



(Header by Sven)

## July 2021

A big welcome to our new readers.

Last month we had reason to celebrate and I missed it! We started the newsletter in March 2013 so **June 2021** was **#100**, without missing a single month. It has changed a little bit in those years and I don't think we ever expected it to be what it has become. Its current success has a lot to do with Dave Williams, with his Cover Quests and articles on various topics, into which he puts in a great deal of time and work. Many thanks to Dave and also to all our other contributors.

This month we welcome Richard Westwood, also Markus Linton, who has sent a couple of audio files from a German radio station with mentions of Russ. They are in attachments. Our German readers will enjoy those but, for those who don't speak German, there is some Russ music. And Liam Wilson spotted something in last month's Cover track. Go back to last month and have a listen and you will see what he means. You are all welcome to share your stories here...as long as they are Russ related.

For some years Russ has had a couple of photos on his studio wall, which he has decided to share with us here and on his Facebook page. They are personal photos so, thank you, Russ.

Best wishes  
Sue

## THIS MONTH FROM RUSS



*This photo was taken in 1985 when Roger played his first solo tour of the U.S.A. The three week trip was planned to promote his 1985 album, 'Under A Raging Moon'. Roger phoned a month or two after the album was completed to ask if I'd play guitar on the tour and sing a couple of my own songs within his set - [ to give him a break]. It was a good buzz to be back on tour after a few years off the road. The shows were eventually only on the east coast, taking in Boston, Philadelphia, Washington DC and ending in New York's, Madison Square Gardens. The photo was taken half way through the Gardens show. As we finished a song, a young women*

*handed me the bunch of flowers....which I promptly handed to Roger...As you can see we both saw the funny side of the moment - I also have a photograph of a moment at the same show, when two guest artist walked on to the stage to sing backing vocals on Twist and Shout, which was sung by another guest artist, John Entwistle. The guests are Julian Lennon and John Parr. Julian walked on from my side, looked at me and asked, "Which mic do I sing on?" I replied, "I saw your Dad sing this so many times" - Julian smiled and said, "I'll sing with you then" - John is an old friend, it was good to see him..... Great Memories - How time flies!!*



*Lots of Love,  
Russ xx*

## **RUSS - LIFE STORIES**

**1957/8**

*At this time, I was playing a lot of football for Kings Road School and the Waltham and District Schools team and on Saturday afternoons I played for Cheshunt Boys Club. I was 12 and the youngest player in the league - [The under 16's]. One day the Hertfordshire Mercury newspaper came to our house and requested an interview and photo. In the next edition there was a whole page dedicated to me. In the piece Roger Deal, who was coach, said, "He's just too good to leave out". I felt very proud after this. I thought, maybe I am good enough to be pro.*

*My school teacher, Stafford Young, had started a Boys Club, situated in a church hall. On one occasion he organised a music night which included a group called The Dick Teague Skiffle Group. I loved live music and this skiffle group were much better than others I'd ever heard and they had a charismatic singer called Harry Webb. There were five members, two guys strumming acoustic rhythm guitars, a drummer, which was unusual, a lead guitarist. The two members that held my attention were Harry, the singer, and the lead guitarist, Brian Parker....He was playing an electric guitar with an amplifier, which had a light that glowed as he played and Brian could play well - and his playing was exciting. Brian was sixteen, the same age as Harry, the singer - They were two I constantly watched....Harry, because he looked and sounded so good and Brian because he played so well. They were very exciting. One of the songs that made a big impression on me was, "Mary Don't You Weep".*

*Harry sang with great feeling, taking into account he was only sixteen. In fact, my dad [who was there], walked over to me and whispered in my ear, "This boy's better than Tommy Steele". The development of this story is this....The Dick Teague Skiffle Group disbanded a few months later because Harry wanted to sing rock - [inspired by Elvis] - He formed a backing band, signed to EMI Records and changed his name to Cliff Richard. Then, in the summer of 1958, Cliff had a hit single with a song*

*called 'Move It'. From then, Cliff was and still is one of the biggest stars in the country.*

*I wish you all a great summer, whatever you plan to do.....Be with you in August. Love, Russ xxx*

## **PODCAST**

The new podcast, **Bob Henrit Part 2**, is out now. It's a long one but you know it will be fun! <https://russballardmusic.com/podcast.html>

## **LETTERS**

### **From Markus Linten**

Hello Sue,

Two weeks ago a version of „Since you've been gone“ (Cherrie and Marie Currie) was played on the Radio Show „Oldieabend“ on MDR Sachsen-Anhalt (Magdeburg). The song was a listener's request. The presenter of the radio show explained that the original Version was from Rainbow.

