



(Header by Sven)

Welcome to our new readers. Please join in.

Russ continues with stories from his autobiography.....this month, his mum.

For those of you who are not on Facebook we have a podcast with John Rogan and a video from Russ that some of our FB friends will have seen/heard already. Dave's article is part 2 of his interview with Alan "Sticky" Wicket, who was the drummer in Russ's post-Argent band. I can guarantee, I think, that you won't have heard Dave's cover before. Other contributions come from Tony, Ronnie and Markus, who has something for our German friends.

Best wishes

Sue

THIS MONTH FROM RUSS

It's brilliant to be able to communicate with you online - while we can't play gigs. It's better than the alternative, no communication. I think music is the best way to make contact with like-minded people....to me, it appears to reach the parts that words fail to do - I've often wondered why? There's something about frequency and rhyme that seems to

magnify the words. I play every day, as most of you know....either guitar or piano, then recording the ideas. Just the fact I'm able to do it after many years, makes it even more intense - I love it as much as ever....

Anyway, on to something for these weird times.....'Mindfulness' - It's something that has always interested me and for years it's surprised me that meditation wasn't taught in schools. It seems to me, that mind and body health should be the first item on the school curriculum. If any of you, reading this, are having a rough time emotionally, it might be a good idea to go online and download a meditation program. People that know about emotional growth say that depression is always loss. At this time in our lives, we've had quite a bit of loss....Loss of social contact, loss of entertainment, musical and theatre and loss of hugs, there are so many things. Breath and emotions are linked, one reflects the other. It's a simple exercise to consciously breath and it's very rewarding....So, give it a try, then, bring it into your life....you'll be pleased you did.

There are so many people in my life I would like to thank. This month, I would like to thank Dave Williams and Roland Herzog for all they do for me and their constant support.

I wish everyone a great Autumn...

STORIES FROM THE LIFE OF RUSS

Last month I gave you all the 'lowdown' on my dad, Les, today, it's Doreen's turn....Doreen was my mum - [still is].

Mum's personality was different from Dad's - she was kind of 'refined', or, that's the image she projected and often . She used big words and often quoted poetry verbatim....I didn't know what it meant but I thought it sounded impressive. One thing she had in common with dad was her sense of humour. She had a generous smile and I used to say funny things just to see her laugh. Mum came from a musical family, her mum and dad both played piano and brothers, Ron and Terry were brilliant trumpet players, Ron semi pro and Terry was pro before he married. Christmases


were amazing, seeing all my relatives dressing up, singing and playing - Magic - When she was five, she attended dancing lessons and travelled round England and Wales, dancing in pantomimes and summer seasons from the age of eight to twelve. She said she loved dancing, although she believed her education suffered when she had to attend a different school every few weeks. She also hated making friends, just to leave them again. Mum was quite religious and could quote anything from the bible. I guess, when I look back, they were both a hangover from the Victorian era. I think they were embarrassed on the subject of sex - when I was about six or seven Mum was making a pie and she rolled out the pastry, I said, "What would you rather have, Mum, pie on the table or tart on the floor?" Well, she went ballistic. My parents were sent to Liverpool to work for the 'war effort'...Dad was a manager in a munitions factory....he used to smile when he said he had forty girls under him - well, his war didn't sound too bad to me!

*Well, I'll give you some more next month on the memoirs...For now, I wish you well. Thanks for your friendship....Stay safe! Peace and Love, Russ
XXXX*

VIDEO FROM RUSS

I am not always able to put the "at home" videos Russ has been doing for his Facebook page into the newsletter but he sent this one via a link rather than a file share. We all wish we had a Time Machine at the moment.

https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=3343097602394806&id=193800960657835

	<p>Russ Ballard</p> <p>On the day we get new restrictions in the UK, this just popped up in my email! Thank you Russ, you make everything good. To everyone out there, enjoy! Carole</p> <p>m.facebook.com</p>
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VOICES GROUP - MODCAST



The first podcast from Sven and Ian is with John "Mod" Rogan, who we all know as bassist in The Roulettes. If you know Mod you will know that this will cheer you up. Here is the link to part 1, published on 1st October, which gives away

some well hidden song writing secrets! The podcast lasts about 40 minutes. Part 2 will be out on 15th October. Or you can find them, along with future podcasts on Russ's website.

