



(Header by Sven)

April 2022

Welcome to our new subscribers.

With Russ's tour still being bright in the memories of those who were there and, for that matter, for those of us who were there via YouTube (thank goodness for YouTube), we have another video, quite an appropriate one for these times, from The Stables with thanks to Andy Burman. Dave has been talking to the new members of Russ's band...this month, keyboard player, Marc Rapson. And we have a couple of items featuring Since You Been Gone. Thanks to Markus Linten for finding one of them.

Enjoy the Easter holidays! Hope the weather is good for you.

Sue

THIS MONTH FROM RUSS

Hello My Friends....A thought.....

So great seeing so many friendly faces at the venues - London 100 Club - Kinross Green Hotel - The Stables - Wavendon - The Beaverwood and - The Shepherds Bush Empire.....

You know, seeing the same people at multiple gigs just goes to show the importance music has in their lives. It's so easy to think that to be such music enthusiasts surely people would actually play an instrument....Well, it doesn't seem to be the case - Which makes me wonder, it might be a fact that being a musician and knowing chords, notes and music structures could be a hinderance compared to a music fan who doesn't judge but only gets off on what he or she hears.

For Liam and Natasha....

Is There Anybody Out There?

*Is there anybody out there?
Can you hear me calling you?
Can anybody see me?
You must know what to do,*

*Can you see what I see?
This is not the way it's meant to be
Can you hear me calling?
I need a sanctuary*

*When you turned around
Your tears fell to the ground
Tears from laughing turned in to crying
Are you scared of living 'cos you see love dying?
If you believe in love, who's behind it?
Who could mastermind it?*

If you believe in love it's plain to see there's not enough

*Can anybody see me?
Looking up from the ground,
Looking for something for nothing,
Nothing's what I found
Is anybody out there, can you make some sense to me?,
What is life, What is love? It's still a mystery.*

<https://youtu.be/ZWMesyc3Elk>

RUSS - LIFE STORIES

FROM HOSPITAL ON TO THE STAGE.....

The boys in the group used to come up and see me, usually at weekends - [visiting time then was two hours] - They sometimes brought me fruit....i remember liking peaches a lot but they also brought packets of Wrigley's chewing gum, which I loved. I always had a piece of gum in my mouth, even when I played on stage. Buster came to see me more than the others, mainly because he'd started a job at 'The Spectator'. One evening he came to see me with a box of fifty packets, he'd walked in to the shop, seen the full box on the counter, wrapped in cellophane and bought the lot - The box cost ten shillings, fifty pence in today's money - [a lot in 1961].

Everyday in hospital was the same, there was the murmur of nurses changing shifts, lights on at 5.45am. Breakfast at six. I did enjoy the fact that, because I had my eyes bandaged, a nurse would feed me my meals - The cleaners would come in and vacuum, mop and scrub and polish the floors. The nurses took temperatures then asked, "Have you opened your bowels?" - I will say, there were quite a few nurses at Moorfield's had my pulse racing and I'm sure I asked for a bed bath more than any other patient in Swinbourne Ward. There was a male sister who was particularly friendly, and very funny, his name was Douglas Hamblin. He loved the arts and always seemed to be at the theatre, cinema and musicals. He knew I was in a group and often asked me questions about rock n roll music - at that time, "My ol' man's a dustman" was number one in the chart. The song had comical lyrics and one of the lines was "He wears cor blimey trousers and he lives in a council flat" Mister Hamblin came in to the ward one day and said, "Russell, can you tell me, what are cor blimey trousers?" - I didn't know then and I don't know now.

It was a boring existence in hospital, I was usually the only young guy. Occasionally, a boy would be admitted with an injury. There was a young man admitted who was put in the bed next to me, his name was Tim Streeton and he played banjo in an up and coming trad jazz band, called 'The Ken Colyer Band'. There was no TV in Moorfields, although we did each have a radio, which I enjoyed, especially the light program where we could hear the latest hits, although most of that station were shows full of live music played by big orchestras like, Joe Loss, Bob Millers Millermen and The Northern Dance Orchestra. These bands and light music monopolized the airwaves, even when Elvis, Jerry Lee Lewis and Little Richard were staple in the charts.

