



(Header by Sven)

## November 2021

Sven always comes up with something original and clever for Russ's birthday. Thank you, Sven, for this year's excellent "card".

Our reader, Eddy Bonte, has written a series of articles about the Roulettes for the US magazine, Ugly Things. Part 1 was before Russ's time but Part 2, which Eddy tells us about below starts in 1963 and is featured in the current issue. Part 3, focusing on their post Adam Faith time, will be out early 2022. Unfortunately, the magazine does not have any outlets in the UK but should be available by post from the US.

Dave has found a press interview with Russ from 1974, which is an interesting read. Huge thanks go to Dave for all his work for the newsletter. He has come up with a new feature for us this month.

Our "favourite tracks" feature didn't last long! Come on! Who is going to write a (short) paragraph about their favourite Russ related tracks?

Some of our readers have sent interesting things, usually videos, for inclusion in the newsletter. They are always welcome. I have them safe and ready to include in future newsletters.

Best wishes

Sue

## THIS MONTH FROM RUSS

*I want to thank all my friends old and new who sent me Birthday Wishes....it made my day.*

*October was quite an uneventful month. I ventured in to my studio most days. Early September I had a root canal treatment which wasn't too bad, a little uncomfortable maybe, but not painful ....*

*The middle of the month I met up with my German friends of thirty years, Michael Bisping, Patrik Mertens and their friend, Dennis. They have a promotions company (putting on shows all over Germany) and their company, A.S.S., have promoted every show of mine for thirty years. It was great to see them and we had fun over a curry with wine and beer. It was a shame the German tour was postponed. Bob H, Roly, Marc and PJ and myself played hard rehearsing a set for the tour. There's a lot of nervous energy expended going over arrangements of songs - re-visiting guitar solos and recalling lyrics to songs, then to be told - "it's off guys". It's the same for the audience. However, we'll make up for these postponements in 2022 and remember there's a UK. tour in February 2022. So, we'll be straight back rehearsing after Christmas....maybe we'll do some in December.*

*Lots of Love,  
Russ xx*

## RUSS - LIFE STORIES

*I finished last month's autobiography section, explaining how I was burning to own an electric guitar and my mum said she'd buy me one when we both take the train into London for my monthly outpatients visit to Moorfields Eye Hospital....*

*After coming out of hospital, I took ten days off school, which was great and mum and dad didn't make me practise piano, which was a relief, however, I couldn't wait to get back to playing guitar. One day my mum said, "I'll buy you an electric guitar when we go into London for out-patients". - True to her word, after going for my check-up, we took a tube train to Tottenham Court Road where I knew there was a great music shop called 'Lew Davis'. I saw a beautiful looking guitar, it was a Hofner Club 60. I saw they had other Hofner guitars, which were cheaper, they were called Club 40 and Club 50, but as ever, I went for*

*the most expensive. I told Mum I needed an amplifier because, being an electric guitar, it had a 'tinny' or small sound without an amp. The man in the shop took one from the window - it was a Truvoice - TV 10. That was it, all I needed was a guitar lead, or cord, - [as they called them in America] and I was all set. We went back on to the tube to Liverpool Street Main Line Station, to catch a train to Waltham Cross, Mum carrying the amp. and me, carrying the guitar.*

*I practiced for hours learning more and more chords but also lead solos, copying the great work by Scotty Moore, Elvis's guitar player, also James Burton who played lead for Ricky Nelson. Other great players were Cliff Gallup who played the great solos on 'Be Bop A Lula' and 'Blue Jean Bop'. I often wondered who were the guitarists who inspired these young players.*

*I was desperate to start a group and asked my friends if they were interested. My friend, Jim Wilkinson, said he would play tea chest bass and he asked at Cheshunt Grammar School who would be 'Up For It'. - So we recruited Rick Nichol on lead vocals and Roy Green on drums. We got together at Rick's house and rehearsed . Rick looked like a rock star and never seemed at all nervous at heading a R 'n' R band. We needed a name and decided on Rick Nichol and The Rebels. The first song we learned was 'Stood Up' which was a hit for Ricky Nelson. We rehearsed it over and over and it sounded pretty good. I was getting better as a guitar player, practicing every spare moment. I'd found something I loved as much as, if not more than football....also music distracted me from thinking about my eye problem.*

