



(Header by Sven Kramer)

## APRIL 2021

Welcome to our new readers! The sun is shining!! Things are looking up.

Dave is spoiling us with his articles - another big name with connections to Russ for us this month. Again, I would like to thank him for all the work he has put into this, and it is considerable.

Can you imagine Russ as a Teddy Boy, albeit a mini one?

Put your feet up and enjoy!

Best wishes

Sue

## THIS MONTH FROM RUSS

As the lighter mornings have arrived, I've been getting full enjoyment from my indulgences and starting two hours earlier. The running I've always enjoyed but it's a great thing to do in the spring. The blossoms are on the trees, the birds and small creatures are becoming amorous and, as I'm on farmland, the rape is brightening the fields beautifully.

I'm in the studio just after seven for six hours, writing, then playing and recording, with phone call interruptions. These things I've always done but, in the past, there's always been some respite, occasionally, lunch times, friends and I have a bite to eat in a favourite restaurant. Sadly, because of lockdown, I, like most of the World have been limited to our personal ground hog day, however, I do have so many great moments each day, indulging myself....and there's no place I'd rather be.

Things are looking up now - the vaccine is working wonders [in the UK, anyway]. - We're unlocking gradually, and thousands of tickets have been sold for festivals in this country. Wow! - We'll be on the road again, playing LIVE, - YES, I'm looking forward to that, I hope you are too.

Much Love,  
*Russ xxx*

## STORIES FROM THE LIFE OF RUSS

I finished my 'Life Stories' last month with fashion in the late fifties and early sixties.

I was probably the smallest Teddy Boy around, I watched the styles teds were wearing, mimicking the way they walked and copied everything. There was nowhere I could find a shop that sold Teddy Boy clothes for eleven-year-olds, [and probably no way mothers would buy them], so, I had to adapt the clothes I had. I started wearing my brother's jackets which were really a few sizes too big for me, but 'Teds' wore drape jackets, so, I had to wear a long jacket and the only long jacket I could lay my hands on was owned by my big brother. The fact that the jacket wasn't made as a drape didn't enter my head.... also, the sleeves were about six inches too long for me wasn't a concern. Teddy Boys also wore pegged trousers which meant the tighter the better. I didn't have the nerve to take in my trousers, but I had a pair of Lee Cooper jeans and I decided to mutilate them. I took a needle and cotton and proceeded to take in my Lee Coopers. When I finished the circumference of the leg was eleven inches. Now I had to see if I could get into them. It was difficult but I succeeded. They felt tight, I didn't care, I thought you have to sacrifice everything for fashion. Occasionally, the stitches did tear, so, I just re- sewed them. My dad looked at me and said 'Blimey, my dad wore them like that'. Mum did have a smile on her face when she saw her little boy as a 'Ted'.... she said, "You look lovely dear." - in the end I think she became a bit tired of seeing me with my various jeans and trousers half done and bless her heart, she used to stitch them for me.

At this time, I was still going to piano lessons every Wednesday. After school I'd leave the class around four, walk to the bus terminus situated at Eleanor Cross Road, jump on a 659 or 675 and ask for a threepenny ticket to Ordnance Rd. Then I'd walk the three hundred yards to Totteridge Road, where piano teacher, Mr. Bentley listened to my excuses for not learning last week's homework....it was too much like hard work. I really wanted a guitar, however, my mum and dad told me to "Stick to the piano". When I walked out of Mr. Bentley's piano lesson it was like being let out of prison.... I had an excited feeling like, great, I won't have to do this for another week. I pestered my dad to buy me a guitar. He always said the same thing, "Stick to the piano".... Until one day, after an episode of particularly unpleasant brattiness from me, my father relented and said, "GET YOUR COAT ON". We jumped into his lorry and drove the two and a half miles to 'Moore' a shop that sold guitars. I bought the most expensive one I could see....it cost 10 guineas [£10.10p]. Also, I took a guitar tutor, called play in a day by Burt Weedon. It was a magnificent feeling - Yes!! I have a guitar! As we arrived home and walked through the door, my dad said..."t'll be another bloody five-minute wonder."

