



(Header by Sven Kramer)

## MARCH 2021

Welcome to our new reader. Only one this month. I think everyone has gone into hibernation. If anyone is getting bored of still being locked down, how about sending in your Russ story for future newsletters. We really would like to hear from you.... quick before we are released back into the world!

This month Dave has given us an article that he has been working on for a while. As you are all obviously very much into music, I think you will really enjoy it. Lots to read and to listen to. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Dave. An incredible amount of work goes into his articles.

I would think it is fairly obvious that the UK gigs that were due to be in April are no longer happening. The promoter is rearranging them for early 2022. Keep an eye out for dates and check with your venue.

Best wishes  
Sue

## THIS MONTH FROM RUSS

*Hello Friends,*

*A year of pandemic, in one way it's flown, another way, it seems longer. This is the one and only pandemic I've lived through. Looking back now I agree with a couple of Psychiatrists that were discussing the pandemic and the best ways to get through. They both agreed, the best way to 'Well-being' is to be completely engaged in something. I found that to be true. In my case, the music never lets me down. Playing the guitar, piano, writing a song or recording. I know my well-being is associated with any one or all of these things. If I have a song on which I'm working, I go to bed looking forward to the morning, when I can continue building the song, writing lyrics, adding over dubs. So, next time you're feeling bored or wondering what to do - think of those things you enjoyed as a kid.... painting, building something, carving.... learn some chords on the guitar or keyboard, buy a cheap recording system and put down some recordings of your own compositions - You don't have to be a*

great musician, but you might make some great music. I hope you enjoy the newsletter....  
Lots of Love,  
Russ xxx

## STORIES FROM THE LIFE OF RUSS

*Dad sold chicken eggs in our shop. They came straight from our chickens into the customers basket, Dad must have been one of the first people to have an incubator. He wasn't one the most technically minded and probably shouldn't have set it up himself, because he unfortunately set the temperature too high and when he went to see the chickens next day many were burnt to death. The kids in the street loved playing in our field. We pretended to be cowboys and Indians - soldiers - We made guns and bows and arrows from small tree branches and twigs.*

*From the age of four or five I can remember radio programmes - 'In Town Tonight' - 'Journey Into Space' - 'Dick Barton Special Agent, with his friend, Snowy'.*

*I loved all kinds of music, I must have been manic to bring up, I wanted a conductor's baton, I didn't know what it was for but I thought the conductor [usually a man] waving it looked really impressive and seemed to be in charge. As mum played her Beethoven records, I would conduct the orchestras and concert pianists that were on tv. Quite often when the show was over, I tried to copy them on our 'upright'. I often look back and wonder how life has changed, I guess not that much - kids still mimic the celebrities on tv. We think that things are more violent, I always thought life was violent. These days the media complain about gangs and hoodies, well, in the fifties every area had a gang on their patch; you'd probably be set upon by a bunch of boys. I was very young when the teddy boy thing happened. I knew that the older generation didn't approve but I thought 'Teds' looked great and had attitude. Although I was only nine or ten, I wanted to be a Ted. Dad laughed when he saw pictures of the Teddy boy suits, he said his father used to wear the same fashion, long drape jackets and tight trousers - but of course the term 'Teddy Boy' suits was a reflection off the Edwardian era, when the style first started. Mods wore Italian suits, 'Winkle picker' shoes with long, pointed toes and sported flat college boy haircuts. Teds and Mods fought like crazy - There were famous gang fights between Teds and Mods, then some years later Mods and Rockers.... Rockers were closely related to Teds, there was just more leather.*

## PODCASTS

Here is the link for all the Podcasts put together by Sven and Ian for the Voices group and Russ's website. <https://www.russballardmusic.com/podcast.html> I am sure most of you will have heard the first two parts of their podcast with Russ, which are there now and part 3 will appear on 1st April, before the next newsletter will be out.