*We heard about a talent contest that Cheshunt Boys Club were organising at Burleigh School. We rehearsed 'Stood Up' and 'Be- Bop- a- I-u- la' until they sounded like the originals. On the night of the competition, I found it hard to hold down the strings because I was so nervous. There were a variety of acts, including a fourteen year old dancer, a saxophone player, however, there was a skiffle group, called The Roulettes. They were very entertaining. The singer was called Bernie Benson and he sounded a lot like Lonnie Donegan. Also they had a washboard player called Bob Henrit. The one song of theirs that had the crowd going was "She'll Be Coming 'Round The Mountain" I can't remember where The Roulettes were placed, but I know they ended higher than us and they deserved to, even though we took our own fan club of girlfriends who screamed at every wiggle of Rick's hips.. Looking back, we probably weren't ready for the contest. However, the experience made me want to do more gigs.*

*To Be Continued....Next month.....Guys, gear, girls, gigs.....Changes of players...*

## NEW TRACKS

As we saw last month, Russ is releasing tasters of some of his new tracks on his Facebook page. Here are the latest two, Courageous and Make Believe World. More to come. You can find them on the Facebook page as soon as Carole puts them on. <https://www.facebook.com/RussBallardMusicOfficial> Which is your favourite so far?

<https://youtu.be/NcloKIZCRtc>

<https://youtu.be/tuMfQ0l3i1s>



### [Russ Ballard - Make Believe World](https://youtu.be/tuMfQ0l3i1s)

A taste of a new album© 2021 Russell Ballard Ltd.P  
[youtu.be](https://youtu.be/tuMfQ0l3i1s)



### [Russ Ballard - Courageous](https://youtu.be/NcloKIZCRtc)

A taste of a new album© 2021 Russell Ballard Ltd. F  
[youtu.be](https://youtu.be/NcloKIZCRtc)

## QUESTION OF THE MONTH

**Russ, what could you see yourself doing if music and football were out of the question?**

**Russ:** *I have often thought Teaching is a very important vocation in everybody's life. We have many teachers as we go through the journey. If we're lucky we might have one or two that inspire us and have a real affect as we grow. I was lucky to have two inspirational Teachers at school. After leaving school, I became very interested in the spiritual life....I've heard people call it - The higher qualities*

*of the mind - There's so many people in this World who are suffering, from depression, Bi Polar and feelings of helplessness. There are life coaches out there who do help....There are the obvious professions, Psychiatrists, Analysts - they do a great job, there's others who are at the other end of a phone line taking calls from distressed people....I'd like to talk to people before they get in to that state. This World is very confusing....We want peace and yet we're aggressive, We've separated ourselves from each other in many ways, We want to be loved but don't give love....We hurt and wonder why we get hurt back. If we take part in this competitive world, then, it would be good to have the mental tools to deal with it, or, realise you don't have to take part as it is....That there's alternative ways to live.*

## **PODCAST**

This new podcast from Sven and Ian of Team RGB is with Steve Rodford, son of Jim. Steve plays drums with The Zombies but he is also a multi-talented musician and composer. You can find it on Russ's website here...

<https://www.russballardmusic.com/podcast.html>

## **ROULETTES ARTICLE**

### **From Eddy Bonte**

Part 2 focuses on the lost successful period of The Roulettes, starting with in the Autumn of 1963 when they released their first Adam Faith with The Roulettes single and a first 45 on Parlophone under their own name. They were on par with many other UK groups of that time, but never scored a hit. Being highly respected by their peers, The Roulettes augmented this double career with session work, e.g. for French superstar Richard Anthony, hit-makers Unit 4+2 and even Canadian girl group She Trinity.

Special attention is paid to Chris Andrews, who wrote specifically for Faith and the group, securing the former's come-back with 'The First Time' before hitting it big time with Sandie Shaw and becoming a star on his own, especially in mainland Europe.

The article also pays attention to their only US hit, 'It's Alright', originally a b-side of a UK single. The author also stresses the importance of the two LPs they made with Faith. He points out that the recordings made 'with' Faith cannot be dismissed as being of minor importance.