QUESTION OF THE MONTH

I loved the old "Voices" video, it was a bit James Bondy! I gather it was filmed near California and I just wondered how long it took to film back in the day and did you make a special trip out just to shoot it? Also, is there anything that sticks in your mind when you were filming it?

Russ: *"It was filmed just outside LA, a place called Indian Dunes. It took two days to film. I did make a special trip...I was called to do Jury Service at St. Albans Crown Court the same week and I asked if I could be excused after two days, to make the filming and the judge said yes.*

Anything that stays in my mind? - Probably the fact I was asked to drive the Rolls away from the big house - (it was actually a convent) - The director asked me drive fast ...I did, but it was downhill and winding....I was glad to get it out of the way...Oh, and the helicopter did get a bit close to my head."

<https://youtu.be/FNrbrhQknLQ>



[Russ Ballard - Voices](#)

Promotional video for Russ's 1984 hit from his self-titled album.

[youtu.be](#)

READERS' VIDEO OF THE MONTH

From Andy Burman

From the UK 2022 tour

<https://youtu.be/yzfFPd9pTTg>



[Russ Ballard, The Fire Still Burns, The Stables, Milton Keynes 14/02/22](#)
[youtu.be](#)

PODCAST - SINCE YOU BEEN GONE

Russ was sent this podcast recently. It is about Since You Been Gone but it is also a potted history of some of his best known songs that have been hits for other people. A fun 13 minutes.

<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/fridays-best-pop-song-ever/id1366606782?i=1000445379277>



[Friday's Best Pop Song Ever: Friday's Best Pop Song Ever #21 - "Since You've Been Gone" on Apple Podcasts](https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/fridays-best-pop-song-ever/id1366606782?i=1000445379277)

Show Friday's Best Pop Song Ever, Ep Friday's Best Pop Song Ever #21 - "Since You've Been Gone" - Jul 26, 2019
podcasts.apple.com

SINCE YOU BEEN GONE - CONTINUED

From Markus Linten

Markus sent me this article, based on an interview with Russ about the song, by Dave Ling, co-founder of Classic Rock magazine. It is a short read but does have a couple of videos in it.

<https://www.loudersound.com/features/how-rainbow-turned-the-soft-since-youve-been-gone-into-a-crunchy-rock-classic>



[Rainbow: Since You've Been Gone - the meaning of the song | Louder](https://www.loudersound.com/features/how-rainbow-turned-the-soft-since-youve-been-gone-into-a-crunchy-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 ...

www.loudersound.com

MEET THE BAND – MARC RAPSON

Dave Williams



Photo courtesy of @shotbyhobbs

I think we'd all agree that it's been a breath of fresh air seeing life slowly return to something approaching normality in recent weeks. One of the biggest positives has been the gradual return of live music, and what a joy it has been to see Russ Ballard and his band being amongst the first to be treading the boards again. There were some new faces sharing the stage with Russ, and boy were they good. One of the key players, literally, is **Marc Rapson**, who has taken on the role of tinkling the ivories. I approached Marc after the 100 Club show in London and asked if he would be willing to be featured in the newsletter, and he

was happy to oblige. So, this month we are pleased to introduce you to Russ's latest keyboard player, Marc Rapson.

DW) Hi Marc. Thanks for agreeing to this interview. For the benefit of myself and our readers, can you tell us a bit about your music background? When did you first become interested in music and is there a musical background in your family?

MR) My Nan owned and played an electronic organ, which I used to play on from about age 2. My parents recognised that I enjoyed playing and bought me my own keyboard around age 4 and then offered me the chance to have lessons from age 6. Although they are not musical, both of my parents enjoy music, Dad being into Motown and British Rock, and Mum, being into Disco and Pop, so music was a big part of my childhood.

DW) How long was it before you started playing with other like-minded musicians?

MR) I began playing with County bands aged 11 and joined my first originals band aged 14, although the next oldest members were 18. That was called Spider Project and introduced me to a whole world of new influences from Frank Zappa to Weather Report and Thelonious Monk.

DW) It appears that you were already showing leanings towards jazz fusion influences at a relatively young age. When did you make the step-up to becoming a professional musician?

