



(Header by Sven)

August 2021

So, this is issue 102. 😊

A big welcome to our new readers.

We have another bumper issue for you here...plenty to read and a lot of links for you to investigate. Get a beer or a cup of tea, sit in the garden (hopefully, especially if you are in the UK) and use the time you are soaking up some Vit D even more pleasantly.

Big thanks to Dave once again. It is he who really makes this newsletter work. Some time ago, when I asked Russ who he would particularly like Dave to feature in an article, without hesitation, he named one of his oldest friends. This month Dave has tracked him down to California and, I am sure you will agree, has come up with a beautiful and sensitive interview about the time even before the Roulettes.

Thanks to Norman for his contribution and thanks to Richard Westwood for coming up with two of my favourite Argent tracks, even if they weren't written by Russ.

Best wishes
Sue

THIS MONTH FROM RUSS

Hello My Friends,

So, here we are, mid August and the days are a little shorter....is it me or are the months going by faster? Anyway, isn't it great to see things opening up - people in restaurants - crowds at football matches - And I'm banking on music venues starting up soon. You might know I have a tour of Germany planned for October, so, I'm now planning rehearsals. I've contacted my musician friends to make sure they're available to start rehearsals from 23rd August. My great mate Bob Henrit and I will be treading the boards together again, as will my more recent friends, Guitarist, Roly Jones; Keyboard player, Marc Rapson; Backing Singer, Claire Gordon and my newest friend, Bass Player, PJ Phillips. As I'd only met PJ once up until last week, I decided to get to know him a little better over an Italian lunch last Friday....in the end, after speaking to Roly on the phone, I decided to invite him, "Great" he said, "I can pick Bob up on the way, if you like?" So, except for Marc we're pretty well acquainted.

As my good friend Sven Kramer runs RussBallardMusic, online, he often sends me requests for radio interviews and I had a Zoom meet with an American Music Journalist on Tuesday afternoon, his name is Joe Miller and he is from Chicago. I enjoyed the forty five minutes with Joe because he was 'clued up' on my career and a music enthusiast. However, he wanted to know how Kiss came to rewrite the first verse of my song, God Gave Rock and Roll to You....I told him as it was to be in an American film "Bill and Ted's Bogus Journey" it had to have a more universal lyric for the U.S. market [My original words had "love Cliff Richard" in the lyric, and Cliff isn't known so well there].....Joe asked me if Kiss and I got on well and I told him, although we'd played shows together and their bass player, Ace Frehley had successful singles of my songs, I had never spoken to them.....Joe found that pretty strange, I think.

It's been a good month as far as song writing goes....Christian and I have done some good things for a great family group - 'The Stencil Pencils' and a new young singer- song writer, John Guala, John has just signed a recording contract and is releasing an E.P. soon....His future looks good, he

has 150,000, fans in E. Asia....Maybe I'll have some more news on the E.P. next month.....Have a brilliant August.....Be with you again September.....Lots of Love, Russ xxx

RUSS - LIFE STORIES

Autobiography Continued.....1958

My friends at the time were local boys and some of them were young hooligans but I enjoyed their company. They were mischievous and much of the time I felt 'on edge' not knowing what they would do next. On Saturdays we would walk up to Waltham Cross High Street and browse around the shops. Woolworths was always a favourite. I would watch my mates nicking things off the counters and feel a bit of excitement along with the fear. Believe it or not, I never stole a thing. Looking back, I think I knew my mum and dad would be upset if I was found stealing. I recall on one occasion, the headmaster at Waltham Cross Secondary School calling me in to his study telling me he didn't like the company I was keeping and suggesting I find new friends. Something inside of me knew he was right but I did like being with them, although much of the time I felt 'edgy'.

On one Easter holiday from school my pals thought it would be a great idea to break into the iron foundry on York Road - "Come on", they said, "There's no one there". I said "No I'm going home". It was just as well I didn't stay with them that day, because someone saw my friends break into the factory and phoned the police, so, they were apprehended and after going to court, were given two years' probation.