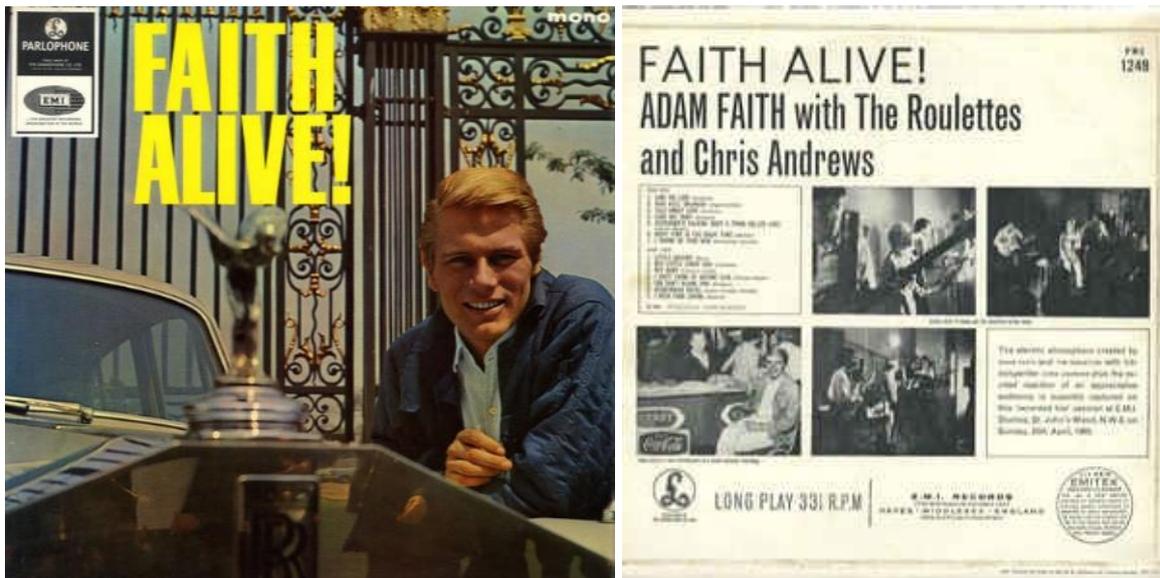
## QUESTION OF THE MONTH

Hi Russ, what can you remember about the recording of Faith Alive? Where and when was it and was the recording start, stop or continuous?

**Russ:** "What do I remember about 'Faith Alive' .... It was 1965, the recording was Abbey Road Studios...number two. There was a stage about four feet high. We were set up the same as we set for our normal gigs, except, as Chris Andrews was playing with us, we had a grand piano also. The fan club were invited before any other people and they were very enthusiastic.... the atmosphere was electric. We decided on a song set list and just played through without stopping. It was a great evening and we still talk about it.....You wouldn't get that in any other job.... Magic!"

**Sue:** A memory of that Sunday in 1965. The sound has gone a little wobbly over time, but this is quite a special track as it was written by our own Mod Rogan.

<https://youtu.be/Pft3dhL6IQY>



## RUSS'S MUSIC HISTORY

By Dave Williams

### Shooting for the Stars - David Courtney

Many artists have featured over the years in this 'History' section, but one that has so far escaped the net is **Leo Sayer**. I was reminded of this recently when the **Healing Hands** video was posted on You Tube. The song came about through a collaboration between Russ and **David Courtney**, and those with long memories will recall that David was the songwriting partner of **Leo Sayer** in the early 1970s. David played a massive part in getting Leo's career off the ground and as a Grammy nominated award winning songwriter and producer, he has sold more than 33 million records. He became the first British songwriter to receive the Tsarskoselskaya Art Award in Russia for his writing and production on Russian artist Marina Kapuro's 2016 album Matinee, and it is he that I've chosen to feature this month.

Born David Cohen in Brighton, East Sussex, in 1949, David was drawn towards music after hearing **The Shadows**, and with some friends formed a band called **The Urchins** with David on drums. The band were proficient enough to gain a place in the finals of the **Melody Maker Beat Contest** held in London. Brighton was an exciting place to be in the mid-60s and

David describes The Urchins as a proud Mod band. He witnessed the Battle of Brighton between the Mods and the Rockers on the beach front, which is featured in the film **Quadrophenia**.

The Urchins gigged heavily and made a few recordings, but their big break came in 1967 when **Adam Faith** was looking for a backing band to replace **The Roulettes**. The Urchins were recommended by Gunnell Management and were auditioned by Adam at the **Ram Jam Club** in Brixton. They passed the audition and were soon heading to Germany, where they played two, sometimes three gigs a night, with the venues often quite far apart from each other. On their return to Britain, they toured the cabaret club circuit and a solid friendship started to form between himself and Adam. Eventually the band began to fall apart as arguments developed and a split was inevitable, though not before they performed at Adam and Jackie Irving's wedding.