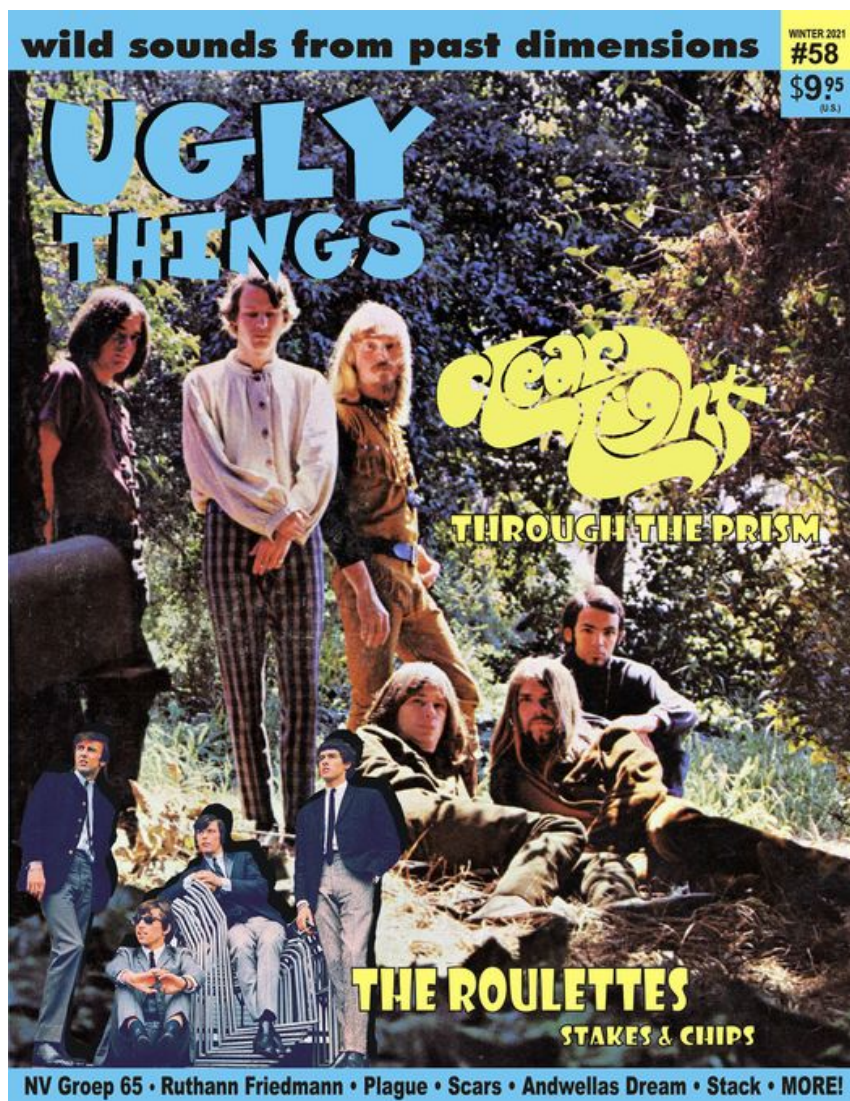


Finally, part 2 of this story ends in November-December 1965, when 'the lads' decide to try it on their own.

The author quotes extensively from correspondence and interviews with all the concerned, making this more than just another facts & figures 'Story Of'. The comments shed light on the why's & how's of their career, putting success, failure and evolution into context.

It is dedicated to the memory of Peter Thorp.

Eddy Bonte



Sue: Eddy runs The Roulettes Facebook page. <https://www.facebook.com/theRoulettesUK>

## AMATEUR HOUR

by Dave Williams

One of the great things about You Tube and similar websites is that it provides a platform for anyone and everyone to demonstrate their talents. There are countless covers of songs by Russ Ballard, not necessarily committed to CD or vinyl. A few months ago, we saw a great version of **God Gave Rock and Roll to You** by **Wrap Party**. Another interesting find is this version of **You Can Do Magic**, posted by **Sabrina's Crib**. . [https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=DNcAiwa9\\_8U](https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=DNcAiwa9_8U)

## RUSS'S MUSIC HISTORY

By Dave Williams

**Ballad Of A Guitar Man**

By Ray Telford

Way up there at the KG publicity office Russ Ballard lines up the Detroit Spinners' "I'm Coming Home", for a second turn on a dilapidated sound system that scarcely does justice to Thom Bell's masterful production. But even so it has Russ listening hard and he is evidently grooving on what he hears.

