



Header by Sven Kramer

Are you all managing to fill your time productively? Those who are stuck at home (that includes Russ, Carole and me!) will be getting plenty of time to get to know Its Good To Be Here really well. It came out just in time! How much we need music, especially at a time like this. I want to thank Russ for helping us through. Why not reacquaint yourself with his back catalogue? I am sure we have readers who are out there working, keeping the rest of us going. We have discovered who are the essential workers! Big thanks to all of you. Have a look at Russ's song on the video below dedicated to the doctors and nurses of the world.

So, to help pass the time, we have lots for you to read. Dave has done an interview with Bill Roberts, who was in Russ's bands post Argent. Then we have another treat for you.... Bob Henrit's take on the build up to the, sadly, abandoned, hopefully just postponed, European tour. And Dave's cover features Roger Daltrey. Enjoy!

Best wishes

Sue

THIS MONTH FROM RUSS

My friends out there.....How are you? I hope you're bearing up to this invader that has not been invited....

Bob Henrit, Roly Jones, Marc Rapson, Mike Steed, Claire Gordon and myself were looking forward to touring Germany, Holland, Austria and Belgium - we had a month of heavy rehearsing, which ended on the 10th of March....We all thought the final rehearsal sounded great. So, feeling a little 'high', we sat in my kitchen and were sharing a bottle of wine, when we received a call from our dear friend, Sven, who told us that Germany was stopping gatherings of over five hundred people. It was obvious where this was leading....cruise ships had quarantined passengers for a couple of weeks and there was talk of social distancing in the media here. We were due to pack the next day 11th, then fly 12th. Now, here we were, all dressed up and nowhere to go.

What have I been doing to get through the days? Keeping as fit as I can...playing guitar and piano, playing table tennis and football with my grandson, Emi.- Cycling with Emi and my beautiful granddaughter, Elodie. I spend a lot of time chatting to friends....Richard, my trainer, the two lovelies, Sue Robinson and Carole Williams...My old friends Mod Rogan, Bob Henrit and Pete Thorp, from the Roulettes....John Waller and Ian Ramage from the music company, BMG. Mike, Roly and Claire and dear Sven.

If you can get out, it does help, especially running, it induces the 'feel good' chemicals...Endorphins and serotonin.

I'm sure you realise the UK tour is postponed. We are to trying rearrange the gigs, hopefully for September. The European shows will also be rearranged, as yet, it's too early to say.

I wish you all the very best through this strange time. Let's keep to the rules that have been set by the Government and their advisers...Hand washing, isolating, social distancing, keep in touch with people. Positive thoughts.....

*Loads of Love,
Russ xxx*

BOOKS

Those who have ordered books should have had an email from Music Glue by now. Because of the virus, production of the books has been put on hold so they won't be delivered to you on the date already given. The new date is 11th

June but that, of course, depends on how the situation develops. It will be worth waiting for! See Music Glue for details.

A SONG FOR MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS ALL OVER THE WORLD

Russ and Dave Courtney wrote this beautiful song. Dave had the video put together and it is now out there to thank the world's medical professionals who really are going above and beyond. Carole put this on Russ's Facebook page a little while ago. Please share it to your own Facebook profile if you have one. Play it to everyone you know, especially if they are on the front line.

<https://youtu.be/jrDGTm2fkkQ>



HEALING HANDS 0

Written by David Courtney & Russ Ballard
dedicated to all the Doctors & Nurses across
the globe
[youtu.be](https://youtu.be/jrDGTm2fkkQ)

RUSS'S MUSIC HISTORY

By Dave Williams

MEET THE BAND – BILL ROBERTS

With plenty of exciting news circulating about Russ's new album and 2020 tour, once again I've turned the clock back to the equally exciting mid-70s, when Russ returned to the road for the first time since leaving **Argent**. We recently featured an interview with bass guitarist **Tony Lester**, this month I'm pleased to introduce you to the guitarist of that 1976 **Russ Ballard Band** line-up, **Bill Roberts**.