MR) I left school and went straight into work at a music shop. At the time I was discouraged from taking a degree in music performance (no regrets!) and was already working as the Saturday boy at the local music shop. It gave me time to still play a lot of music, so I spent my time working and gigging. It was around this time that I started to play around with music production. I worked my way up the ranks a little at work (it was a chain of music shops) but eventually decided to leave and go freelance to allow myself more time to pursue becoming a professional musician.

DW) Spider project, an 8-piece Jazz Fusion instrumental outfit, released an album in 1999 called What is Carpet Bowls. Was this your first venture into the word of recording? Did you go out on the road?

MR) As mentioned, I was only 14 years old when I joined Spider Project. We recorded this album when I should have been revising for my A-levels. It was the first time I'd been in a real studio with a band. I remember it being hard work but have fond memories of recording. It was an album of originals of which I had co-

written some of the songs. We had been gigging quite heavily at the time and felt it was the right time to get something down!



What is Carpet Bowls, the album by Spider Project (Photo credit; www.rateyourmusic.com)

DW) In 2008, you recorded some remixes of three Marvin Gaye songs; *Ain't Nothing Like The Real Thing*, *I Heard It Through The Grapevine* and *Mercy Mercy Me (The Ecology)*. What inspired you to choose these songs? Were the songs ever released officially?

MR) I was given the stems (the individual parts of the recording) by a friend of mine and made the re-edits just for fun. Apart from a shaker part that I recorded for *Mercy Mercy Me*, everything else is from the original Motown recordings. I was interested in seeing what could be done with the original parts. *Grapevine* has a completely different feel to the original. I stripped out the keyboard part and created a more Dub sounding record. *Mercy Mercy Me* is like an extended edit, much in the vein of people like Danny Krivit. *Real Thing* breaks down in the verse to showcase the wonderful string arrangement that you can only just pick out in the original. It was released as a White Label, and I'm told it is quite rare these days!

DW) In 2009 you featured on a 12" single called *Find a Way* by Masirah, the name derived from its three collaborators, yourself, Simon Skofield and

Deborah Jordan. Can you tell us a bit about Masirah? Was this just a one-off release from the three of you?



Find a Way by Masirah, released by Futuristica Music in 2009

MR) Masirah was a one-off, however I have worked with the Futuristica label for some time now, having produced tracks or remixes on albums by Deborah Jordan, Replife, Electric Conversation, Simon S, Nathan Thomas, Georgie Sweet and for myself. It's a label that is very close to my heart, and I'm grateful to have a home to release music that I feel so strongly about.



Some of the artists Marc has worked with; left to right, Georgie Sweet, Deborah Jordan. Simin S and Replife.

DW) I believe you became acquainted with Russ through working with his son Christian, releasing an EP in 2016 called "Heat" on Friday Fox Recordings, the label owned by Christian and Lewis Daniels.

MR) I'd known Christian a little before that. I knew Lewis from when I DJ'd at a night club. He knew of my music on Futuristica and persuaded me to do some House remixes for his tracks. I'd never made House music before, so it was an interesting challenge. After a couple of remixes, he asked me to prepare a 4 track EP which I think took me about 2 years. I remember being quite apprehensive playing it to them, but they loved it and Heat (featuring my good friend and long-term collaborator Nathan Thomas) was picked as the lead. Friday Fox released the record, and it did very well. I was approached by somebody at Defected records and put them in touch with Friday Fox who ended up licensing Heat and another track to Defected.



Heat by Rapson ft Nathan Thomas. The EP was released initially on Friday Fox (left) then licensed to Defected (right).

DW) Presumably working with Christian led to the introduction to join Russ's band. Was Russ aware of your music and how did the invitation to join the band come about?

MR) I got a call from Christian saying that Russ was looking for a keyboard player and he had put me forward. I had met Russ a few times before at a Friday Fox gig, and Russ had worked with Nathan Thomas earlier in his career. It's a who you know thing, right!? I don't remember auditioning as such, but I met with Russ at his studio, and we played through a few things and hit it off. I was blown away by his musicianship - especially on the piano.

DW) The role you, and Steve Smith before you, played in Russ's band, appears to be more than contributing keys, it seems there's an element of directing the show. Is that something that Russ was specifically looking for?

