



Header by Sven.

January 2022

Welcome to our new readers. And a very happy, healthy and successful 2022 to you all.

I hope you enjoyed having a go at the festive wordsearch Dave very kindly compiled for us. The answers, of course, appear as you do it but Dave has sent us some explanatory notes, which you will find in the attachment.

If you are on Russ's Facebook page, you will know that Carole puts a video on there every week. I know a lot of you are not on Facebook and several readers have sent me videos to include in the newsletter so I thought we would have a monthly "**Readers' Video**" item. If you would like your favourite video to be included or if you manage to find something obscure, please send me the link. One proviso....Russ must be in the video, no covers...we already have that covered!!!

Good news about the UK tour....read on!

Best wishes

Sue

THIS MONTH FROM RUSS

Happy New Year to all Newsletter Readers - I hope it's a Happy, Healthy and Peaceful one.

I hope you all had a great Christmas - It's a good time when there are young ones around. I sometimes cast my mind back and can remember the feeling....Magical! - Father Christmas, flying reindeer and Elves....How did we fall for it?? I suppose we were young and hadn't learned the rules yet....We were too young to have any concept of God and, I guess, Mum and Dad was our only concept of a higher power, and we trusted their word and if they said Father Christmas is a real person it must be true, and that jolly, inebriated, overweight old guy can get down our little chimney then 'magic is real'. It amazes me how people find the money to buy the number of presents. My parents always found my brother and myself one expensive gift but to be honest, the most fun was sticking our hand down the stocking and pulling up an orange or a walnut along with a Dinky Toy or lead soldier. Sometimes I wonder when we get to 'that' age - where we stop believing in the lovely old man and his elves...don't other beliefs fly out the window with Christmas? I watched 'My Fair Lady', I think boxing day, and straight after, 'West Side Story' - [My two favourite musicals] and I must admit I felt a tear or two, watching Eliza and Henry Higgins then Tony and Maria act out those great, emotional parts. Every aspect of love is in those stories and it's the thing that ties Christmas together....Well, if you read this, Father Christmas, you're welcome back any time.

RUSS - LIFE STORIES

I ended last month's talking about the evening my brother Roy joined the group....He played along with us, he sounded good, so, he was in.....

At this point I have to say a little more about 'The Parker Royal Five', - Apart from the inspirational Brian, they had a special bass player, JOHN ROGERS. John lived close to me and went to Kings Road School and, like me, he was captain of the football team. John was four years older than me and I followed his path through the football team to his musical career.

He was so much better than other bass players I'd seen and, on top of that, he was a friend of Jet Harris, who was then playing bass with Cliff Richard. The rhythm guitarist in the P.R.5. was a boy from Cheshunt, his name was Norman Stracey. His nickname was Henry, to differentiate from the drummer in the group, Norman Sheffield. Henry loved jazz and knew more chords than any other guitarist I'd ever heard....When he wasn't playing the three chords of most rock and roll songs of the time he'd be playing standards like, 'Misty' and 'Tenderly'. He seemed very quiet and had a shy, toothy smile. - Norman Sheffield, the drummer, was the oldest and musically was the most experienced. He'd played in all kinds of jazz groups. The lead singer was a school friend of Brian, John and Henry...his name....David 'Buster' Meikle. Buster was a popular boy locally, he was not only a good singer, he was also very good at sports, excelling in football and tennis. I remember Bob H. and I catching a bus to 'The New Inn' pub in Waltham Abbey because we'd heard The Parker Royal Five were playing in the hall above the pub. When we made it to the pub we could hear the group, they sounded fantastic, the tune they were playing was 'Rockin' Robin'. We walked to the top of the stairs, the man taking the entrance money looked at me and said, "You're not coming in, you're too young"....Bob and I took the next bus home. The Parkers rehearsed at the original Cheshunt Boys Club, which was the hall of Holy Trinity School, in Trinity Lane. The school was old, Victorian and dilapidated and even had windows missing, so they were covered with pieces of timber, so had gaps in places...it was the gaps that Bob and I used to look through to see the group rehearsing. Once we stayed in the club after it had closed to the usual kids. We were hoping they would allow us to sit in watch them closely, not to mention we might be in the warm. As they tuned up I thought, "Oh, they're going to let us stay", then suddenly Brian walked over to us and said, "You've had your rehearsal, will you let us have ours?", which was Brian's way of saying - "GET LOST". We walked out with our tails between our legs, mind you, I don't blame him, because what they were rehearsing that week we copied the week after - But we were learning - and from the best.



UK TOUR - IT'S GOOD TO BE HERE

At the time of writing, the UK tour is still on and Russ and the band have started rehearsals. I have had a look at all the venues and there are still tickets left at all of them. There is a month for Omicron cases to reduce further so, if you fancy a very good evening out and a good pick-me-up, here is your chance. Join Russ, Bob, Roly, Marc, PJ and Claire for a rocking night at your nearest venue.

