

(Header by Sven)

May 2022

Welcome to our new readers. Please join in...we would love to hear from you.

We have all been on holiday so we are running just a little bit late. I went to Cornwall (my favourite place in the whole world), at the same time Russ chased the sun and we seem to have had similar weather!! 🙌 😊 Russ has kindly written about his holiday for us so we can all enjoy it with him.

We look back at the Shepherds Bush gig in March thanks to Ian and Les. Last month we had the video of The Fire Still Burns from Andy, from the February UK tour, this month Michele takes us back to the album of the making of that track. And we have a great memory from Russ's history from Dave....a lovely read. If you have a similar memory, please send it in.

And finally, for those in the UK.....Eurovision!!!! How amazing was that! Congratulations to Ukraine and congratulations to the UK...for a change. Do you remember when the UK entry was Russ's song?

Sue

THIS MONTH FROM RUSS

HOLIDAY in Greece in April.

In 2019 my beautiful daughter, Karis, took a holiday on the island of Kos and she came home raving about the resort...IKOS ARIA. A few times recently I've said we need a holiday as Covid and its dirty work has put pay to travel this past couple of years - Karis said, "Why don't you go to Kos, it's great" so, I said, "OK". Karis booked the IKOS ARIA Resort for us and I must say it is a great place. A huge hotel with apartments and bungalows that have been built over acres and acres of land by the Aegean sea...From our balcony there were a couple of small buildings....a restaurant and bar, then, beyond.... the Aegean sea... Beyond the sea, there was a mountain.... quite amazing!

I've been to some brilliant places, this is equal to anywhere I've seen...Wow, does this sound too good to be true? - Well, of course, there must be a catch and it was nothing to do with IKOS ARIA - It was the wind...it was constant. Apparently, we'd arrived a week too early in the season - it was April 28 and it remained windy until May 5th, the day we left....But it was good to have a break after two years.

Here's a few amusing moments while we were 'Blowing in the wind'. The resort had golf buggy taxis everywhere to transport the holidaymakers to its beaches, restaurants and bars, however, we walked everywhere. As the buggy's drove past, the drivers would call out, 'kalimera' [good morning]. It seemed to be something that was deep inside their psyche. As the chamber maids entered the room we'd hear, kalimera, - 'Kalimera' we would say back, then, on our way to breakfast, we'd pass the gardeners, 'Kalimera' - oh!, 'Kalimera' we always replied but by the time we arrived for breakfast we were exhausted. The other thing I haven't mentioned is, the sun was 'up there', 'somewhere behind the clouds'. It was the first time I'd been to Greece and I expected the sun 18 hours every day in the summer. Oh! that could be the problem....we're still in spring....summer's six days away! I only took hand luggage, a few T shirts and jeans and a light weight jacket, so I decided to go to the hotel shop to buy a sweater or something warm..."Oh we don't have anything warm" said the woman behind the counter - "is there anywhere in town where I could buy a pullover?" "No" she said.. "there is no town, it's a forty minute drive" Oh, well, I'll have to wear my light weight top for a week.

On the second morning, as I explored a path to the beach, I passed the security man, Giannis....a short, stocky man with a broad grin - "Kalimera" he smiled.....'Kalimera' [I was getting the hang of it now]. I said, "is it always this windy?" "It can be this time of year", his eyes widened - "July, August is wonderful". "Isn't it too hot" - "No" "it's still windy and it cools us". - Yes, I could see it would be like a paradise....Mm, the hot sun with a cool breeze, sounds like heaven, actually, what I was expecting.

After leaving a restaurant one afternoon I had to hold on to my hat, the wind was so strong....as I tried to put my phone in my pocket, the wind blew my hat off my head. It went like a drone across the fields and out of sight. I shouted "Goodbye" which made people laugh. I really didn't think I'd see it again, then I saw a guy in the distance, stop his buggy and run out of sight, then he reappeared with my Panama - it was a lovely thing to do.

My good mate Mod Rogan gave me a book he'd just read. "This is interesting, you can read it on your holiday" he laughed.... It was called 'The Story of Broadmoor'. Very Mod.

On the last day, we packed to come home and sat by the pool. The weather was amazing, an unbroken blue sky...of course it was, we were leaving! But it was a good break....

The service is amazing at the resort, the staff can't do enough.....They all speak English.....All you have to learn is.... 'Kalimera'

Love as Ever...Russ xxx



A strange moment when the the sky was blue 😊😊

RUSS - LIFE STORIES

Hi, Everybody....Here's another part of my autobiography - My coming out of hospital after two cataract ops, and getting back to playing in the group.

The doctor said I could leave hospital, however, I would need to come back for another procedure, to insert a lens in to my eye. He explained, along with the cataract, he also removed the natural lens. He put his hands in front of my face and asked if I could see his fingers, I told him I couldn't.