I'll continue next month.... Enjoy yourselves when everything unlocks.... Life is for living too..... Lots of Love, Russ

## QUESTION OF THE MONTH

"Can Russ tell us.... who are Gail, Rene, Julie and Annabel? That's if he can say!! 😊"

**Russ:** Ha ha! - only the names have been changed to protect the innocent....

Actually, Gail, which was a song I wrote on 'Winning' - The title was 'A Song for Gail', was inspired by a tv documentary, called, 'Gail is dead'. A camera crew followed a young woman as she battled her addiction to drugs. She had no one in her life who cared, and that fact led her to say many times, "I want to die". It was a moving story. To shorten the story, she

died....and no one expected it. I did get a nice letter from the producer, who thanked me for writing the song.

There were a few 'Julies' that I have known, and I could see that they all wanted a Rock 'n' Roll Lover.

With 'Rene Didn't Do it', I first had an idea in my head of an 'Hawaii 5 0' story which I turned in to a song .... I needed a name, and I chose Rene, a French man who I knew many years ago and he will probably never know the song was about him.

'Annabel' - The London club, 'Annabel's' was the inspiration. The club has been in London since the swinging sixties, having never been a member myself, I was wondering if Annabel ever did exist, and if so, she could possibly still be there every night 50 years later.

[Video link to A Song for Gail from the 1976 album Winning] [https://youtu.be/WYjE\\_aPaAt8](https://youtu.be/WYjE_aPaAt8)

## **RUSS'S MUSIC HISTORY**

**By Dave Williams**

### **Still Walking on the Wire – Leo Sayer**



*Photograph by Eliot Gilbert*

Following on from last month's David Courtney feature, it's my pleasure to bring you an interview with David's songwriting partner, the lyrical genius, the face that made those songs famous across the world, all the way from his home in Australia, the legendary Mr Gerrard 'Leo' Sayer.

**DW) Hi Leo, Thanks for agreeing to share some time with our subscribers. First of all, I hope you and your family are safe and well in these pandemic times. In the UK, we are making steady progress with the vaccination programme. How are things there?**

**Leo)** It's a pleasure. I read your article on David and there's many moments there in Russ's history that I wasn't aware of. Healthwise, all my family in the UK are fine but it's like we are living on a different planet down here. We have almost no cases of Covid in Australia at present. I am in line to get a vaccination, 'cos of my age, but my doctor is advising me to hold off 'til I need to travel internationally, which is something that is not allowed at present anyway. I'm scheduled to come to UK at the end of August for shows and also finish up an

Irish tour that had some dates last year postponed 'cos of the pandemic, but I am waiting on the travel ban here to lift, like so many others.

**DW) Last month I wrote an article on David Courtney, which explained how the two of you got together as songwriters. Turning the clock back, what led you into music? Was Patches your first band, or were there others before?**

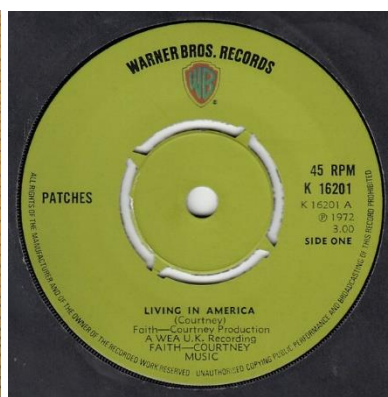
**Leo)** I was a young artist in my youth, it was the only thing I thought I was good at, 'til I discovered music via an older cousin, who turned me onto Bob Dylan and Buddy Holly. My father was a singer in the choir, and my Irish granddaddy (on my mother's side) played fiddle and harmonica. Some of that must've rubbed off but it wasn't a truly musical upbringing. Nevertheless, I was a soloist in the church choir and the Parish priest of our local church gave me some early singing pointers, enabling me to have a strong clear and confident voice from an early age. After art school I went up to London and used to sit in with all the big 'names' on the blues scene in those late 70's. When I came back to Sussex I joined (or formed) a series of amateur bands, and Patches was the final one of many of those.

