

(Header by Sven)

#### MAY 2021

Welcome to our new readers. The theme of this newsletter could be "Memories". The last newsletter inspired a few. This is just what we like to have in the newsletter so thank you Dave, Richard, Gianmaria and Bryan for your contributions. Thanks also to Roland and Dave for some Roulettes memories. Or maybe not memories as this is something new for many of us.

We have news of (possible 💰 ) shows and a couple of special anniversaries.

So, make the coffee and settle down for a good read.

Best wishes Sue

#### THIS MONTH FROM RUSS

Hello friends out there!!

Good news today, Boris said restaurants can open up and parties of six can eat out - best of all, we can have a hug - [as long as we're careful]. It's amazing how many people have said they've missed hugging and being hugged more than anything....There's certainly an energy in touch. As usual I've been in the studio every day. People say to me, "So, where're the songs and when are we going to hear them?" - The fact is, I have about fourteen new songs that were written during the pandemic, but they have to be mixed.

I was thinking the other day, how we used to record in the sixties...we'd go in to Abbey Road for a three hour session. Times would be 10am - 1pm. or *2pm* - *5pm*. *In the three hours we recorded two songs,* [A and B side] including a twenty minute tea break downstairs in the restaurant. The only thing remaining was the mixing. That didn't take long as there were only four instruments to mix. It seems mad that now, it takes days to record one song....that's days to record four minutes of music....It can be quicker, as certain artists like to record one pass with multiple musicians... [Bob Dylan springs to mind] - However, singers, songwriters these days tend to have a home studio and often play the instruments themselves. There's something to be said for both ways. With multiple musicians laying everything down in one take, there is chemistry, where players play off each other and create something that will be different from the lone musician who lays down a drum loop, then a guide guitar or piano, then a bass, then lead vocals and backing vocals and maybe colours like synths, strings etc....OH! I want all those days back that I've spent getting a drum or guitar sound.....

#### **RUSS - LIFE STORIES**

Music and football were all I was interested in at school. Mum found it hard getting me in to bed at night, except Friday nights, when I would be in bed before 7.30pm because I was so excited at the prospect of playing a match. That's all very well, but I would stay awake all night because my parents said I needed as much rest as I could get. Looking back I believe the adrenalin rush outweighed the any tiredness factor next day.

One of the great moments of my life was when one lunch time our teacher, Mr. Young, requested the first team players to report to his class for a team meeting. He said, "The new season is going to start soon and we need to pick a new team captain." The process consisted of the team proposing one or more players, then the captain would be elected by the majority. A couple of boys proposed Stefan Oakman, then a couple suggested me. Stafford Young asked Stefan and myself to leave room whilst the boys voted . After a minute or so Mister Young asked us back in to the room...His words were, "Russell, the boys have elected you as the team captain". It is to this day one of the finest moments of my life, knowing that my friends voted for me, and I still get emotional when I think about it.

# **TOURING - GERMANY**

Nothing can be certain yet with Covid still not being totally predictable but, as of now, Russ's tour in Germany is still on in October. He spoke to his German promoter a few days ago and they are aiming to go ahead with 50% attendance. As it is limited, it might be a good idea to get your tickets as soon as possible. The dates can be found on Russ's Facebook page with one additional date in Bonn on 1st October.

https://www.facebook.com/RussBallardMusicOfficial/events

(On my phone I can only see two of these dates but on my laptop I can see the full list. As far as I know there are eight gigs between 1st and 11th October.)

# **EUROVISION**

It is Eurovision month and it is the 20th anniversary of one of the best (in my opinion) song entries. In 2001, the UK entry was "No Dream Impossible" written by Russ and Chris Winter and sung by Lindsay Dracass. To mark the anniversary, Lindsay has recorded a beautiful piano version of the song.

https://youtu.be/RD0XLSWaKdM



In case anyone hasn't seen it, here is the original from Copenhagen. Surely this should have won!!