On the summer holiday from school in 1958, my friends decided to spend the afternoon in Temple Bar woods. There were quite a few boys and I was the youngest. I still recall this day because it was life changing for me. As we walked along Eleanor Rd. I noticed many of the boys were carrying weapons, either pellet guns or catapults, [sling shots' in America,]. I felt a little scared all the way along the high road, then into Theoblalds Road, which lead to the woods. Everyone became more excited and animated. Suddenly everybody ran into the woods. I wanted to walk back home but didn't want to look like 'The Little Boy' [in my head I was a hard ted]....I heard somebody shout 'take cover.' I could hear guns going off and I just

knew something bad was going to happen. I remember looking around for somewhere to hide when I felt an excruciating pain when I was hit in the right eye by a stone from a catapult. I fell to the ground screaming "I'm blind"....I knew instantly I was blind in that eye.

I don't think I was knocked out at all, because I can recall everything the boys were shouting - all the abuse was directed at one boy....things like "You're ——mental—— off home you —. Dear Roy Green, who was a big boy, carried me home, only stopping to bathe the eye in the New River. I didn't say much to Mum and Dad, I just laid on the sofa feeling intense pain and in shock. My parents didn't know how badly injured I was. I just told them I'd been hit in the eye. My dad sat down at the piano and started playing - the vibration of the piano seemed to go through my head....I shouted, "Please Dad don't play, my head is hurting" - Not knowing how badly hurt I was, he screamed back, "it serves you right for playing with guns and catapults".

My mum eventually phoned the doctor....when he examined the eye, he said, "it looks bad, he should go to casualty. Mum and Dad took me to Chase Farm Hospital. From there I was transferred to Moorfields Holborn. The driver rang his bell all the way there - I remember I was wearing my best Teddy Boy clothes and I heard the driver say to mum, "Is he a little Ted?" - 'Yeah'. When we arrived in the hospital the doctor examined me then said, "You have to stay here".

They found me a room with two beds. The other was occupied by a lovely old man named Mr Maurice. I didn't realise there was another person in the room until the next day. When I first got into bed, I just remember doctors coming and going, shining torches into the eye. After fifteen minutes or so, a nurse gave my three injections, one for shock, one for pain and one to help me sleep.

INTERVIEW

As he mentioned above, just a few days ago, Russ did an interview with Joe Miller of the website, Defenders Of The Faith. Here it is.

<https://defendersofthefaimetal.com/russ-ballard-interview>



[Russ Ballard Interview – Defenders of the Faith](#)

Russ Ballard is living, breathing rock history. His songs have dominated both AM and FM radio for decades. Among the acts who have recorded his songs are Rainbow, KISS, Ace Frehley, Uriah Heep, Night Ranger, Samson, A I I Z, Tokyo Blade, Chevy, Magnum, Girl, Doro... and that's just within the hard and heavy realm.

defendersofthefaimetal.com

SINA DRUMS

Let there be drums (again)



Back in August 2020 we included a write-up on a drum cover version of Rainbow's **I Surrender** by **Sina Doering**, the young German drummer and multi-instrumentalist who's built up a massive 275,000 followers on her 'Sina-Drums' You Tube channel. For those who missed it, the video link is here <https://youtu.be/YTNQ5ph4H2M>

One year and lots of covers in between, Sina has now recorded a cover of the earlier Rainbow hit, **Since You Been Gone**. To quote Sina "One year ago, I did a drum cover of my favourite Rainbow song 'I Surrender'. Since then, I got a lot of requests for this one". Here is the link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hSaL0dVVcJA>

Sina is old school and loves Classic Rock, much preferring it to today's loop-based recordings. I guess each has its place. We included a mini feature on Sina in the January 2019 newsletter located on Russ's website https://www.russballardmusic.com/wa_files/2019_01.pdf . Since that piece was written, Sina has joined a very promising rock band called The Gäs.

RICHARD'S RAMBLINGS

My favourite Argent songs.