Russballardmusic.com/podcast.html

VOTE FOR NEW YORK GROOVE

Markus in Germany sent us this. Unfortunately, you have to be a German resident to take part, so this is for our readers in Germany. It is interesting for the rest of us, though. Click on the top link to vote. You have to vote in all three spaces to get to the page that asks for details, including a German postcode! The closing date for votes is 23rd October, 11.59pm. Markus, please let us know the result.

"Some weeks ago, German radio station SWR1 presented the Top 2000 songs voted by their listeners.

Russ' songs reached no 1645 (So you win again) and no 876 (New York Groove). Number 1 reached – like every year – Bohemian Rhapsody (Queen) followed by songs like Music, Hotel California, Child in Time or Hymn.

Germany's most popular radio station WDR4 (Cologne) will send its Top 444 at the end of October. For those who like to participate, here is the link to the votum: <https://www1.wdr.de/radio/wdr4/aktionen/top444/top-vierhundertvierundvierzig-voting-100.html>

In 2019 Hello's New York Groove reached number 330! However, New York Groove was the most popular song in 1975 in North-Rhine Westfalia: <http://www.hessencharts.de/wdr/mal/70er/mal-75-j.htm> . That's the reason why this Russ song is so popular in western Germany.

Best wishes from Germany (and maybe NYG will rise in the Top 444 ...)
Markus"

QUESTION

Reading your new book and your comments on Concrete and Clay made me wonder which song or songs you found most challenging recording/performing when with Roulettes, either on their own or with Adam? I think Cowman Milk

Your Cow and Hand Me Down Things strike me as maybe on the list perhaps? Long time ago I know but part of the story and I am curious!

Russ: *'Concrete and Clay ' was the most difficult session because I'd never played it before that evening and I thought we'd have three or four takes...in fact they liked the second take, which was the one they chose....I was still learning the changes....All good fun.*

'Cowman Milk Your Cow', written by the Bee Gees, was actually an Adam song and didn't feature The Roulettes.... I think I played banjo on 'Hand Me Down Things'.

Actually, I don't remember any musical challenges with The Roulettes. A lot of the performances we did with Adam were 'variety' and involved dancing. Probably the biggest challenge was dancing the Twist and playing a guitar solo at the same time!

READERS' MEMORIES

From Tony Dawson Hill

I first heard of Russ and saw him with Argent on Monday July 6th 1970 at Friars, New Friarage, Walton Street , Aylesbury. I believe this was the last time a band played there before they started using the now famous Assembly Hall on Market Square.

Cripes!! I hear you say 'this man has a fantastic memory'! Sorry I don't, all the information is on the Friars Aylesbury website. Well worth checking out.

I did see them there though and remember it rather well because they were so loud! It was only a small village hall and seated about 50 people (I would guess). There was a very low stage about 500cm high with seating a metre or so from the stage. My mates and I were at the front and I was sitting next to Andy Newman (he from the band Thunderclap Newman) – grumpy bloke as I recall. Fantastic concert though but bloody loud – my ears are still ringing!

Thanks for a great night Russ that I still remember from all those years ago. Saw Argent many times over the years but nothing beats that first concert.

Question for Russ: Does he remember it and does he know when the first concert and where Argent played?

Russ: "Argent first did some warm up gigs in Germany. We did seven 45 minute slots a night and nine at weekends because we did afternoons as well..... It was hard work but worth it. Our first 'proper' concert was at the ICA (Institute of Contemporary Arts) on The Mall, London, in 1970."

RUSS'S MUSIC HISTORY

By Dave Williams

MEET THE BAND – STICKY WICKET Part Two

In the August newsletter we featured the first half of an interview with **Alan 'Sticky' Wickett**, who played drums in the **Russ Ballard Band** in 1975/76. In Part Two we pick up on his time with the band, **Curly**, and his departure to join Russ's band.

DW) Picking up from where we left off in August, tell us a bit more about Curly.