#### https://youtu.be/qxrp0XzzpzY



Eurovision 2001 16 United Kingdom \*Lindsay Dracass\* \*No Dream Impossible\* 16:9 HQ youtu.be

#### PODCAST

The new podcast is up on Russ's website. This one is Bob Henrit so you know it is going to be entertaining! Here is the link and, while you are there why not have a look around the website. You might find something that wasn't there the last time you looked. If you haven't visited before, you will be pleasantly surprised. <u>https://russballardmusic.com/podcast.html</u>

## **ROULETTES - LOOK OVER YOUR SHOULDER**

Thanks to the Voices group on Facebook we have been made aware of an interesting demo made by Russ and Bob (or as you can see in the photo, Bobby Henritt), "Look Over Your Shoulder". I have left the photo quite big to make it readable. Our reader, Roland Herzog, aquired this test pressing from a German dealer.



Our Dave got onto the case and found this track on Youtube. (Why can't I ever find anything like this on YT?!!) This was obviously made at the same time, "Got No Time To", a demo by Russ and "Bobby". The sound here is wonderfully scratchy!

https://youtu.be/xJ8Lixv021A

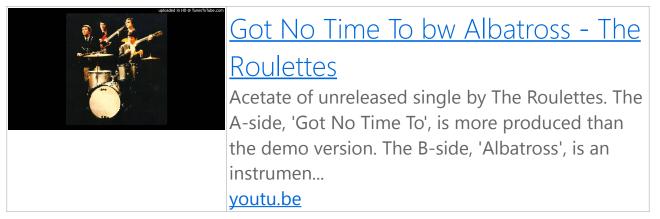
So, after further delving, Dave found the Roulettes' demo of the same song, "Got No Time To".

https://youtu.be/Hq7BcrayWO8



And then....the finished product, although this was not released, which is a shame. I love it! The B-side is included in this video, "Albatross", written by Russ.

https://youtu.be/aTP8Dvbe0-M



I asked Russ if he had any memories of these recordings...

**Russ**: I remember'Got No Time To' was the last thing we recorded....early'67? I remember playing it on piano, although I think Bob and I did some of it together. The instrumental, I don't remember too much about that. Why would we have called that 'Albatross' when Fleetwood Mac had a massive hit called that? Strange!

### **INSPIRED MEMORIES**

#### From Richard Westwood

Hi Sue,

The comments made by the father of Russ after being persuaded to buy Russ a guitar reminded me of my parents when I wanted a drum kit. I pestered them for many years. I too was having piano lessons. My piano teacher assured me that the piano was a percussion instrument and the skills I developed would be useful and transferable to the drums. I doubted this, but of course she was correct. Drums were incredibly expensive. I'd seen the Roulettes at Brooklyn Technical College and I'd stood right next to Bob Henrit's achingly beautiful Black Gretsch kit with an 18" bass drum. I'd wanted to chat to Bob but I was too shy and anyway he was talking to Dave Williams from the support band Finders Keepers who had a very nice sparkle Ludwig kit.

The next day, I redoubled my efforts to get a drum kit off my parents, but I had to wait until a few months later when I spotted a Carlton Kit for sale notified on a postcard in the local newsagents kiosk. £50.00 ono. I had saved £35.00. Mom agreed to let me have the additional £15.00 required. Dad took me to see them. The vendor was about 18 years old and had lost one of his legs in a motorbike accident and had decided to give up drumming. Poor chap.

The deal was done. I took them home, set them up in the living room, I was so excited. The drums were ok, but the hardware was dreadful. The "Ajax" hi hat cymbals turned inside out if I pressed too hard on the pedal. The bass drum pedal squeaked. But in my mind they looked and sounded just like my hero Bob Henrit's Gretsch kit (he would have been horrified).

My mom watched me bashing about, then announced to my dad that "they'll be just like his Scalextrix - he'll play with them for ten minutes and that will be that!"

Mom and dad died a few years ago and that story was told at both of their funerals.

I'm not sure quite what happened to the Carlton kit. But at the age of 71 I'm still bashing away and still get a thrill whenever I play. I'm less keen on the breaking down and packing away after though these days.

Stay safe Sue. Regards to you and Russ (Bob too if you ever see him - still my drumming hero).

Richard.

#### From Gianmaria Framarin

I always thought Russ was a perfect Mod, I can easily see him fit in Phil Daniels' clothes!