Bring You Joy

Bring You Joy, from the first Argent album "Argent" was written by Rod Argent and/or Chris White. It's a rather beautiful song. The melody is wistful and haunting. The lyrics promise everlasting and loving commitment. The instruments are restrained and subtle. The piano solos are truly outstanding. Russ's interpretive vocals are a real tour de force. He means every word and feels the message he is singing.

"And I'll make you feel so happy you will cry,

Yes I'll make you feel so happy you will die"

Then his voice soars, "Sing and shout, throw your feelings to the sky,

Sing and shout, let the joy within you rise,

Shout it out."

Powerful lyrics performed by a singer at the top of his game. A truly memorable and vocally challenging song beautifully performed by the players and the singer.

<https://youtu.be/4OBAHJ6XLQk>

Losing Hold

From the album "In Deep." Another song from the Argent/White stable. This is a very sad song about loss in love and the desperation that comes with rejection. Once again the instruments do a great job with the melody and Russ certainly makes the listener feel the pain and loss. The lyrics are desperate and resigned. Russ's singing reflects the hopelessness described in the lyrics. He also produces a striking guitar solo that fits the song so well. Bob Henrit must have given the studio engineers a recording challenge with his use of a gong.

https://youtu.be/rgUiqKJcO_c

Rod Argent either had a talent for spotting singers with rather special voices or he was incredibly lucky. To have had a band featuring the sublime vocals of Colin Blunstone must have been, well, wonderful! That his next band would also contain a vocalist with the talent to do justice to his songs must be more than just luck. The voices of Russ and Rod worked well together on many songs. Rod's fragile voice made a good counterpoint to the rather more powerful Russ. Both could be delicate and they made a good vocal team. Of course both were prolific and worthy songwriters. Little wonder that Argent were somehow different to other bands. Great material, well played, beautifully sung. Ole!!

Richard Westwood

June 2021

RUSS'S MUSIC HISTORY

By Dave Williams

Face to face with the Jago Meister



This month's history feature takes us right back to the very beginning of Russ's career. Despite all the high-profile musicians Russ has worked with over the years, and all the hit songs he has written, Russ has never airbrushed away the friends and musicians he played with in those early days. We've witnessed this first-hand in recent times with The Roulettes, but Russ often talks about times before then, and one character whose name often comes up is Norman Jago. Norman was the frontman for Norman Eddy and the Imperials. He left the music

business in 1964 and emigrated to the United States. I managed to contact him, and he agreed to share some of his memories of those times he spent with Russ and his brother Roy, including the infamous talent competition that resulted in the group performing at London's Royal Festival Hall in 1959.

DW) Hi Norman. Thank you for agreeing to share some memories with our readers. Perhaps we can start by discussing your childhood? I'm guessing you were born and raised in Hertfordshire.

NJ) I was actually born in Edmonton, North London, in 1943 and lived in Tottenham before moving to Waltham Cross in 1953. They built what they called the 'Tottenham Estate' in Waltham Cross, so some of my friends from Tottenham also moved there. When that happens, you tend to stay in the same box and you don't get exposed to a different set of friends, so when I got hooked up with Russ it was something of a new experience for me. The first time Russ invited me to stay for dinner at his home, his mum, his dad, and his brother Roy made me so welcome. They were all very animated and fun to be with, and on my walk home that evening, to tell you the truth, I remember thinking that I never knew having dinner could be that much fun. It was so different to what I was used to. It had a big impact on me. I must say the Ballard family were very special to me.

DW) How did your musical adventure begin? From what I gather, you formed a group called Rick Nicholl and the Rebels, which featured yourself on vocals, Roy Ballard (Russ's older brother) on piano, Russ on guitar, Bill Brown on bass and Lennie Gypps (aka Bruce Chips) on rhythm guitar and Bob Henrit on drums.