**DW) Patches, featuring Max Chetwynd on guitar, Ian Whitmore on bass and Mike Daroy on drums, came third in a local heat of the Melody Maker Battle of the Bands. When you answered David's newspaper advert and went to audition at the Pavilion Theatre in Brighton, what were you looking to achieve?**

**Leo)** I guess we wanted to find out how far we could take it. Our ambitions were to try and get paid more, maybe get up to London where someone would notice us. We were working day jobs and writing our own songs and it looked like we had as much talent as the bands we were competing against. Most of the groups that bettered us had more money to spend on better instruments, amps, transport than us, so we thought we were deserving a shot. And that's what we brought to David's audition.

**DW) When John Burgess heard the two demo tracks you worked on with David, he offered Patches a contract with AIR, George Martin's label on the spot. David wisely decided to run this past someone with music industry knowledge before signing. He drove the two of you to Adam Faith's house. What are your recollections of that trip? I gather he left you sitting in the car for quite a while.**

**Leo)** Ha! Well, Adam only talked to David at first, and yes, they left me in the car. I thought this was hopeless, a waste of time. But then when Adam came out, he said he was going to book a studio and we were going to make a record. The Air thing was instantly shelved, which I didn't mind as I thought the session that we did for Burgess was well below our best. My instincts told me that Adam would be a far better bet, and these turned out to be right.



[Video link: Patches released one single, featuring David Courtney's Living in America on the A side and David and Leo's The Hour of Love on the B side]

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9FmR2DnogLk>

**DW)** Once Adam decided he would manage you, things progressed quickly. Patches disbanded, although the guitarist Max Chetwynd stayed involved, Gerard became Leo, Cohen became Courtney and the two of you started writing songs at David's Brighton home in Wykeham Terrace. Commuting by train from your houseboat in Shoreham, you worked from 9am through to putting down a demo tape, which could take until the early hours of the next day, after which you'd go home to sleep before being back to start the process again next day. That sounds exhausting. How long was it before you'd accumulated enough songs to start recording an album?

**Leo)** I think David and I started working well together pretty quickly, after all what else did we have to do? David was coming up with melody after melody and I was coming up with all the words. It all just came together so naturally, we wrote prolifically and dreamed of making hits, both of us on the same wavelength. Then we'd play the songs to Adam. He liked 'em all, there really weren't any duds. We almost had too much material, but we cherry picked what felt right and worked up demos at David's flat with Max also on guitar. Then we took that collection up to The Manor.

**DW)** The first recording sessions were made at Richard Branson's Manor Studio in Oxford in July 1972 with David on piano, Max on guitar, Dave Wintour and Michael Hodges sharing bass duties and Mike Giles, from King Crimson, on drums. David and Adam were involved in production, something they were relatively new to. Eight songs were put down, but not without problems when Adam threw a major tantrum and threatened to pull the plug. It sounds like things got rather tense.

**Leo)** We'd run one song at a time, and it soon became obvious which ones worked and which didn't. Having professional musicians in board helped of course, and it inspired David and I to compose some new ones while we were there too. We were sharing time at the studio with Mike Oldfield who was creating Tubular Bells, using his engineer Tom Newman too. It was such a creative place, and it had a great effect on David and me. I can't blame Adam for having a melt-down. We were taking our time and he was paying for it, but his actions had nothing to do with the creativity. He was just under his own pressure.

**DW)** The second sessions took place at Roger Daltrey's new studio at his home in East Sussex. How did that come about? I imagine it must have been exciting to meet Roger, and even more so when he said he loved your songs and asked if you could write material for his first solo album.

**Leo)** Yeah. We had some time to take stock and found that what we'd already recorded sounded great. I still wanted to keep playing live and was auditioning a new band one day when journalist Keith Altham turned up. He liked what he heard and suggested we use Roger's studio. We went up to see him and he was smashing, really supportive and interested in the project. So, we all decamped up there. Roger helped me get a new live band too. When Russ and Bob joined the sessions, that really kicked things along. Now we sounded like a band. When we decided we had enough tracks for the 'Silverbird' album, David and I had still had plenty of good songs to spare, so when Roger said, 'I'd like some like these for myself' we gave him a tape.