I know it was a totally different era and Mods weren't around, so he was a Ted, but to be honest I still perceive him more like a Mod. It's probably the way he always cut his hair, I can see the Paul Weller that's in Russ! Anyway, he was a Ted, so I have to stretch my imagination to some 'Elvis Presley gelled hairstyle' on Russ... naw, it doesnae work! :-p

Leo Sayer...... what a surprise! He had a huge hit when I was a kid, it was 'You Make Me Feel Like Dancing', his name started to spread around, he quickly became a radio favourite, but gradually he was put in the 'mainstream radio/old pop from the '70s' category. Then I saw him appear in Eric Woolfson's 'Freudiana' album, I was so happy about that... I miss Eric. Miss him so much. Along with Russ, Tony Banks, Gerry Beckley, Dewey Bunnell, Rick Davies, Roger Hodgson and Paul McCartney, Eric is to me TOP OF THE LIST. And a Scottish Lionheart, too, which makes me feel much more in tune with him than it would normally be.

Cheerio!

#### **From Bryan Thomas Jones**

Hi Sue,

The newsletter has been a lockdown delight & I have so enjoyed reading the stories of all contributors. Therein lies some wonderful rock 'n' roll heritage. I'm so pleased that contributors have put their remarkable stories in writing for posterity. I worked along the Enfield Highway back in the 70's & I didn't realise just what a hotbed of R 'n'R it was until reading this newsletter.

Russ's 10 guinea guitar would have in fact cost £10.50, in today's money. Annabel's nightclub was one of THE places to be seen back in the day. The owner, Mark Birley, named it after his then wife. She later married financier James Goldsmith & I had the misfortune of bumping into her rather arrogant & entitled daughter Jemima, while skiing in Zermatt, back in the 90's. I don't think Annabel's would have been Russ's place to hang out....far too pretentious darling!!

I'm looking forward to seeing everyone again as soon as Russ gets back on the road. I still have my tickets for The Stables, in Milton Keynes!!

Best wishes,

Bryan

#### And from Dave Williams

Live and (very) Dangerous



After two editions where I've featured David Courtney and Leo Sayer in consecutive months, the question is how do you follow that? The answer is 'with great difficulty'. So rather than a history item on Russ, I thought I might feature one about myself. Call it a Reader's Story if you like, but it's not entirely 'unconnected' with Russ, as you will see.

When I approached David and Leo, they were only too happy to participate in a conversation about working with Russ. The same applies to my previous features on Tony Lester, Bill Roberts, Al Wickett, Robin Mayhew and Chris White. All of them clearly respect Russ, not just as a musician but also as a person. I daresay Ian and Sven would say exactly the same about the musicians they've featured in their podcasts. I'm sure you will all agree that the podcasts have been fantastic and my feature this month is related to something that came out of the pair's podcast with Russ himself.

The fact that Russ experienced a nasty incident in Germany in 1974 was unknown to me until many years later, when I saw a photo of him in one of the music papers. Each week they carried a feature where they looked back at three music industry related landmarks that happened in that same week 1 year ago, 5 years ago and 10 years ago. To see a photo of Russ in his Argent days in a 1984 music paper set my pulse raising. Had Argent reformed maybe? Unfortunately, not, but the caption underneath the photo took me by surprise. It read "Argent's Russ Ballard electrocuted in 1974". There was no other information, so it wasn't until I read about the incident in Bob Henrit's 'Banging On' that I learned more about it, and it took me back to a similar incident that affected myself. Fortunately, like Russ, I'm still here to tell the tale.

# ARGENT'S RUSS Ballard: nothing shocking



# 1971

Russ Ballard of Argent is

electrocuted on stage in Frankfurt. Thankfully, he receives only minor burns. **Yes** are soundtracking a movie about the Vietnam war called '**Peace'**. **May Blitz** celebrate '**The 2nd Of May**', and **Free**  The incident involving me happened one teatime in 1968. It was around 6pm and my father would be just finishing work. I was hiding away in my bedroom, most likely for a bit of respite from my four little sisters and my younger brother. It could get noisy at the best of times. My brother and I shared the smallest bedroom, which contained a bunk bed, a wardrobe and a 'chest', which had been converted from a previous life as a rather upmarket television cabinet. On top of it I had an electric clock, powered by a cable that ran underneath the carpet to the power socket on the skirting board next to the bed.