So I wrote him a mail and last week he cleared it up and played Russ' version from his album „Winning“. You can listen to it when opening the attached file.

It's however interesting to hear between the lines ... 😊

Best wishes

Markus

... and also this one from last Thursday. Russ seems to be in the presenter's good books (we say in German „Stein im Brett haben“ 😊).

Best wishes form Germany

Markus

[Sue: You can find Markus's files in attachments.]

## From Liam Wilson

Hi Sue....

Rozalin Woods..... "What you going to do about it" .... Listen carefully .....distinct echoes of Russ's "Schoolgirl" in there.

Hope you're keeping well and keep up the great work.

Liam

## From Richard Westwood

Hi Sue

I hope you are well and continuing in your quest for all things Russ.

The story of the name Dave Williams, by Dave Williams, is so funny. A power three piece with each member named Dave Williams. Great! You should do it Dave.

I should have mentioned that drummer Dave Williams of Finders Keepers was an excellent drummer. He was having lessons from someone pretty famous in London whose name escapes me and I remember at the Brooklyn Tech gig thinking this is the first time I've watched both drummers (Bob Henrit and Dave Williams) on the bill playing orthodox grip. Both could do proper double stroke rolls too, a rare occurrence.

Regarding name funnies, like many young drummers I would often hang around Yardley's Drum Shop at the bottom of Snow Hill in Birmingham. Tom Farnell had recently ordered a new Ludwig mounted tom tom in Champagne Sparkle and it was in the shop waiting for him to collect. I was chatting to Tom Fisher and Colin Smith when I walked Mr Farnell. Colin chirps "Can you pass me Toms tom tom Tom."

I'll get me coat.

Regards

Richard.

## **RICHARD'S RAMBLINGS**

### **From Richard Westwood**

The first time I saw Argent live was at The Adelphi in West Bromwich. I can't remember the exact year but I think it was early 1970. Argents second album Ring of Hands had just been released. I was attending with my girlfriend and we both spotted a huge American car parked next to The Adelphi and we assumed it was being used by Argent.

Once inside the hall we found Rod Argent sitting at his Hammond organ and still in the process of sorting out his settings. At the time I didn't know much about Rod Argent other than him being in The Zombies and the composer of She's Not There. Information about anything was much more difficult to find in the days before the internet. Anyway we found a table and parked ourselves as part of a pretty small audience. I eventually went off to the Gents toilet and as I was standing at the urinal I noticed someone else had come in to use the facility and was standing one urinal away. I was excited to find it was my drum idol Bob Henrit. I quickly discovered that it's not possible to 'go' properly when standing near your hero. My bladder pump stopped working and I was left in mid-discharge. Bob was incredibly skinny. He was (and still is) five years older than me but from my perspective he was immortal. He was incredibly skinny with very long hair. He was dressed stylishly scruffy and was rather cool. I'd watched Bob on the tele with The Roulettes and I'd always loved the way he sat behind a drum kit, bolt upright and looking rather moody. But now, here he was, standing next to me, doing what comes naturally, whilst I was standing next to him with certain important functionality in a state of paralysis.

"Great new album!" I managed to splutter and Bob responded with a sunny smile and plenty of warmth. He was friendly and chatty and we spent a few minutes discussing who knows what. As he departed towards the front of the hall, I noticed Russ playing pool. He was dressed in a rather smart sports jacket in a brown check. If you've ever seen his brother Roy on the OGWT when Russ and his band performed a few songs, Roy was wearing a similar jacket. Perhaps it's a Ballard trade mark?

Anyway, some time later Argent appeared on stage. This was in the days when the back line carried the instrument sounds and the PA took care of just the vocals. They started their set with Stepping Stone. After 30 seconds Bob was pouring with sweat. He really did throw himself into the performance. Russ too was very energetic and his stage clothes were a skinny little armless vest, black

leather trousers and motorbike boots. The instruments were terrific. But the PA was hopeless. Russ started to sing “Remember days when we were close and warm.....” but you had to lip read because the PA just didn’t have any oomph. There was no sound man I can remember. The drums weren’t miked up.

Although I was disappointed with the overall sound, there was something magical about Argent. I know it’s been remarked upon before, but the band may have carried the surname of Rod, but the person that grabbed attention and ran the show was Russ.

