

(Header by Sven)

February 2022

Welcome to our new readers.

This newsletter marks the end of our ninth year! 🎉

Lots of good news but a bit of not so good news. We have more gigs for you and, hopefully there will be more to add later. Sadly, I won't be able to go to any this time round but, to those who are going, have a brilliant time.

Many thanks to Dave, Liam and Gordon for their contributions this month.

Sue

THIS MONTH FROM RUSS

For the past three weeks we've been rehearsing hard for the tour that starts on Thursday 10th February at The 100 Club in London. The band - [Bob, Roly, Marc, PJ] and myself have been feeling really good about the set but, as luck would have it, I get a call from my great mate Bob Henrit...he phoned [with a

particularly croaky voice] to say, "I've got Omicron!!" - "Oh", I said, What do we do for a drummer?" - Bob suggested Jos, his son...Of course, he's a great drummer and he knows the songs.....So, until Bob feels strong enough to join the tour, Jos will take his place...We're rehearsing with Jos tomorrow, Monday, for the 100 Club on Thursday....Hope to see you there. Love, Russ xx

RUSS - LIFE STORIES

In 1959 we entered a competition called 'Boys Clubs of Great Britain'. Entertainers and groups were given the chance to compete for 'The Frankie Vaughan Award'. Frankie Vaughan was a popular singer in the UK at the time and also the patron of Boys Clubs of Great Britain. We auditioned along with many other groups and entertainers at a hall in Stratford, East London. It was on a Sunday afternoon. We played two songs, 'My Babe' and, I think, 'Be-Bop-a-Lula'. The main Judge was Bill Cotton Jun, who later became head of light entertainment at the B.B.C. We passed the audition and found ourselves playing at London's Royal Festival Hall - Quite scary! We'd been used to playing youth clubs and socials. There were four other groups appearing. We played OK but we were still pretty 'green' and didn't come anywhere, but the experience was wonderful. I remember being surprised at the acoustics of the Festival Hall being so dead...not good for R'n'R.

We were still very young, I was thirteen, Bob was fourteen, but after that day we improved rapidly and became a popular group locally and the Parker Royal Five had, in the meantime, turned professional after being offered to back a new singer called Dave Sampson. He was Cliff Richard's protege....anyway, that's how he was sold to the public. The PR5 changed their name and became Dave Sampson and the Hunters and they soon had a hit single called 'Sweet Dreams'. They also went on to tour with Cliff Richard and The Shadows. [The Drifters changed their name to The Shadows, because of conflict with an American group of the same name]. The recruitment of Dave Sampson as lead singer meant that Buster Meikle was available and Buster's availability coincided with Norman Jago and myself falling out. I recall it was because Norman stole my girlfriend from under my nose...mind you, he was a great looking kid and looked more like a young man than me, even though I thought I had 'EDGE'.

<https://youtu.be/nVjyglgM5R8>



[Dave Sampson & The Hunters - Sweet Dreams - 1960 45rpm](#)

Self-penned debut single from Staffordshire's Dave - and also his highest chart place - 26

[youtu.be](#)

UK TOUR - IT'S GOOD TO BE HERE

All ready to go! Russ and the band have been having fun doing rehearsals and are sounding good. The band for this tour is now Jos Henrit, Roly Jones, PJ Phillips, Marc Rapson and, hopefully, Bob Henrit at the later dates. There will be some merch at the shows, signed books, CDs and the vinyl album in case you have missed out so far. The live "Book of Love" album is the same one that we sold online after the cancelled 2020 tours but it has been re-packaged for 2022.



PROMOTION INTERVIEWS

Russ has done some interviews in preparation for the tour. The first was with Garry Foster of "wcr fm", a Wolverhampton radio station. Garry devoted a whole hour to Russ's interview and played several of Russ's tracks both by him and some covers. He was a really good and knowledgeable interviewer. Garry very kindly sent me this link for the newsletter. Here is an hour of entertainment.

<https://www.mixcloud.com/garry-foster/unchained-25012022-hour-two/> It is possible to skip the first couple of minutes of the news with the slider.

Russ did an interview with Alan Jarvie for his local radio station. You will have to be quick with this one. These are the times of the repeats. I don't have a link for listen again. You should be able to catch the Wednesday repeat. Russ is on in the second hour so, for the UK, add an hour onto these times. For other countries you will need to adjust accordingly. The link for the radio station is 242radio.com or you can find it in other places where you listen....the "Tune In" app or, if you ask Alexa nicely, she will find it for you.