On this particular evening, for reasons long forgotten, I decided to move the chest, which rolled fairly easily on its castors. As I pulled it towards me away from the wall, the cable to the clock stretched, knocking it over. Instinctively I reached behind the chest to disconnect an extension lead that had been fitted to extend the cable. I'd done this a few times in the past without incident, but this time would be different. As I pulled the two pieces of the connector apart, electricity started to surge through my body. I was helpless to stop it and all I could do was scream at the top of my voice. It was either the pain or a plea for help, I'm not sure which. Most likely a bit of both. Immediately the rest of the house knew something was horrendously wrong and I heard a parade of footsteps racing up the stairs. For what seems like minutes, though most likely no more than 30 seconds, the current surged through my body and my abiding memory is the Dr Who theme tune coming into my head. Eventually I collapsed to the floor, landing close to the socket on the wall, still unable to let go of the live connector gripped tightly in my right hand. From the position where I fell, I was just able to reach across to pull the plug out of the socket with my free left hand and suddenly the flow of current stopped, and I was able to release the extension connector from my right hand.

I was left in a state of shock. My younger siblings were equally shocked, and like me, when they saw the damage to the palm of my hand they almost freaked out. My Mum, hardly able to take in what she was witnessing, ushered me through to my parents' bedroom and laid me on their bed. Her reaction was to administer a glass of neat brandy to calm me down. Efforts were made to contact my dad, but he had left work and was already in his car driving the 13-mile journey home. In 1968, Man was still planning to land on the moon and hadn't even conceived anything as complicated as inventing the mobile phone.

The live metal pins had burned into the flesh on my right hand. I was now relatively calm and possibly inebriated from the brandy, but most notably I was frightened. Would I lose my hand? I needed urgent attention. We couldn't wait

for my dad, and seeing as the ticker was still beating, albeit in double time, calling an ambulance seemed rather extreme. My mum opted to consult the local pharmacy, which would shortly be closing at 7pm. There was little time. It would be quicker to walk than to find the telephone number in the phone directory. She asked if I was well enough to walk and we set off, arriving just as the lady was ready to lock the door. The pharmacist looked at my toasted palm and suggested she had just the thing. She sold my mum a tube of ointment for dealing with minor burns. We both knew this wasn't ideal. We both knew we already had a half empty tube of the very same at home. We both knew that what she was recommending was wholly inadequate. A bit like suggesting the use of a plaster on a gunshot wound. However, once home, the burns were coated with the ointment, and I had a restless night sleep, not helped by the fact that I was in the same room where, hours earlier, I was shaking uncontrollably to the theme tune from Dr Who. I never did figure out the reason for that. Maybe it was because my bedroom was the size of a police box.

My dad was deeply disturbed by what had happened. I'm not sure whether that was a guilty complex because he'd decided to go for a crafty beer on the way home from work, thus arriving later than usual. Strangely I was scared he might shout at me. He often did, as did most fathers back in those days. He checked out the extended cable and found the cause. I wasn't to blame. The connector had been wrongly wired. The male half of the connector had been fastened onto the cable that plugged into the electrical socket, leaving the exposed pins live. When I separated the two parts, my hand must have touched the live pins, causing the muscles to contract in my hand, so I was unable to let go.