DW: Hi Bill. First of all, thank you for agreeing to talk to us about your career in music. I'm sure readers of the newsletter will be interested to read about your career in music, especially your connections to Russ Ballard.

BR: Thank you for contacting me. I am happy to be involved and will answer any questions you put to me with pleasure.

DW: Like Tony Lester who we talked with recently, you featured as a member of Russ's first band after he left Argent to go solo. More on that later, but let's start

at the beginning. Am I right in thinking you were born and raised in the Republic of Ireland?

BR: No, I was actually born in Watford, England. It wasn't until 2002 that I moved to Ireland looking for a quieter life with my wife Kate, who was born and raised in Ireland. So much for the quiet life, we are both as busy as ever.

DW: How did you first become involved in music? Did you come from a musical background?

BR: I believe I was around 10 years old. I had a friend called Keith Wilson who like me, was just discovering music. He wanted to play drums and I wanted to play guitar, so that's what we did. It was the beginning of a lifelong friendship. My father loved music but never played an instrument. My mother learned the piano when she was young but always said herself that she wasn't musical. Neither my brother nor sister played instruments, so I really don't know where I got it from.

DW: Presumably you had musical influences when you started. Was there anyone who particularly inspired you?

BR: My reason for learning the guitar was Hank Marvin of The Shadows. I loved that magical red Fender Stratocaster guitar. I have two of them now and they are still magical. I was inspired to write songs because of The Beatles.



L to R; Bill with his two red 'Strats', Bill on stage. (Photo by Sean Flynn, Shutter Fever, Charlestown, Co. Mayo, Ireland) ; Friends re-united, Bill and Tony meet up in 2016 forty years since they played together.

DW: Tell us about your first guitar. Did you take guitar lessons? Do you play any other instruments?

BR: My first guitar was a Teen Scene guitar made of plastic. It only had 4 strings. Looking back, it was rubbish, but I loved it back then. I was self-taught although I did have two classical guitar lessons but never returned for a third. I can also play bass guitar, drums and keyboards a little. Just enough to get me by when I'm recording demos.

DW: How did you progress to playing in a band?

BR: Myself and Keith Wilson teamed up and formed a band with another friend Mick Shakespeare. We were 14 years old and we called ourselves The Everplays. When I was 16, I formed another band, The Scene, with some other friends. Those two bands played mainly local youth clubs and talent competitions. I started writing aged 14. Keith and I wrote songs together and we played one or two of them with The Everplays. We also used to play an instrumental called Sunset, which I co-wrote with Mick Shakespeare.

DW: At what point did you decide to go professional?

BR: I was playing with a band from Hemel Hempstead called The Ashley Ward Delegation and somehow, we became The Vagabonds backing Jimmy James. We were so busy playing throughout England, Scotland and Wales that we had to give up the day jobs.

DW: You moved to London and also got involved in teaching.

BR: Yes. I had signed a publishing deal with Chappell Music, and I had just joined a London band called Smile. Kate and I moved to London to be nearer to the 'action' so to speak. I was writing with song writing legend Barry Mason and we wrote a Christmas song together called Little Jesus. It was recorded by the choir at my local school called Seven Mills. The record got a lot of radio airplay and TV promotion but sadly failed to chart. I was then offered the job of teaching music in the school, which then led to more jobs in other schools. I was still gigging at weekends and writing when I could find the time.

DW: You've worked with Cliff Richard, George Hamilton and Jimmy James amongst others. You must have very diverse tastes.

BR: Yes. I love all genres of music and I've been lucky enough to work with a lot of different types of bands. Rock & Roll is definitely my favourite in the broadest sense, from Elvis to The Beatles, The Shadows, The Who, The Beach Boys, Little Feat, Jeff Beck, The Eagles and beyond.

DW: Any particular artist that has inspired you?

BR: Chuck Berry, Buddy Holly, Eddie Cochran, Little Richard and Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller.

DW: Now the question everyone has been waiting for. How did you become involved with Russ Ballard?