**DW)** Russ Ballard and Bob Henrit, both former members of Adam's band The Roulettes, were drafted in for these sessions, taking on guitar and drum duties respectively, with Russ also adding some keyboards. 'The Show Must Go On was one



of the songs recorded. When it was decided that a banjo was needed for the song, legend has it that you borrowed one that was hanging on the wall at a pub nearby.

**Leo)** I don't remember exactly, but I think there was a local band at the Kicking Donkey, and we borrowed the banjo from them. I think I was the one who suggested the song needed one.



Left to right: *The Show Must Go On* and *One Man Band* by Leo Sayer (Chrysalis Records)

**DW)** The fruits of these two recording sessions resulted in the release of the 'Silverbird' album. The first single 'Why is everybody going home' failed to chart, but the follow-up, 'The Show Must Go On' raced to No.2 in the UK charts, made memorable by you appearing on TV wearing the Pierrot costume. That was a master stroke. Who came up with the idea?



Left to right: *Why is Everyone Going Home* and *Long Tall Glasses* by Leo Sayer (Chrysalis Records)

**Leo)** 'Why Is Everybody Going Home' was one of the tracks recorded at The Manor, and Adam kind of directed the recording and influenced the great string arrangement by Del Newman. It was an epic track, but sometimes when you are too close to a project you can't make the best decisions. Adam was recovering from a major car crash at the time, and I think the single choice was influenced by his emotions. This didn't translate to the public, so it wasn't a hit. But everything changed when 'The Show Must Go On' came out. I was now wearing the Pierrot outfit and make up, dressed in the image seen on the back of the album cover. The world took notice and suddenly the concept of 'Silverbird' all made sense. I had a hit album at my first attempt!



Left to right: *Silverbird* LP by Leo Sayer featuring the Pierrot costume on the rear cover (Chrysalis Records)

**DW)** You'd already written enough material for a second album. 'Just a Boy' was released in 1974, its title derived from a line in the song 'Giving it all Away', a hit for Roger Daltrey. More on Roger shortly. 'One Man Band' was released as a single, again with you appearing on TV in the Pierrot costume. The song peaked at No.6 in the UK. The costume was dispensed with on the release of 'Long Tall Glasses (I Can Dance)'. I assume it was never intended to be a long-term thing, as suggested by the photo on the rear sleeve of 'Just a Boy'. How did it feel stepping out from behind the mask, and was it something you felt you needed to do?



*Rear sleeve of Leo Sayer's Just a Boy LP (Chrysalis Records) signalled the end for the Pierrot costume*

**Leo)** The Pierrot costume only related to 'Silverbird'. I'd made a vow to perform like this for exactly a year, and that's what I did. I remember being on a flight back from LA with my wife Jan and Adam when that date came up, mid-flight. I told them that was that, and 'Just A Boy' marked the change. I guess I got cold feet about going onstage in my streetwear of jeans and T-shirt, so Jan made me a suit we called 'The Great Gatsby'. I even had a nice black fedora hat. That image appeared on the covers of the music papers and everyone seemed to accept it. There were no regrets but funnily when I went back later to LA, the first press thing I attended was set up like a lookalike contest and I was the only one there not dressed as a clown. I'd moved on.

**DW)** The record buying public clearly liked what they saw, and 'Long Tall Glasses' was another success, climbing to No.4 in the UK and No.9 in the US. Meanwhile The Who's Roger Daltrey had released a solo album, made up of Courtney / Sayer songs except for two written by Courtney / Faith, and the single 'Giving it all away' became a big hit for him, reaching No.5 in the UK, with the album reaching No.6. It's a great album, but very different to anything he'd recorded before I suspect it shocked a lot of Who fans, who were expecting another rock record.