NJ) I wasn't actually responsible for starting or forming the band. I was just hanging out with Russ and started to have a go at playing guitar and singing. I seem to recall someone advised me to drop playing guitar after I proved I had no idea what I was doing. After that, I stuck to singing. When Rick left the band, I got more involved with the vocals, and we changed our name to Norman Eddy & The Imperials. The mention of Bill Brown brings back a memory. When he got his first electric bass guitar it kept blowing the speakers. Eventually we figured out that it had to have larger speakers. Who knew?



Former bass player Bill Brown (seated on the Lotus) celebrates his 40th year with Lotus, the first employee to reach that goal. (Photo courtesy of Norman Jago)

DW) Roy and Russ were members of Cheshunt Boys' Club so the other members of the group took out membership so you could rehearse there. It sounds like there were a lot of bands based there.

NJ) Yes, there were lots of bands at that time. I always thought a working-class kid had two chances to make the big time, either in a band or play professional football, but in either of these professions you can't just be good, you've got to be great. "C'est La Vie"

DW) It seems that Russ had it covered both ways. I believe he was on Spur's books as a Junior.

NJ) I wasn't aware that Russ was on Spur's book though it doesn't surprise me. We both played six-a-side soccer for our school.

DW) Bob Henrit was also playing with Freddie King and The Blue Jacks featuring Fred Wilkinson on rhythm guitar, John Dalton on bass, Norman Mitham on lead guitar and Joey Pallett lead singer. They played US air bases though Bob and Nobby were still under 15 but Fred apparently lied about their age. Would this be before or after Bob was in The Imperials?

NJ) We were all pretty young at the time. I was about 16 years old, Russ 14, so I'm guessing that Bob must have played with The Blue Jacks before the Imperials.

DW) Russ suffered his eye injury in 1958 and long periods of hospital treatment meant he was in and out of the band. Was it Billy Kuy of The Stormers, that deputised in his absence?

NJ) When Russ had the awful time with his eye, we did have Billy Kuy occasionally fill in, but we were pretty much on hold while Russ was laid up. I do remember going into a cafe to get something to eat and some guy said to Russ "Hey sunshine, where's the sun?" Not many people wore sunglasses back then, but Russ did so because of his accident, so me with my lack of common sense pushed back on his remark. The guy got up from his seat and, as he did so, he got taller and taller. He didn't look that big sitting down. He picked me up, carried me out of the café and I'm sure he intended to give me a real good hiding. To my great relief, there was a policeman outside. He looked at us and said "Everything alright boys?". Phew!

DW) I read that Bob Henrit was using Russ's dad's drum kit but needed to add a floor tom. Roy took Bob to East London on his Lambretta scooter. He bought a matching drum and tied it to the scooter.

NJ) I do remember one time Russ and I went "up west" to get a new amp, a Watkin's Westminster. We got home with it to Russ's house. After a while playing it, I was so excited about the new amp, until smoke started coming out of the back. It felt like we just lost a family member.

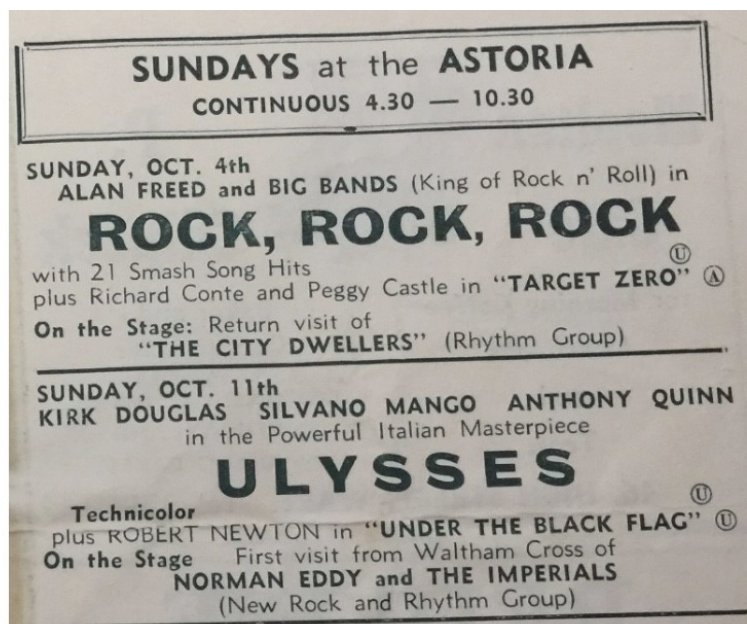


DW) Is it true that the Ballard family piano travelled to gigs on the back of an open-backed lorry and was carried up and down stairs? That would be unthinkable nowadays