BR: I was in a band called Curly, which also featured Alan 'sticky' Wickett and we were booked to back Russ at a CBS Records convention in 1974 I think it was, and I thoroughly enjoyed it. I left Curly in 1975 then early the following year I was contacted to see if I would be interested in joining Russ's band. Without any hesitation I say yes and was with him on and off for six years.

DW: Was it easy fitting in with the other guys?

BR: Oh yes. We clicked right from the first rehearsal. I had already worked a lot with Alan, and Tony (Lester) was great fun to be with. It was as if I'd always known him. Keyboard player Wally Wilson was a real calming character as well as a great musician. Russ was very easy to work with. He was just one of the lads. We were made to feel like a complete band as opposed to just backing musicians.

DW: Would you say that you benefited from Russ's experience as a musician and song writer?

BR: Oh, most definitely. As a guitarist and song writer who better to work with than Russ Ballard? A great guitarist, I'm still using some of the licks I borrowed from him, plus he's written songs that have been massive hits worldwide, so I learned a great deal from him on two counts.

DW: It seemed that in 1976 plans for a UK Autumn tour were shelved. The band presumably went their separate ways but you re-united with Russ a couple of years later as a member of the Barnet Dogs.

BR: After we finished touring, I got the call to be a part of the recording of the Barnet Dogs album. When I arrived at the studio there was Bob Henrit on drums and Dave Wintour on bass. Two top players and a joy to work with. Bob was with The Roulettes, Argent and The Kinks and Dave has worked with everyone from James Taylor to Paul McCartney, so it was a great honour to find myself working with them. We did do a lot of tv, radio and recording together. Later on, John Verity was added on guitar and vocals. A great player and singer and again very easy to work with.

DW: After working with Russ you presumably moved onto other projects. Besides doing sessions I know you did some writing for TV and plays as well as some video work. Was this an area you'd wanted to explore?

BR: I got into the videos and plays through my long-term writing partner Mike Grocott. As well as writing songs for a number of artists, we filmed, edited and wrote music for educational videos for Tower Hamlets County Council Education Department. We wrote plays for schools in Tower Hamlets. The TV and session work came about through my good friend and saxophone player extraordinaire Richard Blanchard. He is also a fine singer, so we got a lot of playing and singing sessions. I just fell into these really. I wasn't looking for them, but I'm glad I did them.

DW: I understand that you wrote the English lyrics to Corrine Hermes' Eurovision Winning Song of 1982. How did that come about?

BR: Richard Blanchard and I did a lot of sessions for Radio Luxembourg in London and the head of their publishing departments asked me if I would write the English lyrics for Luxembourg's 1982 entry, so I did. A lot of other writers were asked to do the same and luckily mine were the ones that were chosen.

DW: When and why did you move to Ireland? Are you still involved in music there?

BR: I moved to Ireland in 2002 for a quiet life. I've become heavily involved in the music scene here, so no chance of slowing down.

DW: Is there a band scene there or are we more likely to see you strumming an acoustic guitar and singing in one of the many cosy and hospitable Irish pubs?

BR: I did two gigs with just me and an acoustic guitar. It wasn't for me. I love working in a band with great players. I was with a very successful functions band called La Bamba and still play local gigs occasionally with The Outsiders. I wrote five songs for Patrick Feeney, four of these co-written with Mike Grocott, and continue to work in his dance circuit band.

DW: Finally, a word about your facebook page, Bill Roberts Songwriter. I see you post new songs quite often, usually accompanied by a video. Can we expect to see more? Do you have any plans to go out and play in a band in the future?

BR: Back in 2017 I recorded an album of my songs with Alan 'Sticky' Wicket and my old mate Chris Maidment in England called Red Guitar under the name of Billy Hammond and the Hotshots and I'm planning to put a band together under that name and record and gig whenever possible. I still write, record and put the occasional video together. Its great fun and very rewarding.