**Leo)** Yeah, there was also some flak from his record company, albeit the Who's record company, Track Records. They tried to stop the release, but Roger was adamant. He went on to make some more really good solo records too.

**[Video link: Roger Daltrey & Leo Sayer performing Giving it all Away]**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l4w8OX\\_2cDo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l4w8OX_2cDo)

**DW)** In little over a year the Courtney / Sayer songwriting partnership chalked up four top 10 singles, actually five when you include Three Dog Night's cover version of 'The Show Must Go On', which reached No.4 in the US Billboard charts. The world appeared to be your oyster but the songwriting partnership with David was about to come to an end, for now at least, as your 3rd album, 'Another Year', would feature a new co-writer in Frank Farrell, former bass guitarist with Supertramp. You wrote a number of songs with Frank, who sadly is no longer with us. How did writing with Frank compare to writing with David? Was it the same writing process?

**Leo)** Adam intentionally split me and David up, and neither of us could understand why. I was told David was concentrating on his solo album and didn't have time to write with me, and he got told something else. It was frustrating, but I had already started on some lyrics and now that David was not available, I started hearing my own melodies for these. Frank Farrell was playing bass in my band and he was a super pianist too. I started singing him my ideas and we pretty quickly put some of that on tape. You really can't compare different songwriters. Frank had a very Beatlish style I guess, he was a Brummie, and as he had been in Supertramp before playing with me, their style had rubbed off on him, not a bad thing. Anyway, just as it did with me and David, as soon as we tried writing together, we pretty much immediately hit the ground running.

**DW)** With David moving on, you also needed a new co-producer. Step forward Mr Russ Ballard. Was this a decision taken by Adam?

**Leo)** Yes, that was Adam's choice, as they'd worked together for many years. But I was happy with this as I knew from our work together on 'Silverbird' that Russ was a superb musician, and this could only influence the album for the better. Russ played piano on some the tracks, most notably on 'Bedsitterland' and 'I will Not Stop Fighting' - beautiful parts. I think Russ and I found a great chemistry, as he and I were performing these songs 'live' in the studio, recording the same take with no overdubs.

**DW)** Like David, Russ was a novice as a Producer, one of his reasons for leaving Argent being that he wanted to get more involved in that side of the process. How easy did the recording of 'Another Year' come together? I seem to recall reading that there was pressure from Adam to complete the project within a two-week period, hence things were a bit more rushed than you would have liked.

**Leo)** Well unfortunately Adam didn't give us long enough to work on the project properly, and by that, I mean it was hectic for Frank and me to finish up the songs to our liking even before starting the recording. I remember us driving over to the Costa Brava in Spain two weeks before the studio was booked. Two of our roadies were driving. There was Frank, me, a tape machine and Justin Hayward's upright piano shackled on to a trailer - no midi or DAW's in those days! We had rented songwriter Chris Andrews' house and finished all the songs in a week, including the six days it took to get there and back. I think Frank and I flew back home and went straight into the studio. It was such a rushed job, but I'm truly proud of the result. It's possibly my favourite album from those early days.

**DW)** In the Netherlands and Ireland, the first single from 'Another Year' was the beautiful 'I Will Not Stop Fighting'. In the UK 'Moonlighting' provided you with your biggest hit to date reaching No.2 in the UK charts, achieving silver status, and topped the Irish singles chart. 'Another Year' reached No.8 in the UK album charts and like the single, it also achieved a silver award. Bearing in mind the new writing and production team, it must have been pleasing that the album sold well and maintained