This was my third time seeing Bob and Russ live. First was at Wednesbury Youth Club, second Brooklyn Tech both with The Roulettes. It was to be another nearly fifty years before I spoke to Bob again at the Russ Ballard event at Ware. He didn’t remember me! But there he was, still ridiculously skinny and still with a good head of hair.

My best friend gave me a painting that hangs at home. It shows an elderly jazz drummer behind a kit and says;

You don’t stop drumming when you get old - You get old when you stop drumming!

Well done Bob. What a terrific career.

Richard Westwood.

## **RUSS'S MUSIC HISTORY**

**By Dave Williams**

Rolling back the years





We dwell an awful lot on the early 1960s in this newsletter and the two official Facebook websites, quite rightfully, because at that time, a revolution was gathering momentum with the emergence of beat music. This would see Adam Faith's backing band The Roulettes stepping into the limelight from behind the shadows, Cliff stepping into the limelight with The Shadows whilst further north, The Beatles were making waves on Merseyside. On the opposite coast on Tyneside, Alan Price had assembled The Animals with Eric Burdon and Chas Chandler, and in the centre of England Graham Nash and Allan Clarke united to put Manchester on the map with The Hollies. Despite producing no one band as big as The Beatles, Birmingham could lay claim to having scores of bands with ever evolving line-ups, and some notable acts at the time were The Applejacks, the Spencer Davis Group and The Moody Blues. This was the picture in England, but what about north of the border? Scotland has produced its fair share of musical talent over the years and continues to do so today with Chvrches, Biffy Clyro, Calvin Harris, Lewis Capaldi and latest sensation Lola Lennox, the daughter of Annie, proudly waving the Saltire.

That is today, but back in 1964 a band was being assembled in Edinburgh called **The Ambassadors**. The name might not be familiar, given that they only played one gig, a private family wedding. The names of the founding members might be more familiar. Alan Longmuir, aged 16, led the group on guitar with his younger brother Derek joining him on drums, the line-up completed by their older cousin Neil Porteous on acoustic guitar. There is a proverb 'great oaks from little acorns grow', and this certainly applied to The Ambassadors. Changing their name to **The Saxons** and expanding their line-up, the group focussed on playing American

pop and R&B. As their popularity grew, they decided to become **The Rollers**, but wanted to add something that reflected the music they were playing. Taking it in turns to throw darts at a map of the United States, the second dart landed on Bay City, in Michigan, and history was about to be created.

Fast forward to 1971, the **Bay City Rollers** were signed to Bell Records and released a single called Keep on Dancing, which reached No.9 in the UK charts. Several unsuccessful singles followed, along with more changes in personnel. By 1974, the Longmuir brothers were accompanied by Stewart “Woody” Wood on guitar, Eric Faulkner on guitar and Les McKeown on vocals. This would become the classic Bay City Rollers line-up, and they were quickly catapulted to success and stardom across the globe as ‘Rollermania’ took hold. Fans, dressed in calf-length tartan trousers and tartan scarves, became known as ‘the tartan army’. Hit after hit followed; Bye Bye Baby, Remember (Sha La La), Shang-a-Lang, Summer Love Sensation and All of Me loves All of You to name just a few. I didn’t give them a lot of attention at the time. I was far more interested in following the fortunes of Argent and a few other favourites. However, tenuous links would soon emerge between **Russ Ballard** and the band.

I never for a minute thought I’d ever purchase a record by The Bay City Rollers. After all, they were labelled a ‘teeny bopper’ band. But behind the façade I’m guessing here were 5 guys trying to produce serious music. Eric Faulkner and Stuart Wood were co-writing a lot of the band’s music, although many of their singles relied on the writing talents of seasoned songwriters, Bob Gaudio, Bob Crewe, Bill Martin and Phil Coulter included. Nothing wrong with that at all. Clever thinking, no doubt on the part of their (later controversial) manager Tam Paton.