DW: Thanks for sharing this Bill. I'm sure the newsletter readers will enjoy reading this, and on behalf of myself and Russ Ballard fans everywhere, we wish you the best of luck with your future ventures.

BR: Thank you. You're welcome.

Footnote: To see Bill Roberts in action, follow the links below:

With The Outsiders: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CgwYMdn8bs8>



The Outsiders - This train stops at every station

Band available for any event. Contact: Bill 087 2129916 Song written by Bill Roberts and Mike Grocott. Find us on facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/#!/pages/The-Outsiders-Band/193930483952360> Video by Joe Dooney joedooneymedia@gmail.com www.youtube.com

With Russ & The Barnet Dogs: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NjYKqUthY5U>



Russ Ballard, The Barnet Dogs - I Will Be There

Watch the official music video for "I Will Be There" by Russ Ballard & The Barnet Dogs Listen to Russ Ballard: <https://RussBallard.Ink.to/listenYD> Follow Russ Ballard: Facebook: <https://RussBallard.Ink.to/followFI> Website: <https://RussBallard.Ink.to/followWI> Spotify: <https://RussBallard.Ink.to/followSI> Chorus: I will be there, baby, baby, baby ... www.youtube.com

Solo work (with a hint of humour): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MnfYdYHza8>

Facebook Page: Check out "**Bill Roberts Songwriter**"

LETTERS

Can't wait to hear Russ' version of 'You Can Do Magic'!!!

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Done it.

It's got a darker tone compared to America's version, but I'm used to it: the same had happened with 'Cast the Spirit'.

America had to offer sunshine and harmonising vocals, Russ has always been more on the dark side of things... It reminds me a lot of Patti Smith's 'Because the Night'...

I sincerely expected more guitar work on the tune, because Russ had done a lot of that on the 1982 version.

From

Gianmaria

EUROPEAN TOUR PREPARATION

From Bob Henrit

Reasons to be cheerful - 1,2,3

Our rehearsals with Russell were going rather well in his studio although there was a problem waiting patiently in the wings, which nobody in the world (least of all us) expected. Certainly not when plans were being laid for the tour well over a year ago. Every time we turned on the news in February we learned that the situation with Coronavirus aka Covid-19, was getting worse. We were all privately hoping our work of preparing RGB's songs had not been in vain if the escalating health scare meant we weren't allowed to leave the country. Italy had seized the initiative by closing venues where people gathered (like at gigs say) and since the Italians shared borders with several other countries this might force them to be closed elsewhere. Italy actually has 5 different borders and Germany had no less than 9. Obviously if the situation worsened, our mainly German tour (which as an added complication included one gig in Belgium, one in Austria, and another in Holland) could be in deep trouble. There were three more borders to cross - twice. And, if the Burghers who ran Munich, Frankfurt, Hamburg and the other big German metropolitan areas didn't want to let lots of potentially infected people gather together in the cities they were responsible for, they wouldn't let them happen. We of course would be absolutely snookered. Scheisse!

However, 'Five guys and a Gal' kept on rehearsing and doing what other gigs we had in the book until we were due to head-off. And, though I say it as shouldn't, the six of us were sounding pretty damn good (make that world class!) as we diligently practised our favourite Ballard songs.

We were definitely ready to Rock - and Roll. Excelsior!

Halfway through the preparations for our European tour, Chris Andrews had called RGB to see whether us Roulettes fancied doing a gig with him and some pals, just before Easter in Selm, Germany where he lives. We'd all got together in deepest Hertfordshire in 2018 and 2019 to celebrate the not inconsiderable fact that we were still playing (jointly and severally) at a reasonably advanced age. We Roulettes had carried Adam Faith's trendy wicker coffin and Michael Parkinson congratulated us in his Eulogy on being one of the few groups from the sixties who were all still alive!

Unfortunately every time I turned on my computer in March pieces of information came up on screen in ominous black boxes bringing yet more grief. These bulletins announced that more and more people were being diagnosed with the Coronavirus and it was seriously escalating towards being a pandemic.