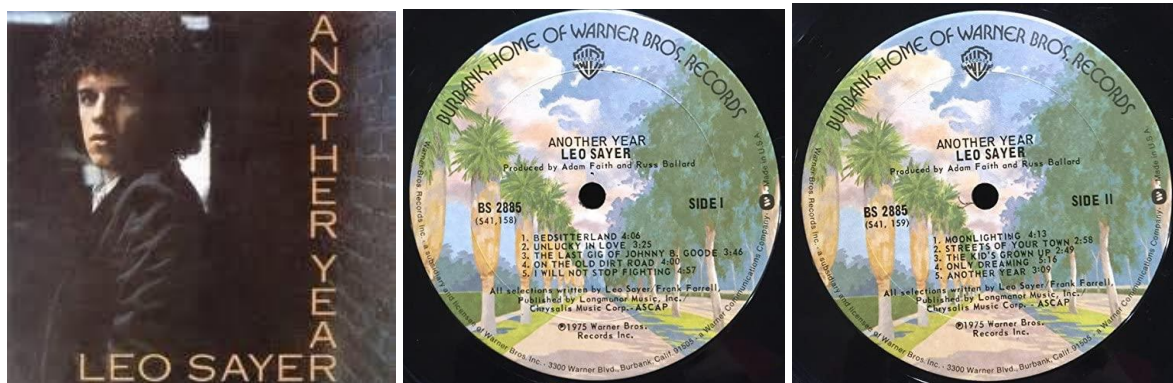


your career momentum. Were you concerned at any time that the album might not succeed?



Left to Right: The singles *I will Not Stop Fighting*, *Moonlighting* and *Let It Be* by Leo Sayer (Chrysalis Records)

**Leo)** Well, I was told it wasn't a success and Adam swore he'd never produce me again because of it. That's typical of my experiences with him. He'd change his mind in an instant and working with him as my manager meant I'd often get left high and dry. There were many things going on behind the scenes, and though I was at my creative peak, I don't think that was appreciated at the time. But, yes, 'Another Year' did work well for me.



*Another Year* by Leo Sayer (The US Version on Warner Bros Records)

**DW)** After 'Another Year', more changes came with the release of your 4<sup>th</sup> album 'Endless Flight'. Suddenly you were recording in California with the cream of American session men and Richard Perry as producer. The results would include your best-known hit 'You Make Me Feel Like Dancing', No.2 in the UK, 'When I Need You', No.1 in the UK, USA and many other countries, and 'How Much Love', which made the Top 10 on both sides of the Atlantic. What prompted you to work with Richard Perry? Was Adam still managing you by this time and how did you feel about recording in America? Did you foresee the success that it would bring?

**Leo)** Adam now wanted me to make an American album and he had found me Richard Perry to produce it. I was meanwhile talking to Jerry Wexler, thinking he'd be perfect, but that was overruled. I didn't see eye to eye with Perry at first, I'd written some new songs, but he didn't like any of them. We were pulling in different directions but eventually found some common ground. As the album started to take shape I was writing, or co-writing, most of the material anyway. Adam was still managing me, but mostly he let Richard and I get on with it. For me the best thing about recording in L.A. was working with these incredible 'A-Team' musicians and my fellow songwriters. I was in there with the very best. Writing songs with the likes of Barry Mann and recording with guys like Ray Parker Jr and Steve Gadd, I was learning at the top table.

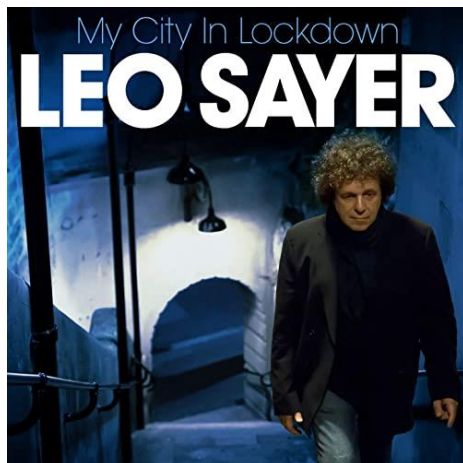


Leo's career flourished under Richard Perry with the *Endless Flight* LP yielding three hit singles left to right: *How Much Love*, *You Make Me Feel Like Dancing* and *When I Need You*

**DW)** You had many more hits including 'Thunder in My Heart', 'More Than I Can Say' and 'Orchard Road' and also re-united with David Courtney later on to write more songs. TV work included a really funny sketch with the comedy duo Cannon and Ball. [Video link to Cannon and Ball with Leo Sayer] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fW-rcK3kYk0>

Sadly, Bobby Ball passed away last October, partly attributed to Covid-19. It's sad that we have lost so many great entertainers in the last couple of years. David Courtney recently released a concept album, *Isolation Symphony*, on Covid-19 and the lockdown. You also released an excellent single last year called 'My City in Lockdown'. Do you see a light at the end of the tunnel and the possibility of getting back on the road in the near future? I know you have some UK dates lined up for later this year.