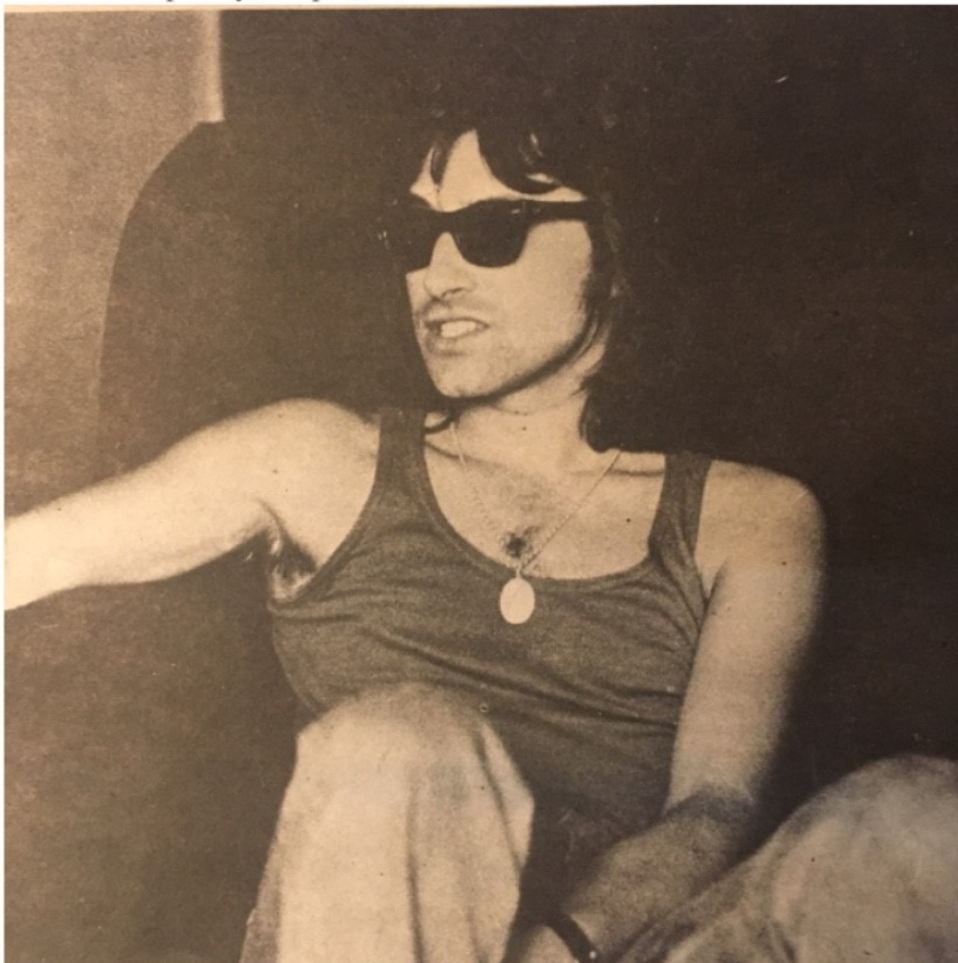
Earlier this year Russ announced his departure from Argent, a band who'd stuck together for four years and whose personnel had always, on the face of it, seemed indivisible. All their press interviews previously had hinted at the closeness and feeling of musical brotherhood within the group. To an outsider the policy could have read something like the band that stays together wins together and Argent were just beginning to win. Hit singles and at least a couple of high selling albums plus a reputation for being the nicest guys seemed good enough reason for them to continue along that safe and comfortable path. A renegade in their midst was unthinkable yet here was Ballard saying he didn't mind if there happened to be a few duff notes on his first solo album – if the overall feel was right then he was happy. A far cry indeed from Argent's high precision and faultless musical technology.

At this moment Russ has all but finished his album. Most of the tracks with him playing electric guitar, bass, drums and piano, are all in the can and the results he says are beyond his expectations: "After being in a band so close knit as Argent were," he says, "and the way that everyone used to lean on each other – to come right out and do something so isolated and on my own has been an immense challenge. I always felt I could do it and as far as I am concerned it has worked to my satisfaction.