After the split, David decided to teach himself to play piano and taking it to it quite quickly, he discovered that he had gift for writing good melodies. Meanwhile he formed an Entertainments Agency with his father, booking acts such as **Bruce Forsyth**, **Dave Allen** and **Freddie Starr**. However, he missed doing his own thing and decided to place an advert in a local newspaper looking for local talent to promote. A day of auditions was arranged, which hadn't borne much fruit until late in the afternoon when a band called **Patches** took the stage. David knew straight away that this band were special, largely due to their dynamic lead singer with the mane of curly hair. Once the band left the stage a deal was agreed over a handshake.

David arranged an audition with **George Martin** for his new record label AIR. Patches were offered a contract on the spot. When the paperwork arrived, David couldn't find a music lawyer in the Brighton area, so he decided to drive to Adam Faith's house to run it past him. Adam went through the contract and asked David if he could hear a tape of the band. Adam liked what he heard and suggested that they should tear up the contract and manage the band themselves and Adam would finance an album.

**Patches** secured a deal with Warner Brothers for two singles and the option of an album. When the singles failed to chart, Patches were released. David and Adam remained confident that there was something special about lead singer **Gerard Sayer** and wanted to pursue working with him. This didn't go down well with other members of Patches, who disbanded as a result.

Deciding that Gerard needed a name change, David came up with 'Leo' after reading the star signs in his local newspaper. At the same time David decided to change his own surname from Cohen to Courtney. His father was not impressed. Leo and David got together every day at David's flat. Leo would turn up at 9am with a notebook of poems and David would sit at the upright piano previously owned by Adam and before that, **Chris Andrews**. They would work intensely, coming up with songs and committing them to tape, often finishing at 2am the following morning when Leo would race back to his houseboat to grab a few hours of sleep before the next session.

Once the pair had written sufficient numbers for an album, recording time was booked at **Richard Branson's Manor Studio** in Oxford. Here eight songs were recorded. Additional sessions took place at Roger Daltrey's 8-track studio housed in a barn adjoining his East Sussex house. It was at this session that Russ Ballard and Bob Henrit were brought in. This included the recording of **One Man Band**, which, it was decided, would benefit from a banjo. Without a banjo to hand, the one hanging on the wall in the saloon of the nearby Kicking Dog pub was borrowed.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O6gEkfwozhE> **The Show Must Go On** video link.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S2o2kdd\\_Veo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S2o2kdd_Veo) **One Man Band** video link

**Roger Daltrey** sat in on some of the recording sessions and really liked the songs. He was planning to release a solo album, and asked David and Leo if they could write some songs. The pair had already amassed a lot of material intended for use on Leo's second album, so they were able to use some of these whilst adding some new ones. Once Leo's album, **Silverbird**, was completed, David started work on producing Roger's album, **Daltrey**, with Adam, again involving Russ and Bob.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gck-lFLsl1I> **Giving It All Away** video link (Daltrey with Russ & Bob Henrit)



Left to right; Silverbird (Leo Sayer), Daltrey (Roger Daltrey), Just a Boy (Leo Sayer), Midsummer Madness (David Courtney)

Being careful to contact the correct **David Courtney**, the other one being a former British gangster, I asked David about the recording of these albums.

**DW)** On both the **Silverbird** and **Daltrey** albums, the session players included **Russ Ballard** and **Bob Henrit**. As former members of **The Roulettes**, I assume Adam played a part in recommending them?

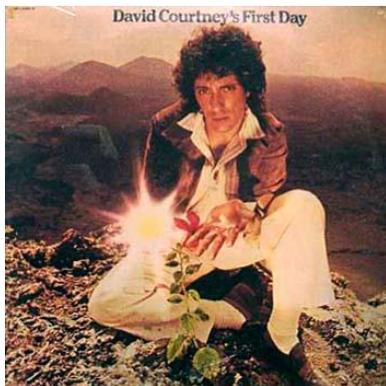
**DC)** Yes, I met Russ & Bob through Adam. We recorded the first set of tracks at The Manor in Oxfordshire with **Mike Giles** on drums. Russ and Bob played on the later sessions at Roger Daltrey's studio which included the recording of **The Show Must Go On**.

**DW)** Further success followed with **One Man Band**. Both Roger and Leo recorded versions of the song, and **Three Dog Night** also recorded a version that was a big hit in America. Leo then released his second album, **Just a Boy**, which featured the hit **Long Tall Glasses (I Can Dance)**, which peaked at No.4 in the UK. I notice you were not involved in Leo's 1975 album **Another Year**.