NJ) Oh yes. The piano had to go on the lorry when we took it to the Astoria Cinema. We could not get it on the stage. It was too difficult, so basically Roy had to play it in the audience, but the sound was great there. I always remember doing Conway Twitty's "Make Me Know Your Mine". I loved that song. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IX7nGiXM2Fc>



Photos: The Astoria Cinema, demolished in 2019 to make way for 10 luxury apartments. (www.hertsmemories.org.uk)



Press cutting advertising 'new rock and rhythm group' Norman Eddy and The Imperials first appearance at the Astoria in Ware. Incredibly, eight days later they performed at the Royal Festival Hall in London.



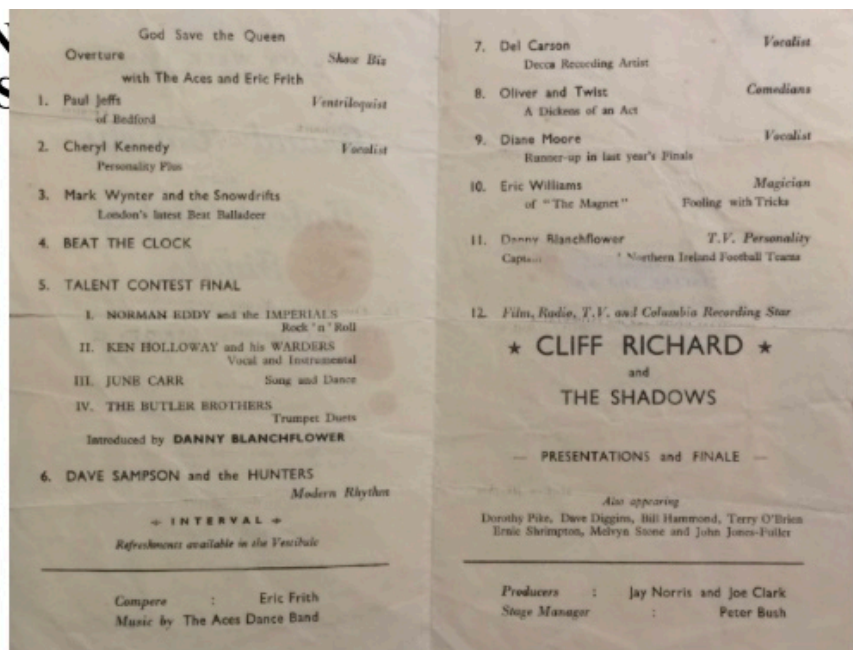
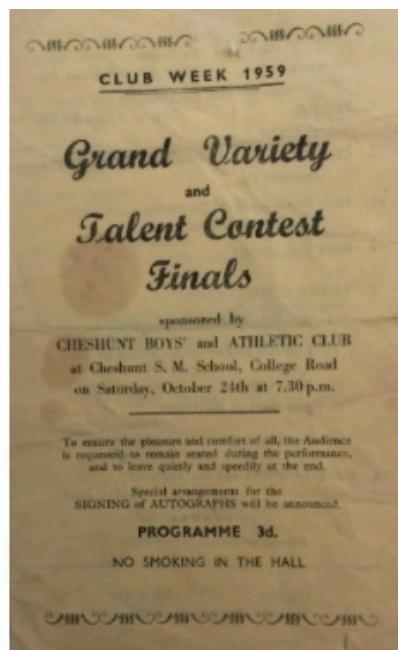
Norman Eddy & The Imperials on stage at the Royal Festival Hall. (Photo courtesy of Norman Jago)

DW) In 1959 The Imperials entered a talent contest and reached the final, which was staged at the Royal Festival Hall in London on 19th October 1959. An amazing achievement, it must have been really exciting for you all.