Russ Ballard (and friends) '2020' tour was coming under serious threat and we were powerless. As little Jimmy Rodford once memorably said: "We're all prawns on the draughtboard of life"!

However hope springs eternal so me, Steedy, Marc, Roly, Claire and of course Russell continued with our rehearsals and on Wednesday 10th March we were in the enviable position of having more songs ready to go than we needed - which was good. An embarrassment of riches you might say. We'd rehearsed all the day before prior to going out for a rather important team-building Indian meal in our favourite restaurant The Neelakash down the hill from Russell in Ware. Naturally it came with an elegant sufficiency of wine (and or beer) to help it down.

We started our last rehearsal rather early on the 11th March and little did we know what would happen next. After I'd made my excuses and left the rehearsal at lunchtime to go to the hospital; the super-sharp, razor-edged sword of Damocles - make that the sword of Corona - was inexorably falling and the single strand of horse's tail- hair keeping it dangerously suspended above our heads was about to stretch and snap.....

We finished the rehearsal early so's The Lovely Ricki could drive me to Chase Farm Hospital to get myself fitted with a 24 hour blood pressure monitor and just when I was safely strapped into it and heading for Sainsbury's (other supermarkets are available, although mostly with German names) to buy new socks and pants for the tour, I got a call from RGB. Sven Kramer from the RGB team had just called with what I'm told he called 'Super-bad news'.

Keine Scheisse, Sherlock!

'Bum, pooh, willy' - the tour was off. As far as I could ascertain the German government had scuppered us by banning gatherings of more than a couple of hundred people. I'd heard from someone who was just back from the Fatherland that they'd started out banning crowds of 10,000 but obviously soon saw it was a recipe for disaster. It didn't matter whether it was a big crowd or a small one. Coronavirus could, and would still spread.

"The best laid plans of mice and men gang aft agley" as Rabbe Burns once wrote to a mouse. Or if you prefer, "So near and yet so far" as Claude Francois once lip-synced to rather badly. on a French TV show with The Roulettes. Surprisingly Roly, not in the Eurovision Song Contest!

In any band Russell and I had been in there was always an element of whatever plans you had to do with your musical career you needed to: "wait till you were on the plane". Whichever band we were in viz: The Roulettes, Unit 4, Argent, even the Kinks, it could all go pear-shaped at the 11th hour. Hence the warning in the imaginary small print: **Wait till you're on the plane.**

Thank goodness I didn't buy any underwear!

Something else was under threat too of course. Chris Andrews' gig. We'd rehearsed a load of songs for the Roulettes part in this show in Selma with Herr Andrews and our German friends. It included the obvious 'La Bamba', 'Bad Time', 'Long Cigarette' and 'Can You Go' which was yet another of his songs for us. Unsurprisingly, it was one I certainly can't remember playing since we recorded it in 1965.

We also ran through some of Johnny Mod's really silly songs like 'Running Bear'. His version doesn't have any words; just highly suggestive grunts and gesticulations so he wouldn't have problems with the Germans understanding

what rude words he was trying to mime. I had a suspicion he would attempt the Sausage Song (die Bratwurstzange) which it's unlikely would have offended a German audience but to put our minds at ease, he promised he wouldn't do it. Yeah right; watch this space! As it happens, and perhaps unbeknownst to Herr Rogan, there are a lot of German songs on the internet about sausages, so he's not alone. However the problem with our concern for the rude gestures ultimately sorted itself out when, as expected (and unsurprisingly) the gig was cancelled by the town council of Selm.

So where do we go from here? Naturally we are confidently hoping to reschedule the RGB 2020 European dates eventually although of course no one we know could possibly guess when the Coronavirus danger will be over whereupon it would be safe to: 'go back into the water'. So far no one had mentioned that the UK gigs were under threat but it would be naive to think there wasn't going to be a problem. That said, we were all hoping against hope we'd be allowed to fit them in. If that turns out to be the truth, I'll see you there. We'll knock 'em dead,,,,,

To avoid any confusion, I'm the one at the back. The one at the front is Russell!.

