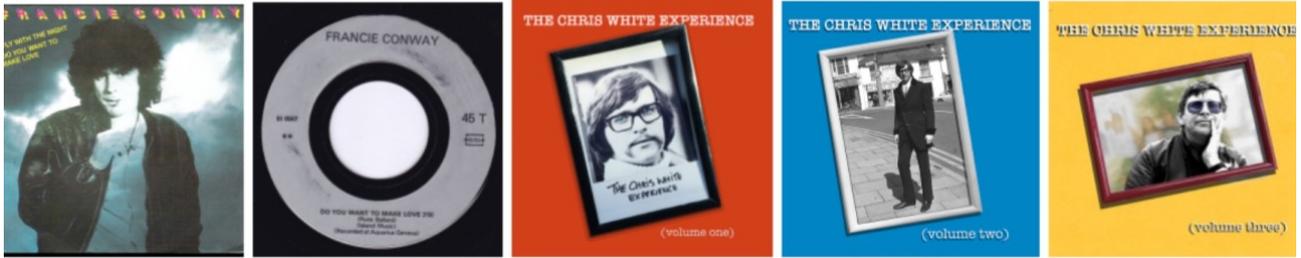
	<p><a href="#">Make Love - YouTube</a></p> <p>3 Confident Female Mindsets That Drive Guys Wild... (Matthew Hussey, Get The Guy) - Duration: 14:52. Matthew Hussey 5,759,385 views</p> <p><a href="http://www.youtube.com">www.youtube.com</a></p>
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It also transpires that **Natalie** recorded two other songs by **Russ**, but that's for another day.

But, as is usually the case, there's a twist to the tale. It turns out that I had already listed an earlier version of **Make Love** from an Irishman that also slipped under the radar.

### **Do You Wanna Make Love?** by **Francie Conway**

In 1981 Kerry born singer **Francie Conway** released **Do You Wanna Make Love?** on RCA Records, which was produced by former **Zombies** bass guitarist and **Argent** producer **Chris White**.



This is an opportune moment to plug the recent release of some of **Chris's** work including unreleased gems detailing his work as a songwriter between 1976 – 2019. The three volumes are currently available for download and it would appear that they will also be released on CD. A treasure trove of material for lovers of **The Zombies** and **Argent**. I haven't been able to locate a link to **Francie's** version of the song, but I'm pretty sure he features on the **Chris White Experience** releases, another reason to check them out.