NJ) This was a Boys' Club competition featuring entrants from Boys' Clubs around England and Ireland. We reached the final, which was held at the Royal festival Hall. I think there were three categories. Unfortunately, we did not win our category. I believe the winner was a boy from Ireland singing Danny Boy. We also tried out for an Amateur Grand Variety and Talent Contest. The winners would perform with Cliff Richard at Cheshunt Secondary Modern School. The preliminary heats featured 17 acts, about 5 of these being rock and roll bands.

RUNNING ORDER (REPRODUCED FROM THE ORIGINAL PROGRAMME SUPPLIED BY NORMAN JAGO)

- 1) 'THE RAMROCKS' - Rhythm Group (Hoddesdon)
- 2) 'JOHN ALMOND' - Tenor Sax Solo (Enfield)
- 3) 'THE BLUE JACKS' - Rock & Roll (Cheshunt)
- 4) 'JUNIOR EXPRESS DANCERS' - Song & Dance (Hoddesdon)
- 5) 'COLLEEN' - Vocalist (Enfield)
- 6) 'THE VICEROYS' - Singers (2) with guitar (Edmonton)
- 7) 'ROY BALLARD' - Piano medley (Waltham Cross)
- 8) 'JOHNNY LONG & THE TALL MEN' - Rock & Ballads (Essendon)
- 9) 'THE CHIARAS' - Vocalists (Waltham Abbey)
- 10) 'HARRY GREEN' - Accordion solo (Enfield)
- 11) 'KEN HOLLOWAY & HIS WANDERS' - Vocal and instrumental (Waltham Cross)
- 12) 'C J NICHOLAS' - Pianist (late replacement for Waltham Cross magicians Janet & Michael)
- 13) 'DANNY KING & THE BLUE JACKS' - Rock & Roll Group (Hoddesdon)
- 14) 'JUNE CARR' - Vocalist (Upshire)
- 15) 'NORMAN EDDY & THE IMPERIALS' - Rock & Roll Group (Waltham Cross)
- 16) 'TERRY O'CONNOR' - Vocalist (Cheshunt)
- 17) 'BUTLER BROS' - Trumpet Duets (Hoddesdon)



I remember the talent contest because one of the songs we did was Heartbreak Hotel. It starts off with just me singing unaccompanied "Since my baby left me, I found a new place to dwell", so in order to pitch myself I asked Russ to give me the chord. He gave me the wrong chord, so when I started off the song, it was too high. I sounded like Tiny Tim. I turned around to Russ to have a go at him but did not get the chance as he could not stop laughing. But, despite that mishap we still won a place in the final. Unfortunately, we didn't win. I believe June Carr was the winner, but Russ will probably correct me.



DW) The Imperials were clearly very busy in October 1959. The group entered the Boys' Club competition again in 1960, again reaching the final, though by now they had become Buster Meikle and the Daybreakers, following your departure, with Buster Meikle (ex-Royal Parker 5) replacing you. What made you choose to leave the band?

NJ) I didn't really 'leave' The Imperials. I think it was more a case of Bob and Russ wanting to move on. To be perfectly honest Russ and Bob were way out of my league, and they deserved to follow their dreams in the music business. I have always cherished the short time I spent in the band with them.

DW) After leaving the Imperials, I believe you joined The Jaguars. I say this because Russ wrote in one of his earlier newsletters "Norman Jago was my close friend from twelve years until sixteen, when I joined Adam Faith. We were together in a group for two years...it was called Norman Jago and the Imperials. I think Norman, who was two years older than me, started the Jaguars when he was eighteen."