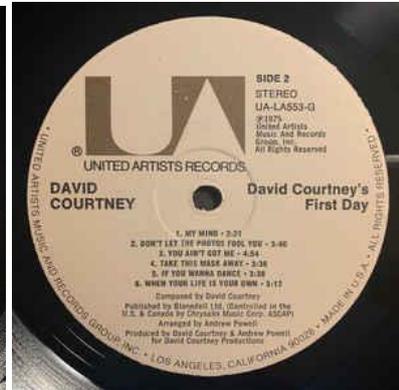
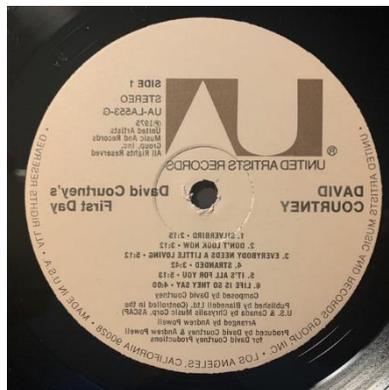
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c44JQWLqrCY> **Long Tall Glasses (I Can Dance)** – Video link.

**DC)** **Three Dog night** covered **The Show Must Go On** which made No.4 in the Billboard chart and remained in the charts for six weeks. Leo & I had gone our separate ways after **Just A Boy** was released, before he went on to record the **Another Year** album

**DW)** In 1975 you released your debut solo album “First Day”. It featured some great songs including the singles **My Mind** and **Don’t Look Now**, and a song called **If You Wanna Dance**, which has a similar feel to The Show Must Go On but based around a boogie-woogie piano rather than a banjo. Can you tell us a bit about the album? I gather Russ Ballard played on the sessions. Was Adam Faith still involved?



*First Day by David Courtney*

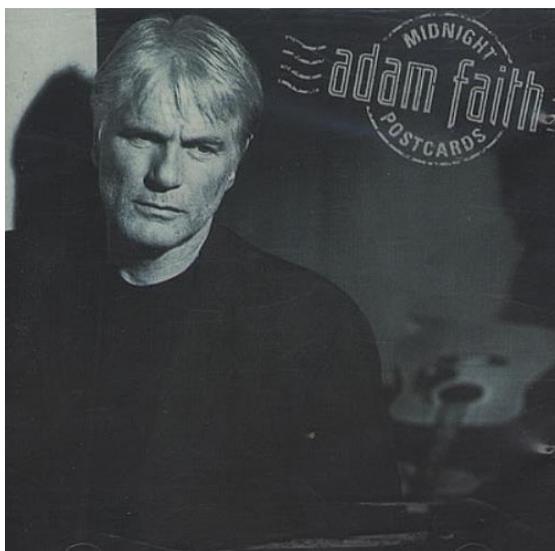


**DC)** I co-produced **First Day** with Andrew Powell, who previously worked with **Kate Bush**, **Pilot** and **Alan Parsons Project**. It was recorded at Air Studios. The engineer was Geoff Emerick, and the session musicians included Barry Morgan (drums), Mike Moran, Albert Lee and Alan Parker. **David Gilmour** played guitar on **When Your Life is Your Own** and was notable as being the first album he guested on. Adam was not involved.

**DW)** Talking of **Adam Faith**, you produced his 1974 **I Survive** album, then later in 1993, **Midnight Postcards**, Russ Ballard participating on sessions for both. **I Survive** was recorded after Adam’s terrible car accident, whilst **Midnight Postcards** came later and appears to be a set of classic covers.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X4D4w1jq6ik> Adam working in the studio in 1988 – video link

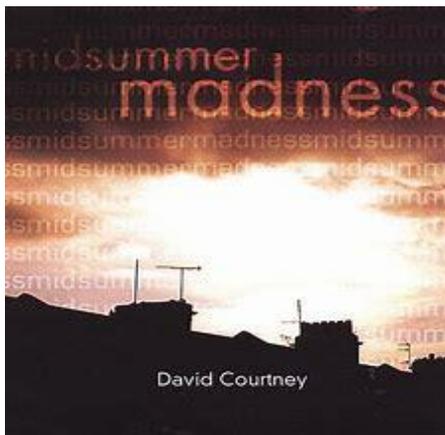
**DC)** **Midnight Postcards** consisted of a mix of covers and originals that we wrote together. It was the last album he made.