Saturday 5th @ 12noon

Sunday 6th @ [9am](#)

Tuesday 8th @ midnight

Wednesday 9th @ [9pm](#) (all times UK).

EXTRA GIGS

Lucky people up there in the north of the UK. Russ has two extra gigs but you will have to wait until October.

8th October 2022 Hull, Wrecking Ball Arts Centre.

9th October 2022 Edinburgh, Caves.

Then on **Saturday 20th August**, Russ will be playing at the **Golden Age Rock Festival** in **Liege, Belgium**.

<https://goldenagerock.be/en/>

NEW TRACK TASTERS

Two more tasters from Russ's potential "lockdown album". Let us know what you think. This time we have Escape and Charlatan.

<https://youtu.be/H0y6LS35CuE>

**RUSS
BALLARD**
Escape

[Russ Ballard - Escape](#)

A taste of a new album© 2021 Russell Ballard
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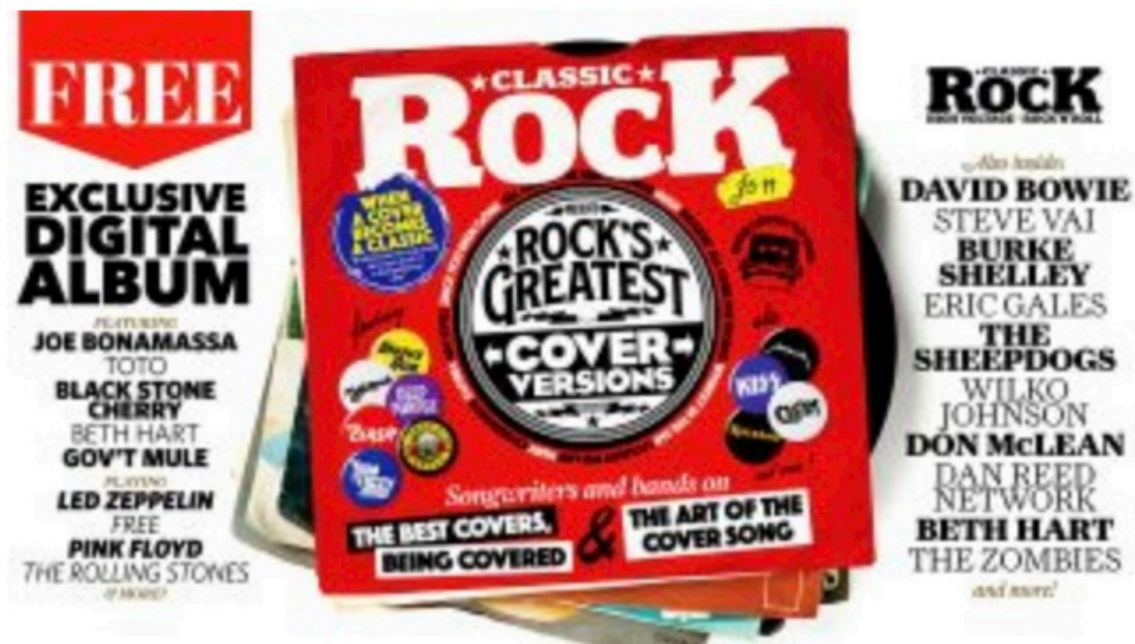
<https://youtu.be/dyn4g5ci9RQ>



[Russ Ballard - Charlatan](#)

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CLASSIC ROCK MAGAZINE - COVERS FEATURE



In the current edition of Classic Rock magazine they have a feature about Rock's Greatest Cover Versions. Russ did an interview for this a few months ago. Featured are articles on God Gave Rock and Roll To You and Since you Been gone with comments from Russ. I can't get photos of the articles into the newsletter so they are readable for everyone but I understand that it might be possible to enlarge them in gmail and you should be able to enlarge them sufficiently if you are reading on your phone.



SINCE YOU BEEN GONE

RAINBOW 1979

First recorded by: **Russ Ballard, 1976** Written by: **Russ Ballard**

How Rainbow took its writer's "soft" original and turned it into a punchy rock classic.