AW) In 1974 Curly rehearsed at Little Gaddesden Village Hall almost every day to get the band tight and to try out new songs. We gigged quite a lot on the college circuit but the album deal still eluded us. After backing Russ at the CBS Convention in Eastbourne, an offer came in from CBS to do a single on the Epic record label and subsequently 'High Flying Bird' came out in March 1975. Shortly before that, Russ had asked us if we would like to be his backing band on an American tour. I jumped at the opportunity, but the rest of the guys seemed set on their own career paths. I was really taken with Russ's songs and with the man himself and was very keen to work with him.

DW) You went on to leave Curly.

AW) Curly's new songs were becoming less 'Funky' and more 'Country' based which I wasn't particularly enjoying. Even our manager used to comment "your music's changing boys"! With that and Russ's offer in mind I left the band. I called Russ to tell him I was available and keen to work with him plus I knew some other likeminded musicians if required.

DW) The Russ Ballard Band that performed on the Old Grey Whistle Test (a BBC TV programme) in 1975 featured Geoff Skates on guitar and Russ's brother Roy on keyboards. Neither featured in the subsequent touring line-up.

AW) When Russ asked me to do the 'Whistle Test', I suggested **Geoff Skates** the guitarist from Armada and **Tony Lester** a talented young bass player and former school friend of mine from Birmingham. I guess Russ asked his brother **Roy** as he

was a good player and had no one else in mind at that point. I don't think Roy was really interested in going on the road and I believe Geoff went back on tour as guitar tech for the Baker-Gurvitz Army.

DW) This created an opening for Bill Roberts from Curly?

AW) Well, I am not quite sure how long it was after I left Curly that **Bill Roberts** also quit the band. Meanwhile, Russ had recorded '**Winning**' using seasoned session players. I was not involved though I did some other sessions with him around that time with **Leo Sayer** and **Roger Daltrey**. By the time we toured Europe and the United States in 1976, Bill and Russ had connected, and Russ had found keyboard player **Wally Wilson**, so along with me and Tony 'The Russ Ballard Band' was cemented.

DW) I was impressed with Wally Wilson's playing when I saw you at St Albans in May 1976. Where did he originate from? Any idea on what happened to him in recent years?

AW) Wally was one of those wonderful characters in life that come along from somewhere then ultimately disappear to from where they came. I remember him as a gritty Hammond player and always fun to be around. Like you, I would love to know what happened to him. St Albans was a great gig as was the **Marquee** on the previous night. It was actually recorded, and we did some mixing on it in New York but sadly the proposed live album never came out. I remember the gig was jam packed on a roasting hot night, but the band was pretty tight and the atmosphere electric. Happy days!

DW) I still have a review of that concert from one of the music papers. It's exactly how you describe it. Hot, sweaty and an audience containing a number of musical celebrities. Around this time the band went into the studio to work on some songs. You mentioned one song in particular that comes to mind from that period.

AW) I remember going into **Livingstone Studios** in Barnet with Russ and the band to lay down some new songs he had written for a potential band single. One song stood out and that was '**So You Win Again**'. Russ can tell the story better than I can, but I remember him recounting being sure we had a potential number 1 hit. He took the recording to the head of **CBS** who said it was a great song, but it wasn't suitable for a rock artiste or band, but more for a soul band or an R&B performer. The song ended up with **Hot Chocolate**, whom the CBS guy happened to manage, and just as Russ predicted, it reached no1 in the charts but sadly not for The Russ Ballard Band. Instead, we released **Some Kinda Hurricane**, which whilst a great song, sadly did not have quite the same impact. One humorous

postscript to those Livingstone sessions, which Russ reminded me of recently, was that I had forgotten my drum sticks that day. In the absence of a music shop in Barnet, Russ took me to the local DIY store, and I played all those tunes using 1/2in wooden doweling cut to size! Russ tells me, with a smile on his face, that I still owe him for the wood!

DW) You were also involved in some session work, including the recording of the Roger Daltrey LP Ride a Rock Horse.

AW) Ride A Rock Horse came out earlier in 1975 and my only involvement was on one day when I was just visiting Russ at the sessions when he asked me to join **Tony Meehan** on percussion overdubs on '**Walking the Dog**'. I just picked up a pair of shakers and joined in. It was the one and only time that I met Tony. I was a big fan, but I did not recognise him, as he had only been introduced to me as 'Tony'. He was booked as the percussionist but when we got talking, I asked him if he was in a band and he said he had been, so I asked him which band? He replied, '**The Shadows**'. I said, "oh f*** you're Tony Meehan, I'm a big fan of yours!" He just smiled but I felt stupid although somewhat delighted that I had on that day played something on Roger's album and also met Tony Meehan ... thank you Russ!