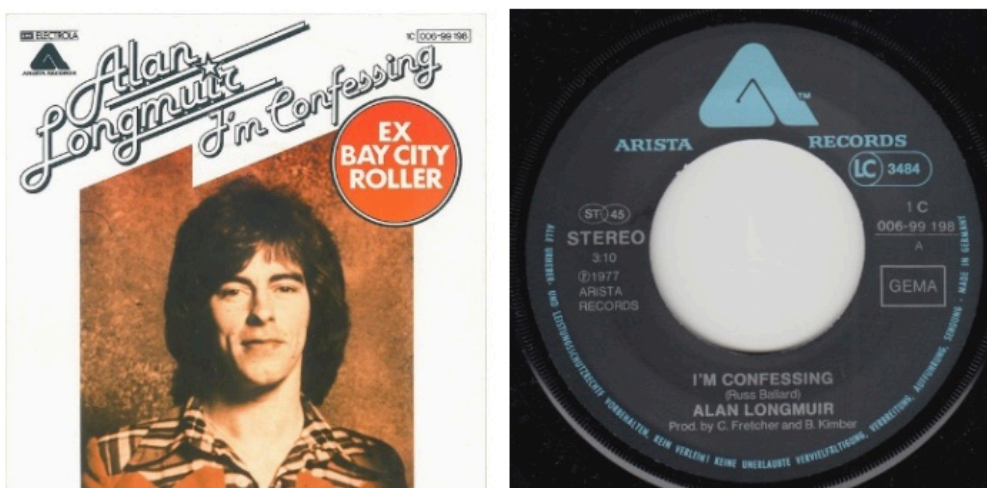
By early 1976, success had taken its toll on founder Alan Longmuir, and he left the group. His replacement was 17-year-old Ian Mitchell from Northern Ireland. His stay with band would be brief, but he would remain long enough to participate in the recording and release of the album Dedication in 1976. It contained a cover version of Dusty Springfield’s I Only Want to Be With You, which became a big hit in America. The US release included a cover version of **Russ Ballard’s Are You Cuckoo**, which wasn’t included on the UK pressing. Russ had included his own version of the song earlier in the year on his **Winning** album.

Ian Mitchell left to be replaced by guitarist Pat McGlynn. Again, McGlynn’s time with the band would be remarkably short, and after his departure, the band decided to continue as a 4-piece comprising McKeown, Wood, Faulkner and

Derek Longmuir. In July 1977 they released their 5th studio album, *It's a Game*. McGlynn had been present at some of the early sessions, but his contributions did not make it onto the final release. In the UK, a song called *You Made Me Believe in Magic* was released as the A side of a three-track maxi-single, peaking at No.34, a clear indication of their declining popularity. Ironically, this was the record I bought. I like it, though I'm sure that the inclusion of **Are You Cuckoo** on the B side probably played a part in me buying it. Here is a link to a show from 1976 featuring the band performing **Are You Cuckoo** (the song begins at 30.26) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1J9PoNB4auo> Dig those trousers!



In 1977, Alan Longmuir released a solo single called *I'm Confessing*. The song was written by **Russ Ballard** and issued by Arista Records. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V4wpcpFt6l8> The single failed to chart in the UK despite reaching No.44 in Australia, and Alan subsequently re-joined **Bay City Rollers** the following year, restoring the line-up to a 5-piece.



However, disenchantment in the ranks led to the departure of lead vocalist Les McKeown and manager Tam Paton. From that point onwards it's a well-worn story of a successful band falling apart, reforming, disagreements, different versions touring under the band's name and so on. At one point, in the early 1980s, seven members toured Japan together, with Mitchell and McGlynn both involved. In subsequent years former members have continued to work with and without each other, though a rift developed between Stuart Wood and Les McKeown, serious enough to prevent any future reunion of the classic line-up.