Having quit the band Argent two years earlier, Russ Ballard had hoped that a second solo album would ignite his solo career. *Winning*, released in 1976, did bring attention to several of Ballard's songs, although little of it under his own name; Santana covered its title track on their album *Zebop!*, the Bay City Rollers re-recorded *Are You Cuckoo?* and Roger Daltrey borrowed *Just A Dream Away* for the score of the film *McVicar* in which he starred.

But it was *Since You Been Gone* that cemented Ballard's reputation as a go-to songwriter to take rock music into the charts.

"I knew immediately that *Since You Been Gone* was radio-friendly," Ballard recalls now. "Because I wrote it on the piano, we recorded it that way. Which was bad because it was an obvious rock song. My version was kinda soft."

Following its appearance on *Winning*, *Since You Been Gone* became a Top 50 US hit for the Illinois band Head East. It was also recorded by all-female South African band Clout, and as a duet by former Runaways vocalist Cherie Currie and her sister Marie. Others who covered the song include Brian May, the Graham Bonnet-fronted band Impellitteri, and Michael Ball.

The best-known version, though, is by Rainbow, who toughened it up for the opening single from their first post-Ronnie James Dio album, *Down To Earth*. It gave Rainbow their first ever UK Top 10 hit. But not everybody in the band was thrilled by this development – drummer

Cozy Powell considered the track a "sell-out". But regardless of its genre it remains a bloody good tune.

The original version of *Since You Been Gone* was edgier than that of Rainbow's. Guitarist Ritchie Blackmore transposed its keyboard riff to lead guitar, singer Graham Bonnet replaced the harmony line 'Do do do do, do do do do' with the emphatic 'Woah', and the result was stunning.

"I first heard Rainbow's version on the radio out in my garden on a nice summer day, and I went: 'Wow!' Because what they had done with it sounded really strong," Ballard relates fondly.

On successive albums, with singer Joe Lynn Turner having replaced Bonnet, Rainbow carved out a more commercial course still – Ballard contributed another belter, *I Surrender*, to fifth album, *Difficult To Cure* – but *Since You Been Gone* was where it all started.

Blackmore expressed his thanks, albeit belatedly, in person when Ballard was invited to perform *Since You Been Gone* with the reunited Rainbow at

London's O2 Arena in 2017.

"We had a nice chat in his dressing room, and I realised we had more in common than I expected," Ballard remembers. "Both of us had been involved with [iconic record producer] Joe Meek, and I had been offered a job in The Outlaws [whose line-up featured Blackmore], though I had to turn it down. In fact, I offered to write a song for Blackmore's *Night*," he adds with a grin. "But that didn't happen because I never spoke to Ritchie again." **DL**

"It was an obvious rock song. My version was kinda soft."

Russ Ballard

GOD GAVE ROCK AND ROLL TO YOU II

KISS 1991



First recorded by: **Argent (as God Gave Rock And Roll To You), 1973** Written by: **Russ Ballard**

From divine origins to loud guitars (and *Bill & Ted*), its writer reflects on the song made into a megahit by Kiss.

Written by Russ Ballard, recorded by Argent and introduced to a new generation of fans by Kiss, *God Gave Rock And Roll To You* owes its unusual title to a difficult US tour and a much-used saying favoured by Ballard's mother. The guitarist and vocalist had suffered panic attacks during an American tour as a member of Argent, "possibly as a result of working too hard", he theorises. Upon returning to the UK, over a period of around nine months the attacks gradually subsided, to his great relief. "It felt like being reborn," he says. "While the sky had been blue, now it was bluer."

Ballard also reveals that his mother was deeply religious. "She would say God gave us this, and God gave us that," he recalls. "With both of those things in mind, I sat down at the piano and tried to convey how I was feeling."

The original recording of the song was released as a single, and took Argent into the UK Top 20. Full of sunshine and optimism, its lyric advised: 'Don't step on snails, don't climb in trees/Love Cliff Richard, but please don't tease'.

When, almost two decades later, Kiss recorded the song for the soundtrack of the film *Bill & Ted's Bogus Journey*, they retained its celebration of rock music and the blood, sweat and tears involved in making it big, but gave the elbow to its cheesier sentiments. Their new words proposed: 'You gotta put your faith in a loud guitar.'