*Midnight Postcards featuring a mix of covers and originals, would be Adam Faith’s final recording,*

**DW)** Your second solo album, **Midsummer Madness**, was recorded at **Chateau Herouville**, aka 'The Honky Chateau' in France. The session musicians included **Jim Rodford**, **John Verity** and **Bob Henrit**, who at that time were putting together their debut **Phoenix** album. The Chateau has hosted many big-name recording artists such as **Elton John** (obviously). Any interesting big names while you were there? I also heard the chateau is haunted! Any strange happenings?

**DC)** **David Bowie** and **Iggy Pop** stayed with us for a week. One evening while relaxing in the main lounge area we heard a piano being played in the distance. The sound was coming from the empty studio. It was at this point we learned from the owners about the ghost of the Polish composer **Frédéric Chopin**. Needless to say, we didn't sleep at all well that night!



*Midsummer Madness by David Courtney recorded in 1976 but not released until 2006.*

**DW)** I really like the **Midsummer Madness** album, particularly the songs **No Hero** and **Dear John**. What was the reason for its non-appearance until 2006?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YomgvxhTp8Y> **No Hero** - video link (featuring John Verity guitar solo)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i74lUnpC-U> **Dear John** – video link

**DC)** I was unsure about the album, so I took the decision to mothball it. It was released many years later. I produced a version of **Dear John** with **Roger Daltrey** in 1976

**DW)** When it was eventually released, it was packaged with another album called **Shooting Star**. Thirty years is a long time between the two recordings. What prompted you to resume your solo career?

**DC)** It was the idea of **Peter Purnell**, the owner of **Angel Air Records**. I became side-tracked with other ventures and later was inspired to resume writing and recording.

**DW)** **Shooting Star** seems a little more experimental, including some interesting vocal effects. The track called **If I Could** is a good example. I absolutely love it. The title track, **Shooting Star**, became one of the two hits you wrote for pop duo **Dollar**, the other being **Who Were You with in the Moonlight**, both reaching No.14 in the UK charts. How did this come about?



Dollar featured David Van Day and Thereza Bazar. Their hits *Shooting Star* and *Who Were You with in the Moonlight* were written by David Courtney.

**DC)** I was going to release the original versions that I recorded as singles for myself post Midsummer Madness but was convinced by a mate called **Chris Youle** who persuaded me to let him have them for **Dollar**.

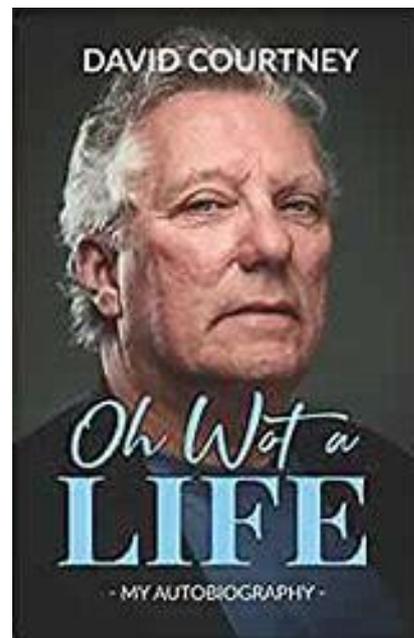
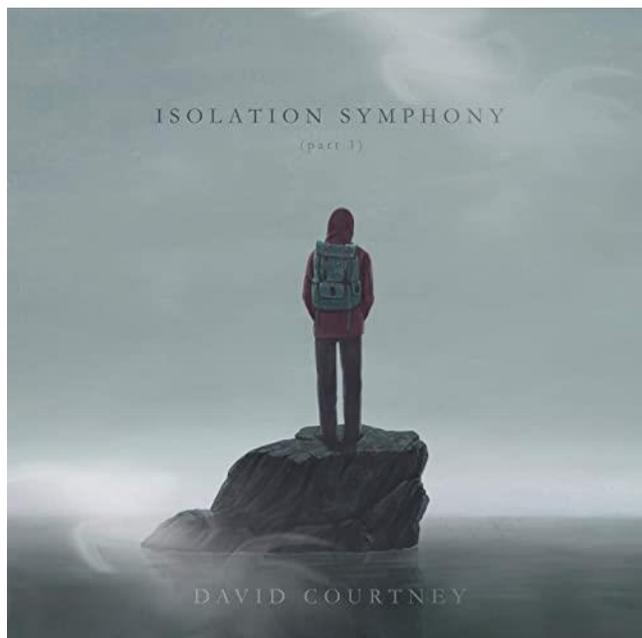
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TfcaMCDdswY> **Shooting Star** - video link.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vVrQuN1U4Gs> **Who Were You with In the Moonlight** - video link.