[Video link: My City in Lockdown by Leo Sayer] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qr--HzkeeBI>



*My City in Lockdown* released in 2020 by Leo Sayer

**Leo)** There were so many great experiences on TV. I had my own series for 3 seasons with the BBC, chose some great guests with whom I some amazing duets. Yes, it's indicative of this age we've reached that so many heroes are leaving us right now, it's sad but we hang in as best we can and personally, I don't like to dwell on it. I'm still as creative as ever, getting ready to release a new album as we speak, and even planning another. My voice is in excellent shape and I'm just starting to get back to live work down-under. I have some tours coming up this year and hope, as I've said, to carry out a major UK tour in September to November. I also am scheduled to guest with Jools Holland at the Albert Hall and a few other places. But, with the way things are right now - who knows? I'm taking each day as it

comes and I'm working all of *them, whether in my studio or in front of an audience. Just like the song says: 'The Show Must Go On'!*

**DW)** Thanks for your time Leo and we look forward to seeing you in the UK in the Autumn.

**Leo)** I'm delighted to have been involved. Between us we had some great experiences making music together, and Russ and David with Adam before I came along. We made some great records and wrote some amazing songs. Those days are long gone now, and the way records are created nowadays is so vastly different. I can't imagine what happened for us will ever happen again, so it's important we tell our stories for posterity. Please send my best to Russ.

**Postscript:** Leo's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary 'The Show Must Go On' UK tour begins in late September and runs through to November. Details can be found on his website at <http://www.leosayer.com/shows/> or on his Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=280845523404533&set=pb.100044372621591.-2207520000.&type=3>

## DAVE'S COVER QUEST

Russ has tended to write on his own for most of his career, but he once revealed that he is open to collaborating with others, and since then it would appear to be that there has been no shortage of writers wanting to work with him. We have seen one or two co-written songs in recent cover quests by Loreta and Thunder. There are many more and this month we feature another.

### No.31



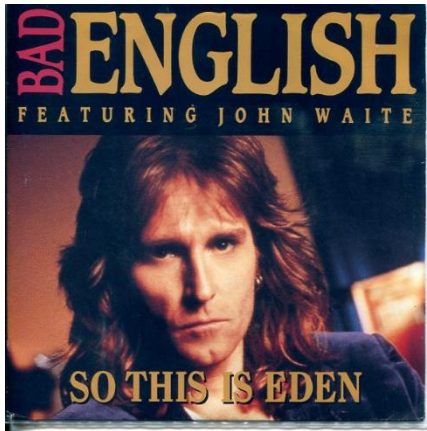
### Rebel Say a Prayer *by* Bad English

Bad English were formed in 1987 by former members of The Babys and Journey. Most will remember singer John Waite who had a massive solo hit with Missing You in 1984. Keyboard player Jonathan Cain and guitarist Neil Schon had also enjoyed considerable success as members of Journey, so Bad English, named during a game of pool after Waite missed a shot, came together with quite a musical pedigree. Perhaps unsurprisingly their first album went Platinum and Gold in America and Canada respectively. In Europe they were moderately successful.

The band's second album, 'Backlash' released in 1991 gained little attention in the States and was probably more successful in the UK and Holland. Sadly, the band had split by the time the record was released. Backlash featured this month's Cover Quest song 'Rebel Say a Prayer', co-written by John Waite, Jonathan Cain and Russ Ballard.

[Video link to Rebel Say a Prayer] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aluROGxUNcQ>

Bad English fans will point out that the same team also co-wrote the opening track 'So This is Eden' and indeed this is true, and you can hear it here.



[Video link to So This Is Eden] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LweEkA3pRJM>