DW) You also took part in the Shepperton promotional videos for Ride a Rock Horse along with Tony Lester. That must have been an interesting experience.

AW) Those days filming at Shepperton were an absolute delight. All the people booked were real top pro's and such fun too! Roger wasn't at the recording session when I was there so the only contact with him was during those filming days and at a dinner that we all attended one evening. I did meet him years later when the '**Steve Gibbons Band**' were supporting **The Who** on one of their tours, and again in 2004 when he guested with '**The Lonnie Donegan Band**' at a 'Tribute to Lonnie' night at the Albert Hall. We spoke about the 'Ride a Rock Horse' promo filming sessions and he commented "it only seems like yesterday".

DW) What became of you after the Russ Ballard Band disbanded?

AW) I worked in the late 1970's 'Pub Rock' scene with '**Street Band**' which featured the fresh faced '**Paul Young**' as front vocalist. I also did some gigs with **Bill Roberts and Friends** which sometimes included dear 'ole **Jim Rodford** on bass! When 'Punk' came along, I jumped ship back to New Orleans Jazz played in UK & Europe with the wonderful Sammy Rimington. In 1981 I joined '**The Steve Gibbons Band**' which was, and still is, a great original Rock 'n Roll band. I have played with Steve many times over the years since and he remains a dear friend.

*At the end of the 1980's I was asked to join '**Steve Marriott and the DT's** and joined him again later in '**Steve Marriott's Packet of Three**'.*

*He was an incredible performer. In the 1990's I also did a succession of stints with **Chris Barber** before joining **Lonnie Donegan** in 1998.*

***DW)** So many musicians refer to Lonnie Donegan as a major influence when they started out, yourself included, and you ended up working with him. That must have been a thrill.*

***AW)** I met Lonnie when I was drummer with '**The Chris Barber Jazz and Blues Band**' on a reunion tour of Chris's original 1950's band together with his 1990's outfit. I got on with Lonnie straight away. He was such a character, and during the tour he asked me to play washboard on his Skiffle interlude. That led to me playing washboard and percussion on his **Mule Skinner Blues** album. After I left Chris, he called me and told me to cancel any plans I had, as he wanted me to join the band as their permanent percussionist. He was about to go on tour with **Van Morrison**, which led to being offered sessions with **Van Morrison, Bryan Ferry and Jools Holland**. I continued to play mostly percussion and sometimes drums with Lonnie until his tragic, untimely death in 2002. He was fantastic to work with and we shared a lot of humour!*



Sticky Wicket (second from right) with the Lonnie Donegan Band

DW) Was it at this point that you decided to form your own Swing Orchestra?

AW) After Lonnie died, I formed my own 'Swing Orchestra', which was something I had long yearned to do, and which has become very successful on the UK Swing Dance scene.



Picture above: The Sticky Wicket Swing Orchestra

*I have also been teaching and I've taken the opportunity to collect some fine vintage drums, which I talk about and play on the '**Next Level Chops**' You Tube Channel which seems to be having a world wide appeal. Touring wise, apart from my Swing Orchestra, I have been working with **Beki Brindle**, a fine guitarist, vocalist, and herself a talented songwriter. I first met her at an **Argent** reunion gig at '**The Robin 2**', **Bilston** in 2012. We have toured the UK, Ireland, and the USA, including Woodstock some 42 years after I was there with Russ! Russ also gave us one of his songs, '**Blue for You**', to record.*