Peace and love! {T/B/C I hope.}

God willing, the virus will have become a figment of our collective imaginations by the end of the year "and the world will sing again" as the Beatles sort of Imagined. We of course will all be "back, in the New York Groove"

This next paragraph is something of an afterthought which should really come under AOB as in, Any Other Business.

During a lull in the proceedings in RGB's studio before we started rehearsing for real one morning we were messing around with a function song or two with Marc leading the charge and Claire singing. I'm not sure whether I should tell you this, but we really, really sounded like we knew what we were doing. So much so that if we can't get to Europe we could do a few weddings in the UK, providing getting married isn't banned too. Or possibly a 100th birthday or two like Steedy and I did last year. Oh what fun we had?

'Five guys and a Gal' would be a pretty awful name for our exclusive offshoot band so it might just work! Perhaps we would be lucky enough to play at the sort of event where a drunken dad comes up to me and says the immortal words. "My son wants to play your drums. He's done it before you know". As soon as he clicks

the sticks together four times, before lifting both hands high over his head to hit, you know this is not going to end well. And don't even try to get me started about Mod's favourite wedding situation. The kids sliding around the wooden dance floor on their knees in front of the band which are desperately trying to play "Suspicious Minds" like the 'TCB' band in Las Vegas!

There are never enough splinters hidden in the floor when you need them!.

As far as repertoire is concerned we wouldn't have any problems. Other than "Mustang Sally" and "Johnny B. Goode" which are both givens, we could play "Let's get it on". This is of course the Marvin Gaye song seriously drunk people, who think they can sing a bit, love to do. Even though it doesn't actually go anywhere - not as far as the band are concerned anyway. "Pick up the pieces" is in the same vein, as is "Headhunters".

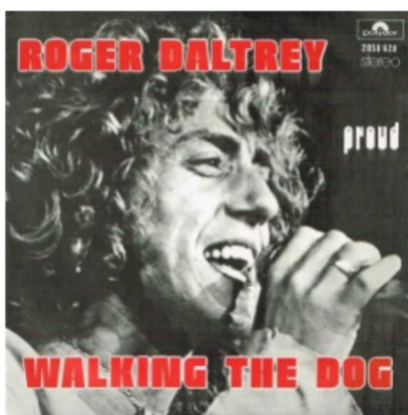
Great riffs but no real song. Time for a key change?

Can we take it up the octave? Ooh err missus!

DAVE'S COVER QUEST

No.21

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. Here's one that was covered by **The Who's** singer **Roger Daltrey**, who often features in the newsletter because of his association with Russ over the years.



Proud by **Roger Daltrey**

Readers of the newsletter will recall that **Roger Daltrey's** 1975 LP **Ride a Rock Horse**, was significant for being Russ's first project as a producer. Russ also contributed three of his own compositions towards the album, the best known being the single **Come and Get Your Love**. Also included was **Near to Surrender**, but it is **Proud** that features as this month's cover. Many will argue that it doesn't really count as a cover because it was never previously recorded, but the song does actually have a history. In 1970, in the formative days of **Argent**, they visited America to play some tour dates. The song features on the bootleg copies of the concerts at **Fillmore East** and **Fillmore West**. It never made it onto the first LP, nor any subsequent release by the band. However, Russ lifted it from the vaults, dusted it down and gave it to Roger to sing. The result turned out well and featured as the B side to Roger's cover of the **Rufus Thomas** classic **Walking the Dog**. I'm going to stand aside this month and let somebody else provide an opinion. Welcome **Mojo DaddyMystic**!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2TCLq1uJB3Y>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x5X7rfRbhvk> is a link to Roger performing the song at Shepperton Studios with **Russ Ballard** on guitar, **Tony Lester** on bass and **Alan Wicket** on drums.



[Roger Daltrey - Proud](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x5X7rfRbhvk)

Roger Daltrey - Proud (1975)

[www.youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x5X7rfRbhvk)