NJ) Again, I didn't actually form The Jaguars. After the Imperials, a band from Edmonton were looking for a vocalist and asked me to join them. They were a good band and we always had plenty of gigs. We spent some time in Hamburg and Germany, so again I had lots of fun and lots of experiences. In 1962 I saw the Beatles and on my return from Germany my dad informed me that my girlfriend,

now my wife, would not stick around if I kept on doing the band stuff, especially as I didn't have a regular job. So, having seen just how fantastic The Beatles were, I thought it was time for me to throw in the towel. In 1964 I emigrated to California and got a job as a butcher. Admittedly this was very different to a life in rock and roll, but it has been very good to me, and I have no complaints. The Jaguars continued after I left, and they did some stuff with Micky Most. Jerry lee Lewis, Cat Stevens etc.

STEVENS ETC.



Norman and Sylvia (left) on their wedding day, 10th October 1964 at Holy Trinity Church, Waltham Cross, and (right) in Palm Springs last month.

DW) Thanks Norman. This has been a great insight into the earliest days of Russ's music career, which I'm sure will be of great interest to fans young and older. Despite having left these shores 57 years ago, it's quite clear that you look back on those days with great fondness and pride. Looking at the youthful appearance of the two of you, the Californian climate certainly agrees with you.

NJ) It has been so much fun thinking of Russ and all my bandmates "back in the good old days". Russ deserves all his success, such is his talent, and most of all he is class act. On behalf of myself and Sylv, please send him my love.

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I hope our newsletter readers enjoyed reading about those earliest days of Russ taking his first footsteps into music. I certainly enjoyed talking with Norman, and a couple of days after I finished the piece, he came back with an “Oh by the way...” email, and it totally floored me. Amazingly, and I’m sure to Russ’s delight, it would appear that in recent years Norman has dusted off his microphone and started performing again. Before the Coronavirus stopped play, he’d been performing with a group called the BEATSWORK BAND, and if that wasn’t enough, he sent me a link to the band performing a number by Santana at a local festival on Laguna Beach in California. Could there be a better named band anywhere on the planet? Well, having watched the video, I was pleasantly surprised. The boy sure can sing!

Now it may be pushing the imagination a bit too far, but next time there’s an RBE at Ware, a Norman Eddy & The Imperials reunion. Ha, I must cut down on eating cheese before bedtime.

Here is a selection of clips of Norman performing with the BEATSWORK BAND. I hope you enjoy them.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6QmVUUhlnZg>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x4A_0qLNy-k&list=PL9lpPLRtRYMz-zBQcb5PcyWKDYCZ8kiiG

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=atNyyoFWsmo&list=PL9lpPLRtRYMz-zBQcb5PcyWKDYCZ8kiiG&index=6>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eChkUulbjH0&list=PL9lpPLRtRYMz-zBQcb5PcyWKDYCZ8kiiG&index=7>



[BEATSWORK BAND](#)