MR) For many of the bands I've played in, certainly in the last 15 years, I end up getting myself into a Musical Director role, it just seems to happen naturally and is a role I feel comfortable and confident in. I wouldn't say I'm the Musical Director of this band, but I'm happy to give direction if and when it's needed.

DW) I'm guessing you weren't expecting the additional responsibility of helping stand-in drummer Jos Henrit through the show. I imagine it was very tough for Jos, but you provided great guidance. What was the mood in the camp when covid ruled Bob Henrit out of the tour at the 11th hour? Was there a sense of panic?

MR) It was such a shame that Bob was ruled out right at the last minute, and it takes guts to step in at that moment like Jos did two days before a tour begins. The MD role in me broke out and I helped guide Jos with the arrangements, and as the tour went on, I was able to step back a little. In fact, the last gig at Shepherd's Bush I was able to step back much more as Jos has had more time to assimilate the arrangements. I'm not sure panic is the right term, but we were definitely on tenterhooks hoping we could pull it off. From the feedback we've had, it seemed to go well.

DW) I said to you after the London gig that I felt this was the best Russ Ballard gig I'd attended. I didn't mean any disrespect to any of the wonderful musicians that had worked with Russ previously, I just felt that you had a rockier edge. The playing was tight, and the vocal harmonies sounded strong. The choice of songs taken from a huge catalogue, was spot on, and gave the audience what they wanted to hear. How was it from your point of view? Did you enjoy the tour and how well did the band gel?

MR) I think it's fair to say that Jos brings a heavier edge with his playing style which brought a lot of energy. Roly (guitarist Roland Jones) is the longest serving

member of the band and really knows his stuff. He brings a great tone and excellent vocals and is a thoroughly nice bloke. This was the debut tour for PJ (bass guitarist PJ Phillips) and myself, so I think we wanted to put our stamp on things musically and vocally. I've loved working with PJ, he's effortless and plays just the right amount (you know he can give it the beans but is happy to serve the song). I think Russ is enjoying the energy that we bring. Away from playing, we all get along and that is so important to me.

DW) The current tour is now complete, and I guess you have your own career to focus on. What is next in the pipeline for you? Is there a possibility that we will see you performing with Russ again later in the year?

MR) It's the usual spinning of plates for me. I sing, play and MD in a high-end function band called Miss Disco and we've got quite a few dates through the summer. There are Russ dates in the diary this year, although I'm not sure how much is confirmed yet. I have writing and production sessions booked for various artists. Nathan Thomas and I are also in negotiations with a label to release a new batch of House songs.



Marc's 2xVinyl LP Dark vs Light (left), released in May 2021 by Futuristica Music and (right) Miss Disco, the premium UK high energy function band performing dance floor anthems with Marc featuring on keyboards.

DW) Thanks so much for providing us with an insight into your career Marc. It looks like you will be busy with various studio projects as well as live dates with Miss Disco. I'm sure I won't be alone in hoping that there will be some slots in your calendar to allow you to take up your position with Russ and his band when the cancelled shows are rescheduled. Good luck with your future projects and I'm sure many of us will now be keeping an eye on your future releases and live appearances.

DAVE'S COVER QUEST

This month's artist is possibly of Polish descent and may have had a more successful career as a pop singer and actor under the name Mr Lee Grant. I've seen a couple of (usually) reliable sources that state this, but I can't find any concrete proof that ties the two together, so I'd rather not go into any detail on the artist.

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Schoolgirl by Bogdan

Bogdan released his single Oh Eddie in 1980. It was on CNR Records in the Netherlands, and 7 Records in Australia. Produced by Peter Collins, both of these releases featured a cover version of Russ Ballard's Schoolgirl as the 'B' side. Not often you see that, as when an artist releases a cover of one of his songs, it's usually as an 'A' side. Oddly, the third version, the UK release, which came out on the Black Label Records, the song that Russ wrote for Argent, was replaced by a cover version of Berry Gordy Jr's classic song Reet Petite, made famous by Jackie Wilson. Sadly, I can't find a link to a video of Bogdan's rendition of Schoolgirl, but I did locate a clip of the "A" side.

https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=Nbr2-gN7_08 Listening to Bogdan's voice, I'm quite intrigued to hear what his interpretation of this early Russ Ballard song might sound like!