Next morning my dad took me straight to the Children's Hospital where all hell let loose. The doctors wanted the name of the pharmacist who failed to give the correct advice. They said infection could have set in, with bad consequences. They cleaned up the wound and warned me that they were about to spray it with an anti-septic that would sting. Not a little sting, but a big sting, feeling like I'd been stung by a swarm of wasps. I gritted my teeth, but to my relief, there was no pain at all. They bandaged my hand and sent me home. I had to attend daily appointments for the next week and weekly thereafter for the next three weeks or so. Same process each time; cleaned up, anti-septic spray, fresh bandage, and home. By the third day, I had to make my own way to the hospital using the bus. The wound was examined and cleaned as usual, then a nurse explained that the spray they were about to use would sting. I finished off the sentence for her, "Like being stung by a swarm of wasps". She nodded. I sat there all macho, smiling to myself. Talk about tempting fate. This time she was right. I nearly hit the ceiling and now the nurse was smiling. She had that "not so macho now" look on her face. It's only now when I look back that I realise that this was an indication that my nerves were recovering as part of the healing process. We've said before that music can help you remember particular events during your life. Well, I distinctly remember hearing 'Days' by The Kinks as I was going for treatment, hence I can identify the year as 1968. Each time I hear that great song, it takes me back to that day when I felt the sting from that spray. Any worse and I'd have landed on the moon a year earlier than Neil Armstrong.

The healing process proceeded quickly from that point. Oh, and an added bonus, the clock still worked! I still bear three scars, though they are nothing more than the childhood battle scars carried by many grown-ups. The only real lasting effect has been a healthy respect for electricity. Sadly, it was my mum that wired the connector with the male and female parts connected the wrong way around. She did argue in her defence that I'd no business pulling the connectors apart, though I did point out to her that they were designed for that very purpose. When the subject came up years later during one of those "do you remember when" conversations, I jokingly referred to the incident as "the day my mum tried to kill me". It was just meant as a bit of humour, but I immediately saw the hurt on my poor mum's face and to this day I deeply regret what I said in a silly moment of thoughtlessness. Nowadays she'd probably get her own back by joking that her cunning plan failed.

Actually, this wasn't my first encounter with 240 volts. Electricity is not my friend. In fact, someone suggested that 'David Watts' might have been a more appropriate name for me. I was a baby and still at the crawling stage when I found a metallic object and wondered what might happen if I stuck it in one of the holes in the little square box on the wall. Well, we all know what curiosity did to the cat, and I was about to receive my first lesson. A flying lesson. There was a large bang, and I flew across from one side of the room to the other. I guess I may have simultaneously filled my nappy. There were lots of tears, a shouting at, but no lasting damage. Neither would the clock extension lead incident be the last. Despite my raised awareness, I've had at least four minor jolts since then, some my fault, others not. Five if you count the occasion when I was almost struck by lightning, but that's another story.

Fortunately for everyone, Russ survived his incident at The Zoom Club in Hamburg. Others have been less fortunate, Les Harvey from Stone the Crows being one, as mentioned by Russ in the podcast. We now live in a world of health and safety regulations, which seem to get more restrictive year by year, something we often complain about, but they are there for a reason, and there's no question that lives are being saved as a result. Well, that's all for this month. I'm off to change a light bulb. Wish me luck!

# **RUSS'S MUSIC HISTORY** By Dave Williams

#### 45 Years Ago This Month

Whilst it's not been possible to attend any live concerts in the last year, its worth noting that this month 45 years ago, Russ took his newly formed band out for two UK appearances. The first gig took place at the famous **Marquee Club** on Wardour Street on the evening of Friday May 7th. London got to see Russ's new line-up, which consisted of **Bill Roberts**, **Wally Wilson**, **Tony Lester** and **Alan Wickett**, with Russ using his holey Strat, apart from a couple of songs where he switched to electric piano. The set list consisted of songs from his '**Russ Ballard**' and '**Winning**' albums, along with some **Argent** classics and **Roger Daltrey**'s Get Your Love. It was a hot evening, and the event was extra special because Russ was presented with four awards for some of his songwriting and production work.

On the following day, Saturday May 8th, with the sun again beating down, the band travelled a few miles north to St Albans, the spiritual home of Russ's former band Argent, where they played to an enthusiastic crowd that included various members of Argent, plus my good self. I'd never had the pleasure of seeing **The Roulettes** or **Argent** at that point, so to see Russ stroll like a Rock God through the assembling audience towards the dressing room to prepare for the show really built up my anticipation.

Afterwards, I was stood near the front with several local Argent diehards when **Fred Wilkinson** appeared and chirped "Who'd like to meet Russ?". He explained that Russ was hosting an after-gig get-together with his family (anyone remember those days when we could get together? Hopefully they will return very soon) and he wanted to show them the awards he had received the night before. So, a lucky four of us were handed an award each, to take to Russ backstage. I think I was possibly carrying the award relating to **Moonlighting** by **Leo Sayer**. A great honour and privilege to meet Russ in that way.