Whereas Argent were primarily a musical construction kit overtly concerned with the correctness and mathematics of what they were playing. Russ is trying to infuse in the new album a degree of personalised soul – a slant all his own which he eventually hopes to be recognised through.

“It’s a reaction to all I’ve been through in the past,” he tells you. “This album is just an album of songs which I hope people will remember and associate with me. This is my contribution to music, or to my kind of music, much more so than what I did with Argent. With them I was getting too involved in some ways – in ways that I knew just weren’t right for me as a musician. “I mean, I’m not John McLaughlin and I don’t want to be playing like him. I’m not that involved in that kind of music, though I can listen to it and appreciate everything these guys are trying to do.”

Helping out on Russ’s album have been a horn section, largely made up of Gonzalez musicians, who he says have lent invaluable assistance in getting exactly what was wanted. The aim, Russ says, was to present the music with plenty of spaces.





## **SATISFACTION**

“There’s also strings on the album,” Russ goes on, “but they’ve been arranged in such a way that they maybe only play one extended chord at the end of a song. I’m trying to keep it from being overdone. The main thing for me is to keep it from becoming too schmaltzy. It has to be kept funky. The good thing is that all the guys who’ve been helping out have all been around a bit and if I explain to them just what I want it’s done. “The rhythm tracks I did myself mainly because I felt I could do them to my own satisfaction. There’s been times before when I’ve said to a drummer just play it simple and straight forward and they always put in some extra fill which I didn’t want and you say ‘no I want it this way’ and they go in again and play it the way they hear it which still isn’t what I wanted. OK so I do it myself and there’s a couple of misplaced beats but it feels right and that’s the thing that matters.”

Later this year, Russ says will see the emergence of a Russ Ballard band. The exact line-up remains fluid in his mind, though he’s aiming for bass, drums and a co-lead guitarist to enable him to switch from guitar to piano as required as a working basis.

## **FEELING**

“Again,” Russ predicts, “it’ll be a simple thing”. It’s easy to write a piece of music which has everything going on but the hardest thing to learn is to know what to leave out. I’ve heard so many guitarists who clutter up a song simply through overplaying but I’d rather write a song with four chords in it than one with 24 chords if the one with four sounded right. It’s not something you can put into words because it has to do with feeling. “With Argent we used to do so many overdubs to get something sounding technically correct but I’d rather it sounds human even if there are mistakes.”

Though Russ admits that recording nowadays is probably the most important selling point for a band, he also fervently believes in the power of live sets: “From a writing point of view I believe you must be on the road to come up with the real goods – for the songs to sound fresh and spontaneous etc. – but a piece of recorded music is there for ever whereas people can watch and enjoy a live gig and forget all about it in a year’s time. “That way you have to keep proving what you’re capable of – which isn’t necessarily a bad thing”.

## **PERFORMERS**

“I think the Beatles wrote their best stuff when they were on the road. I say that because if you’re at home all the time there’s nothing to drive for. I’ve always

gone for an actual performance in the music – like in some of the early Presley records there were a few duff notes, but the performance was always brilliant. Again, that applies to the Beatles so much – they were as much performers as they were musicians.”