**DW)** Your latest recording project is **Isolation Symphony**, a concept album written during the Covid 19 pandemic. I can imagine the songs cover a range of emotions. Some video clips produced by **Vanessa Champion\*** have been posted on You Tube and the songs are impressive. You pulled in some great names for the recording sessions. It has elements of **Pink Floyd** and **Alan Parsons Project**. Can you tell us a bit about the album? What inspired you to write it, who was involved and how can readers get access to it?

\*Link to **Silent Scream** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hr3QVsJMjDY> video by Vanessa Champion

\*Link to **The Safe Zone** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bN1SBUXAub0> video by Vanessa Chapman



*Isolation Symphony* (left) and *Oh Wot a Life*, the David Courtney autobiography

**DC)** I was inspired by the events taking place and wanted to document it musically. I have always loved concept albums starting with *Sgt Pepper* by **The Beatles** and *In Search of the*

Lost Chord by **The Moody Blues**, as well as Ziggy Stardust by **David Bowie**. I am already working on a new project at the moment. It is very exciting and it's going to be another concept. As for Isolation Symphony, its available through the usual outlets, including the Angel Air website <http://www.angelair.co.uk> and Amazon. Also, for more information on this and other releases, there is my website [www.davidcourtney.co.uk](http://www.davidcourtney.co.uk) . This also carries details on my autobiography **Oh Wot a Life**.

**DW)** Yes, I've read the autobiography and I can't recommend it highly enough. Let's just say the title says it all! You continue to be active in the music industry. Over your 50 years in the business, what would you say has been your proudest moment?

**DC)** I would say my proudest moment was working with **Sir Paul McCartney**.

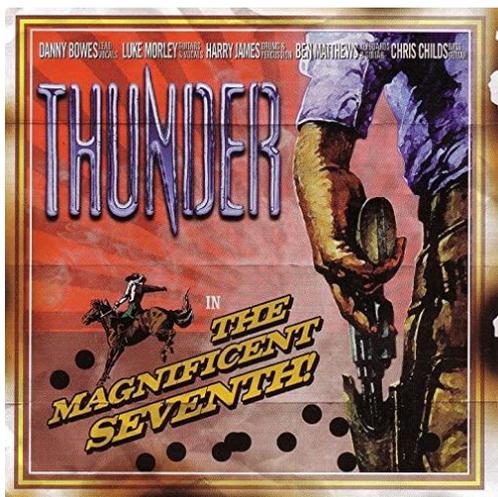
**DW)** An honour and a privilege indeed. Thank you for answering my questions David. I've really enjoyed putting this piece together and best of luck with your current and future projects. I wish I could have included more, but as they say, it's all in the book. If you buy the Kindle version of the autobiography as I did, there is a bonus download included containing some great music!

Finally...another chance to see the video that inspired this article. **Healing Hands** recorded by Russ Ballard and written by Russ Ballard and David Courtney  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=irDGTM2fkkQ> - **Healing Hands** – video link.

## COVER QUEST

This month's discovery is by a well-known British melodic rock band with a loyal following.

### No.30



*The Magnificent Seventh by Thunder*

### One Fatal Kiss by Thunder

Hailing from London, Thunder was formed in 1989 by former **Terraplane** members **Luke Morley** (lead guitar), **Danny Bowes** (lead vocals) and **Harry James** (drums). Co-written by Russ Ballard and Luke, **One Fatal Kiss** features on the band's 2005 album **Magnificent Seventh**.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eb8t06Z7Jdc> **One Fatal Kiss** – Video link

The band has had a stop and start career, splitting and reforming a number of times because of members being involved in other projects and there “not being enough hours in the day”. Even when they have been apart, they committed to play a Christmas show every year during which they usually include a lot of interesting cover numbers.

Thunder has had a fairly consistent line-up since they formed, the only changes being the bass player. Mark “Snake” Luckhurst was the original bass player until he was replaced in 1992 by Mikael Höglund who was in turn replaced by current bass player **Chris Childs** in 1996. Chris Childs? Yes, the former bass guitarist with the **Russ Ballard Band**.

Fans of Thunder will be pleased to hear they have a new album, their 13<sup>th</sup>, titled **All the Right Noises**, released on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2021 by BMG Records.