This review of **The Marquee** concert by **Trevor Gardiner**, is reproduced from one of the music papers at that time.

Beer, Sweat & Cheers – Ballard comes home Russ Ballard – Marquee, London Bathed in the Marquee's tropical atmosphere of beer and perspiration, a packed audience gave Russ Ballard a hero's welcome last Friday on this, his first official gig in Britain since leaving Argent, two years ago. Complete with a guest list rivalling the Dead Sea Scrolls in length and the NME Encyclopaedia of Rock in content, it felt more like an unofficial welcome-back party rather than anything else, the general feeling of goodwill and unrestrained enthusiasm towards the band serving as ample proof of the respect Ballard has earned for himself over the years.

Two years of writing, producing and doing sessions for a variety of other artists, as well as recording two albums of his own, have kept Russ away from the stage, and his eagerness to recapture the spirit of live work made his performance all the more electric. Still wearing the familiar dark glasses and toting the same old Stratocaster, he led his band of Bill Roberts (guitar), Tony Lester (bass), Wally Wilson (keyboards) and Al Wickett (drums) through a devastating set of numbers from both his albums, interspersed with a few of the songs he wrote for others, Roger Daltrey, Three Dog Night and, of course, Argent.

Kicking off with "Danger Zone Part One", Ballard quickly found his feet and crashed into a powerful "Born on Halloween" from his new "Winning" album. Throughout the rest of the evening his power and vitality prevailed, coaxing jagged, earthy chords from his guitar and whipping along the rest of the band at a steaming pace. Helped by some strong harmonies, particularly from Roberts and Lester, Ballard's voice soared above the music as two years of pent-up energy discharged itself into the audience.

"A Song for Gail" provided a short breathing space between the rockers, Bill Roberts complimenting Ballard's sorrowful electric piano with some equally moving guitar, before taking off again with the unforgettable "Fly Away", once more helped along by the strong harmony back-up. It soon became apparent just how many great songs Ballard has in fact written, as he worked his way through numbers like "I Don't Believe in Miracles", "Liar", "Get Your Love", and "It's Only Money". With every song he captured that magical ingredient of true "Rock 'n' Roll", each one so simply constructed, yet charged with a fire and vivacity which sent sparks of electricity cracking through the audience. Slicing through the muggy atmosphere like a knife, the set climaxed with "She's A Hurricane" and "Weekend", leaving the audience calling for more even before the band had reached the stage door. They obliged with "Danger Zone Part Two", Ballard's guitar once again springing into action, burning across the funky backdrop of Wally Wilson's clavinet, and nicely bringing the set to a close.

# **DAVE'S COVER QUEST**

Another Russ Ballard song this month, but not exactly a cover as I'm not aware of any other versions. I actually bought this single when it was released in 1981 and was always under the impression that A II Z was a German band. Wrong. The band hails from Manchester in the UK.

#### No.32



#### I'm the One who Loves You by A II Z

Taking their name from the popular A to Z street maps, A II Z was a short-lived band from Bramhall area of Stockport, and were early pioneers of the New Wave of British Heavy Metal movement, commonly referred to as NWOBHM.

Fronted by brothers Dave and Gary Owens, lead vocalist and guitarist respectively, they were signed by Polydor Records, releasing an album in 1980 called **The Witch of Berkeley**, recorded live in a local school hall. An EP called **No Fun after Midnight**, taken from the album, failed to make an impact on the charts, resulting in the brothers changing the line-up and shifting towards a more melodic rock style. In 1981, the band enlisted the help of Russ Ballard in a second bid for chart success. Produced by Andy Scott of **The Sweet**, it has elements of the **Rainbow** version of **Since You Been Gone**, with a suitably catchy chorus. <u>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ycb22ioNZyk</u>



# <u>A-II-Z - I'm The One Who Loves</u>

# <u>You</u>

Track 1 from the 1981 I'm The One Who Loves You 7" single.

www.youtube.com