1. WHISKEY © James Fullin	Vocals, Guitars & BVs: BEKI BRINDLE-SCALA
2. ALIENS (HAVE LANDED) © Rebecca Brindle-Scala	Drums: STICKY WICKET
3. LAST NIGHT © Lightning Hopkins	Backing Vocals: JO BRIGGS & Bass on "Aliens (Have Landed)":
4. SATISFIED (Duet w/Steve Gibbons)*** © Muddy Waters	Congas, Washboard, Percussion: CHRIS MAIDMENT
5. BLUE FOR YOU ** © Russ Ballard / Producer: Russ Ballard	Pianos, Organ, & BVs on "Aliens (Have Landed)":
6. WHAT KIND OF MAN IS THIS? © Koko Taylor	DANNY MCCORMACK
7. TWILIGHT © Robbie Robertson	Bass: JOHN RIGORDAN
8. MY BABY'S GONE © James "Yank" Rachell	*Bass: GEOFF OCKENDON on Burning Like St. Joan
9. BURNING LIKE ST. JOAN © Rebecca Brindle-Scala & James Fullin	**Bass & backing vocals, keys, producer on "Blue For You": RUSS BALLARD
	*** Harmonica: JOHN SEBASTIAN on "Satisfied"

All tracks other than Blue for you engineered & produced by Daniel McCormack
All songs Recorded, mixed & mastered in The United Kingdom
Photo credit: Philip Lightwood-Jones
"Blue For You" (vol. 1) - © Beki Brindle Band 2018

It was a delight to work with Russ again on such a wonderful song and I think Beki did a fine job too. Christian mastered it for us! It was an absolute pleasure to "complete the circle" with my dear friend after all these years. My time with Russ and the band will always be special as it was the first 'break' in my career path. Working with him and playing his wonderful tunes was such a joy.

DW) Alan, you have had a very varied and interesting career so far during which you have worked with some amazing people. I would like to thank you for sharing it with us. I am sure the newsreaders will join me in wishing you well in the future and we long for the day when live concerts can fully resume. Finally, Al, don't forget, you still owe Russ for the dowelling!

For more information on Sticky Wicket, please visit his website <http://stickywicket.info/> where you can read about his career in greater detail and his Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/stickywicketswingband> which contains a wealth of interesting photos. You can also subscribe to his You Tube channel by clicking on the link below: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC_K2TJBX0f4IZRDAFv9LnFg

DAVE'S COVER QUEST

This is the month when we turn the clocks back, and here we turn them right back to 1974 the year that Russ left Argent. Not one of his better-known songs, but they all count. Here's a bit of Glam Rock from 1974. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-KM2KvyEgvQ>

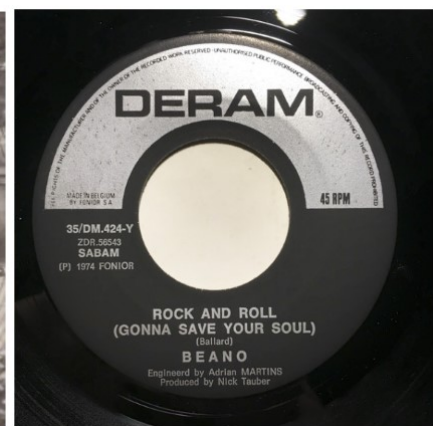
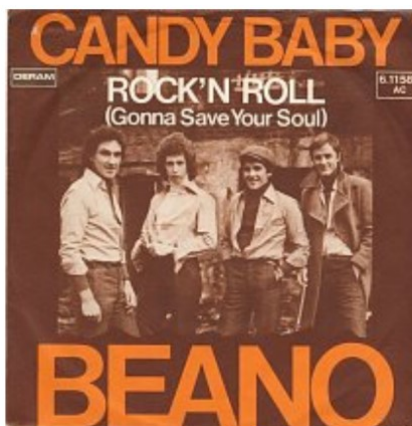


[BEANO=Rock & Roll gonna save my soul.wmv](#)

BEANO=Rock & Roll.

www.youtube.com

No.27



Rock and Roll (Gonna Save Your Soul) by Beano

Produced by Nick Tauber and released on Deram Records in 1974, this Russ Ballard song was recorded by Beano, led by Freddie Phillips. They were a comedy show group that mainly toured the Working Men's Club circuit in the north of England. They also released five singles and in 1975 an LP called Candy Man.



Not all of Russ's compositions achieve a high profile, this one featured as the B side of their single Candy Man. When the LP of the same name followed a few months later, **Rock and Roll (Gonna Save Your Soul)** was not included.

The band put themselves forward as potential UK representatives in the Eurovision Song Contest with **Everybody Knows** in 1977 and **Don't Throw Your Love Away** after changing their name to **Scramble**. Both songs were unsuccessful.