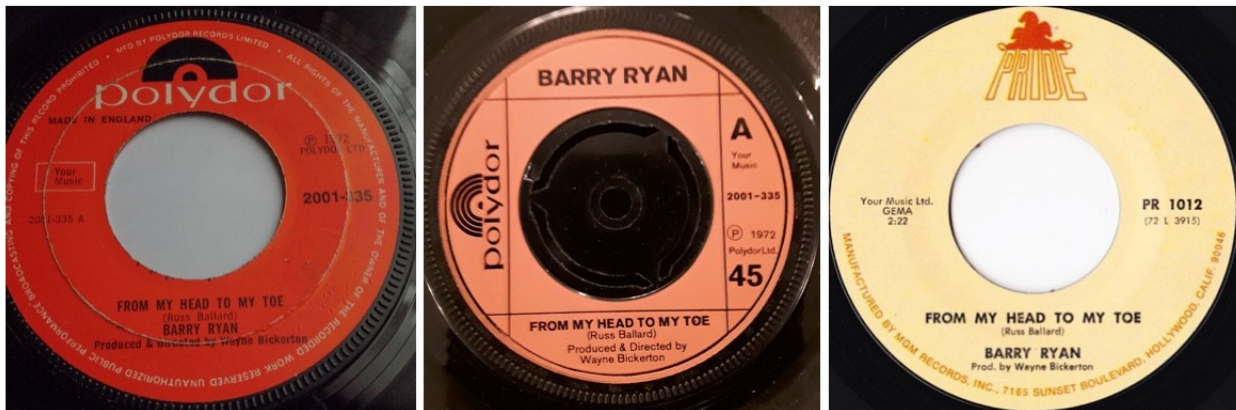
*This article, written by **Ray Telford**, originally appeared in Sounds music paper in the August 17th, 1974, edition. Any errors in the text from the original article may not have been changed for the sake of accuracy. As a condition of use, a link to the original article is included below.*

<https://geirmykl.wordpress.com/2019/02/20/article-about-russ-ballard-from-sounds-august-17-1974/>

## DAVE'S COVER QUEST

A touch of sadness for this month's Cover Quest. My featured artist is **Barry Ryan**, who many will know recorded, and had a hit with, **Can't Let You Go** in 1971. The song, written by Russ, reached No.32 in the UK charts, and really should have achieved greater heights. A year later, Barry turned to the Russ Ballard catalogue once again, this time releasing **From My Head to My Toe**, our featured song this month.

### No.38



### From my Head to My Toe *by* Barry Ryan

**Barry Ryan** was born Barry Sapherson in Leeds, West Yorkshire, England in 24th October 1948. He began performing with his twin brother Paul at the age of 16, and the duo signed to Decca Records in the following year. Releasing songs as **Paul and Barry Ryan**, the pair clocked up 8 Top 50 singles in the UK within two years, the biggest seller being **Don't Bring Me Your Heartaches**, which reached No.13.

When Paul decided to quit as an artist, finding it too stressful, Barry carried on as a solo artist, with Paul remaining in the background as a songwriter. Success quickly followed when Paul's song **Eloise**, became a million selling No.2 in the UK for Barry, and topped the charts in 17 Countries. <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=E9md5oW00q4>

The orchestral arrangement was inspired by **MacArthur Park** by **Richard Harris**, and Paul's future classic came together over a period of three days. When EMI were reluctant to release **Bohemian Rhapsody** as a single by **Queen**, due to its length, **Freddie Mercury** used **Eloise** to demonstrate that it was possible to achieve worldwide success with a song that stretched to just short of 6 minutes long. The song achieved further success in later years when **The Damned** took their version to No.3 in the UK charts in 1986.

Further hits followed for Barry, and in between recording songs written by his twin brother, he achieved moderate success with a recording of Russ Ballard's **Can't Let You Go**. Another song written by Russ, **From My Head to My Toe**, followed a year later, but failed to reach the charts, despite its' commercial sound. It's often the way unfortunately. <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=O4ksMTI5iPA>



[Barry Ryan-From my head to my toe](https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=O4ksMTI5iPA)  
az énekes 1972 évi angol slágere.....tha singer hit in  
[m.youtube.com](https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=O4ksMTI5iPA)

Barry quit the music industry in the early 1970s, making a brief return in the late 1990s and early 2000s. By this time, he had carved out a career as a professional fashion photographer.

I had considered making contact with him last year for a Newsletter interview, but I saw a quote from him in an interview for Strange Brew that he rarely gives interviews, and I always try to respect those who value their privacy. The interview, for those who'd like to read it, is here <https://thestrangebrew.co.uk/interviews/barry-ryan-interview/>

It was with great shock and sadness that when I came to write this piece, I learned that Barry passed away a few weeks ago aged 72. It was widely reported but I totally missed it.





*Barry Ryan (Source unknown - no copyright infringement is intended)*

*Barry Ryan (Source unknown - no copyright infringement is intended)*

By way of a tribute, here is a clip of his hit version of Russ Ballard's **Can't Let You Go**, accompanied by a video featuring photographs taken at various stages throughout his recording career. <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=rms3bco1pkQ>