Ballard is happy to admit that Kiss "improved" his song. "They got the

tempo right, and their guitar solo was better," he says. "Looking back now, I realise that Argent didn't always pay enough attention to the detail of the arrangement."

He also doesn't mind that in tweaking the lyrics, music and title, Gene Simmons, Paul Stanley and Kiss producer Bob Ezrin cheekily inserted their own names to the credits. "I had no objection because without them the song would have been stuck away on a shelf just gathering dust, but now it was going to be a part of a massive, high-

profile movie soundtrack," he points out, referring to the the second *Bill & Ted* film, which also featured Megadeth, Faith No More, Winger and Steve Vai. "Plus," he adds with a chuckle, "I didn't have to give away too much of the publishing."

Regrettably, despite the consistent quality of his solo albums, Ballard never had a UK hit of his own, although his songs have been

recorded by Rainbow (*Since You Been Gone, I Surrender*), Uriah Heep (*On The Rebound*), America (*You Can Do Magic*), Hot Chocolate (*So You Win Again*), Roger Daltrey (*Just A Dream Away*), Ace Frehley and Peter Dinklage (*Three Dog Night*), Olivia Newton-John, Night Ranger, ABBA's Agnetha Fältskog, and many more.

Ballard continues to play and record, and, should covid allow it, look out for a rare UK tour this month. "I also made a new album during lockdown," he says. "I hope that will come out before too long." **DL**

"Without Kiss the song would have been stuck away on a shelf just gathering dust."

Russ Ballard

AMATEUR HOUR

by Dave Williams

With Janet B's version of Voices included as this month's Cover Quest choice, I thought why not feature the same song in my Amateur Hour feature. So, here's a version by Stefano Campi, who I think, is singing over the original instrumental backing track. It's the video that catches the eye though. Anyone know what that's all about? Answers on a postcard!! <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=jYSKB9GhZEs>



[Voices \(Russ Ballard cover\)
m.youtube.com](https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=jYSKB9GhZEs)

READERS' VIDEO OF THE MONTH

From Gordon Dickson

Russ and The Barnet Dogs: Rock & Roll Lover

We have had this video on Russ's Facebook page but it is definitely good enough to watch time and time again. Or is that just me?! One of my favourites! Drums: Bob Henrit, Guitar: Bill Roberts, Guitar: John Verity, Bass: Dave Wintour.

<https://youtu.be/9Q2mochKZms>



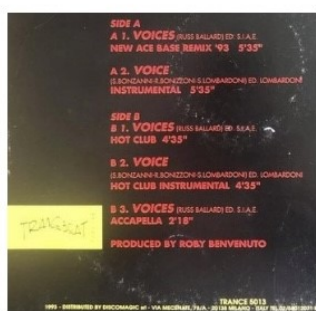
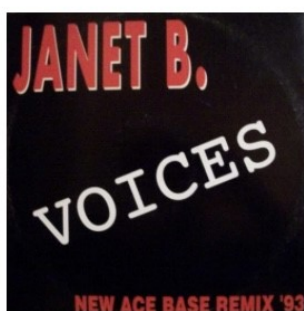
Russ Ballard, The Barnet Dogs - Rock & Roll Lover

Watch the official music video for "Rock & Roll Lover" by Russ Ballard & The Barnet Dogs Listen to Russ Ballard: <https://RussBallard.lnk.to/listenYDFollow> Rus...
[youtube](https://youtu.be/9Q2mochKZms)

DAVE'S COVER QUEST

Voices, I hear Voices. Here's a version that not many of you will know about.

No.41



Voices by Janet B

This version of Voices hails from Italy according to the sleeve artwork and was released on 12" vinyl in 1993 on the Trancebeat label. As the title suggests, it has an association with **Ace of Base** in that it seems to be a mash-up with their hit

single **All That She Wants**. Personally, I wouldn't consider it a ground-breaking cover of this milestone song for Russ, but its yet another example of how his songs can be re-engineered into different genres. It was produced by Roby Benvenuto, real name Giancarlo Benvenuto.

New Ace Base Remix '93 <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=8DCjX7WSlvM>



Janet B. - Voices (New Ace Base Remix '93)

#Reggae #Eurodance Please subscribe to our channel!

m.youtube.com

The song also appears on an album by Ace of Base...and Friends released in Poland in 1993 on the Hilton label, though it is claimed to be an *unofficial release*.