10th February London 100 Club
12th February Kinross Backstage
14th February Milton Keynes The Stables
15th February Chislehurst The Beaverwood
17th February Wolverhampton KK's Steel Mill

NEW TRACK TASTERS

Two more tasters of the tracks Russ has been writing over the Covid era. You can also hear these on his Facebook page and can comment on them there if you feel moved to do that. Tell us what you think.

<https://youtu.be/Zw6dGex-fdU>



[Russ Ballard - The Wild](https://youtu.be/Zw6dGex-fdU)

A taste of a new album © 2021 Russell Ballard Ltd.
[youtu.be](https://youtu.be/Zw6dGex-fdU)

<https://youtu.be/qGKh-NSfwDE>



[Russ Ballard - The Family](https://youtu.be/qGKh-NSfwDE)

A taste of a new album © 2021 Russell Ballard Ltd.
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AMATEUR HOUR

by Dave Williams

There are plenty of recordings of **Liar**, the song Russ wrote for Argent's first album, available on vinyl and CD, including versions by Graham Bonnet, Three Dog Night, The Meters and Capability Brown for starters. There are some very good versions by unfamiliar names waiting to be discovered on the internet, and one that caught my eye, as well as my ear, is a version posted by rastop1.



Alexander Rastopchin, to give you his real name, is a musician and electronics designer, and filmmaker. Born on January 9th, 1957, in Kazakhstan, a republic of the former USSR, he moved with his family at the age of 7 years old to Belarus, in the western part of the Soviet Union. Graduating from Mogilev high school, he was admitted into the prestigious Radio Engineering Institute and became a hardware expert at the computer factory. Whilst learning to play guitar, he designed and built his own distortion box.

From the late 70s to the early 90s, Alexander spent around 300 days a year with different bands and solo performers, visiting much of the world, including: Germany, Italy, India, Burma, Laos, Vietnam, Mongolia, Afghanistan, Ghana, Nigeria, Ivory Coast and the USA. Since 1993 he has lived in New York City where he plays and teaches guitar and produces electronic gadgets for musicians and sound engineers. He has a number of covers on his You Tube channel. Here is his cover version of **Russ Ballard's Liar**. <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=rews7jTso2Q>



[Liar- cover by Rastop](#)

Song written by Russ Ballard of the band Argent covered it and made a huge hit, my favorite version [m.youtube.com](#)

READERS' VIDEO OF THE MONTH

Argent - Stepping Stone

At Festival Avanguardia e Nuove Tendenze in Rome 1972

This video was sent to the Facebook page by David J Lee and appeared on the page on 16/10/21.

<https://youtu.be/lul7CpomLVc>



[live @ ARGENT - Festival Avanguardia e Nuove Tendenze, Roma 1972 pt. 8](#)
[youtu.be](#)

PODCAST

The latest podcast from Sven and Ian is up now on Russ's website. Or you can find it wherever you usually listen to podcasts. Their guest is award winning Irish musician, Francie Conway, who has worked with Russ in the past. I can personally recommend Francie's latest album, Hidden Gems. One track was written by Russ and he does backing vocals and plays guitar on several other tracks.

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

DAVE'S COVER QUEST

Let's start off 2022 with a bit of rock music. I must have slept through this one. I knew that Russ had co-written this song with Magnum's Tony Clarkin, but I don't remember being aware that it actually charted, or that it appeared on BBC TV's Top of the Pops. So here goes with the result of January's cover quest.

No.40



Rockin' Chair by Magnum

Magnum are a British rock band originating from Birmingham in 1972. Their line-up has undergone several changes over the years, but the two ever-present core members are guitarist Tony Clarkin and vocalist Bob Catley.

Their first album chart success came in 1982 with their 3rd album Chase the Dragon, followed by The Eleventh Hour a year later. However, things turned sour with their record company Jet Records, which resulted in the band joining FM Records briefly before Polydor took them on. Now signed to a major label, Magnum were able to utilise a bigger marketing budget and were able to produce videos to accompany their single releases.

To try and break the band in the United States, Polydor suggested that Tony Clarkin should work with co-writers. The results appeared on their Goodnight LA album. The opening track is the subject of this article and was co-written by Tony Clarkin and Russ Ballard. Interestingly, the producer was none other than Keith Olson, who produced Russ's At the Third Stroke album in 1977.

Strangely Polydor never released the album in the States, and Magnum left the label soon afterwards. The band split in 1995, Clarkin and Catley remaining together under a new name Hard Rain. In 2001, they reverted to Magnum and continue to this day, with a new album due out in January 2022 titled The Monster Roars.

Going back to 1990 and the album Goodnight LA, Rockin' Chair was issued as a single and achieved success in the UK, peaking at No.27 in the Singles Chart, with the band appearing on Top of the Pops on 22nd June 1990, to support it. <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=CUDs4Zy0OMk>

	Magnum Rockin Chair top of the pops 22/6/1990 - YouTube
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That's not the end of the story, however. There are two other songs co-written by Clarkin / Ballard on the album; Matter of Survival <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=n8cJMG312xQ> and No Way Out, plus there was allegedly a 4th song written and recorded called Dancing with the Devil, that never made it onto the album.