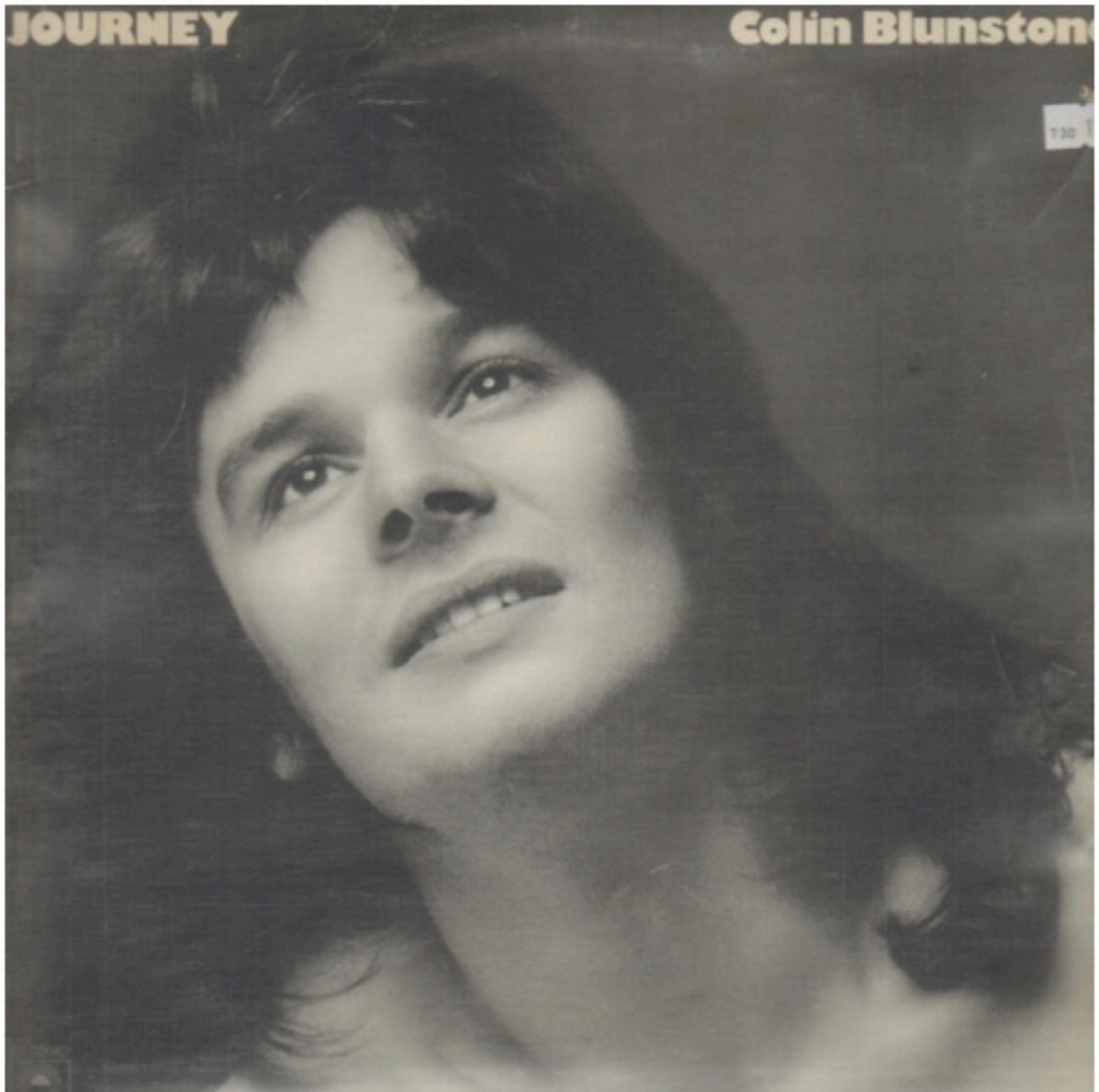
BEATSWORK BAND AT THE SAWDUST ARTS
FESTIVAL 2014

www.youtube.com

DAVE'S COVER QUEST

August's cover quest features an artist who is no stranger to working with Russ Ballard, having had success with the original version of I Don't Believe in Miracles.

No.35

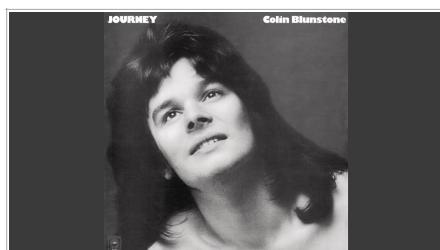


You Who Are Lonely *by* Colin Blunstone

For reasons unknown, the UK version of Colin's 4th solo album, **Journey**, had a different track listing to the version released in other parts of the world. Not only that, it had a different sleeve design. The UK lost out on the inclusion of two **Russ Ballard** songs. The opening track of Side Two, **Its Magical**, later came out as a single in the UK though sadly it didn't make the charts. The other track, **You Who Are Lonely**, selected as this month's cover, featured as the final song on Side One. Both songs were produced by Russ himself, and its possible that they were recorded after the UK version of the album had gone into production.

I love the chorus on this one, and I'm surprised it wasn't picked up by another solo artist and turned into a hit.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2KYjaoFojK8>



[You Who Are Lonely - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2KYjaoFojK8)

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