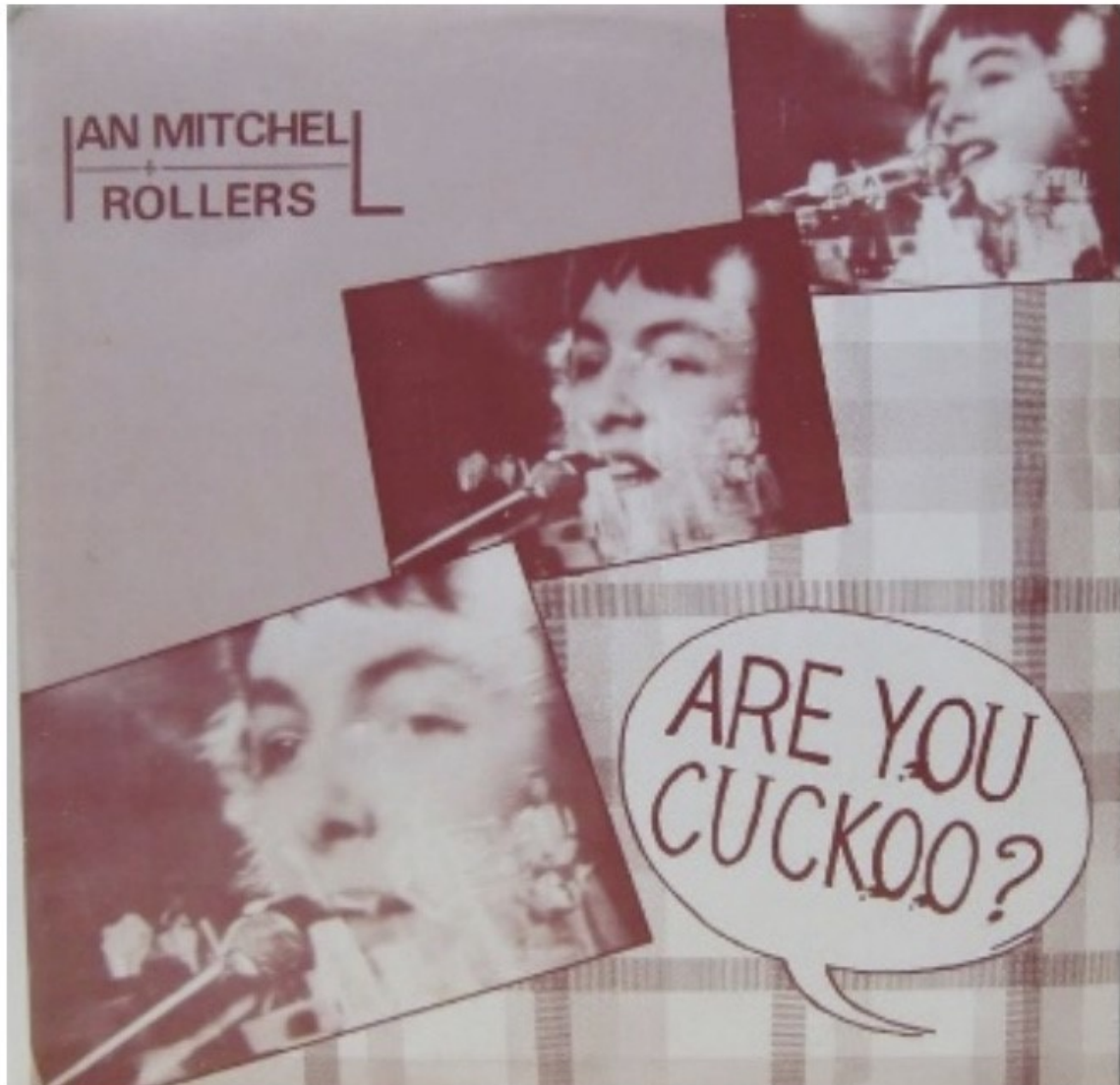
Tragically Alan Longmuir died on 2nd July 2018 after falling ill while on holiday with his wife in Mexico.

Lead vocalist Les McKeown released a handful of solo albums, one of which, Heart Control, only released in Japan, featured a **Russ Ballard** song called **Can't We Talk It Over?** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-oL-lqKdqqw> . McKeown joined Bay City Rollers in November 1973. He was reluctant to join them at first, but his arrival as the new frontman saw the group become massive almost overnight. Sadly, he died at his home earlier this year on 20th April 2021 aged just 65.



The losses do not end there sadly. On leaving Bay City Rollers after just 9 months, Ian Mitchell returned to his native Northern Ireland, where he joined some old school friends in the group Rosetta Stone. While Mitchell was with the Rollers, they released the 1976 album Dedication and achieved success in America with a cover version of Dusty Springfield's I Only Want to Be with You. Though Mitchell participated in brief reunions in later years, he also performed with his own Ian

Mitchell Band. Interestingly in Taiwan an 'unofficial' 1977 vinyl album release by Ian Mitchell Rollers, on Ian's own label, features a re-work of **Are You Cuckoo?** Featuring a track list of 28 songs including many Bay City Roller hits, its interesting that Ian chose to name the album after Russ's song.



Ian succumbed to a short battle with throat cancer on 2nd September 2020. He was 62 years old. He was very popular with musicians he had worked with over the years as well as his legion of fans.

## DAVE'S COVER QUEST

No.34



### Baby Blue by Pickup

This record came out in Germany in September 1981. No mistaking that Russ wrote it.

<https://www.discogs.com/Pickup-Baby-Blue/release/10476512>