I came out with instructions to rest and not to go straight back to playing in the group but that's exactly what i did. Billy Kuy enjoyed playing with us and often played alongside, so, sometimes we were five, sometimes six. Again, I lost another month of school, and anyway, I was only interested in playing music. I never intended in getting a real job when I left school. I didn't know what I would do for a job, I just thought something would 'show up'. At this time, I'd been wearing dark glasses for two years, I'd been hiding behind them, afraid to show my injured eye, which was then starting to look injured. I was withdrawing more and more in to myself, which seemed to take my mind away from the injury. The thinking seemed to be, while I'm playing music I'm not thinking about how I look. The problems came in all the moments when I wasn't playing music - like getting on a bus, or walking through the town....going to shops. Basically, living a normal 'LIFE'....Expressions like 'The eyes are the windows of the soul' - There was an advert that said, 'The Eyes Have It' - Many love songs had lines about eyes...'I Only Have Eyes For You' - 'Angel Eyes' - 'Brown Eyed Handsome Man' - There's so many and they seemed to reinforce the reason to wear dark glasses....Anyway, a doctor and nurse suggested I should wear glasses to protect my good eye. In truth I was becoming depressed in 1961, and, looking back, I'm sure I just buried the hurt and the extrovert side of my personality.

I started broadening my guitar styles, I really loved the playing of Chet Atkins....Chet was a country picker and played finger style, or with finger pics, where he would mute the bottom three strings with the palm of his right hand, while he played the melody or lead lines with the remaining fingers. It's a very similar technique to the 'stride' piano style where the pianist plays rhythm with his left hand while the right hand plays lead. I sat for hours trying to find how Chet played some of his pieces. With albums it was easier, because I could turn the old 33RPM players down to 16RPM.which slowed the playing down to exactly half speed and kept

the tunes in the same key. I learned many of Chet's pieces....the first I perfected was 'Trambone' [a piece the Duane Eddy had also covered on his album, "THE TWANGS THE THANG"] then 'ONE MINT JULEP', which was a Ray Charles song - 'Googus' - 'Salty Dog Rag' - There were so many other artists, guitar players and pianists I was listening to...

I'll write some more next month...Enjoy the rest of May, be with you in June xxx

JUST LEAVING THIS HERE!

Make of it what you will! Thank you, Emanuel. 😊



SHEPHERD'S BUSH

Our reader, Les Linyard, is an amazing photographer. He is happy for us to see the photographs he took of Russ and his band when he was Rick Wakeman's guest at the Shepherd's Bush Empire in March. This link will take you to Les's photos on Facebook.

<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?vanity=les.linyard&set=a.10159913760929321>

And here, from RGB Team member, Ian, is a glimpse of the last few nail-biting minutes pre show and the first song, Rene Didn't Do It.

<https://youtu.be/2fpQOI6JrKI>



[Russ Ballard "Rene Didn't Do it" live at Shepherds Bush Empire, 30/3/22](https://youtu.be/2fpQOI6JrKI)

Enjoy Russ and his brilliant band as they open their show at London's Shepherds Bush Empire. This video captures the band about to take the stage, the introd...

[youtu.be](https://youtu.be/2fpQOI6JrKI)

QUESTION OF THE MONTH

What does Russ remember about making the album "The Story Of Making The Fire Still Burns"?

Russ: *I had to go in to my memory banks and sing the words to myself....Last night, in between sleep, I recalled my 1984 head and my thought process at the time. The first part was the world, 'out there' and how it looked to me....Then, the chorus - The Fire Still Burns etc...The second verse 'In here, inside my head' then, "Inside my shoes are feet that keep moving, to find their way" it's about how I thought about things 'out there' in the world.*

It was Alan Freeman narrating. I remember it was John Stanley who put the thing together - Also his idea (quite good actually). This album was selling in shops in Germany for hundreds of Euros. For the time it was quite novel.

Video from Michele Turner.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e6LKkh6FL1E>



[The Story Of Making The Fire Still Burns - Russ Ballard - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e6LKkh6FL1E)

"The Story Of Making The Fire Still Burns" performed by "Russ Ballard" is taken from a second LP of a very rare double LP set. This album "The Fire Still Bu...

www.youtube.com

PODCAST

The latest podcast from Sven and Ian is on Russ's website. They spoke to Space Elevator, who were due to support Russ on the Covid abandoned Europe 2020 tour. They are an excellent band. Look them up on YouTube. <https://www.russballardmusic.com/podcast.html>

EUROVISION

It's Eurovision month again so this has to be done. For any of our newer readers who aren't aware, Russ and Chris Winter wrote the UK Eurovision entry in 2001. This is a good song and should have come higher than its 15th place. It is worth reading some of the comments on the video.

<https://youtu.be/qxrp0XzzpzY>



[Eurovision 2001 16 United Kingdom](https://youtu.be/qxrp0XzzpzY)
[*Lindsay Dracass* *No Dream](https://youtu.be/qxrp0XzzpzY)
[Impossible* 16:9 HQ](https://youtu.be/qxrp0XzzpzY)
[youtu.be](https://youtu.be/qxrp0XzzpzY)

RUSS'S MUSIC HISTORY

By Dave Williams

On this day...

I know I'm in danger of recycling a story I've told before, but certain dates tend to be remembered; some for good reasons, some for bad and others for sad. On Sunday last week, someone mentioned it was May 8th, a date I immediately recognised as one of significance. I cast my mind back 46 years to Saturday May 8th, 1976. That was the time I first met Russ Ballard at his concert in St Albans. My memory might not be as good as it once was, but I do recall quite a bit about that day, though strangely, that doesn't include much about the concert itself, other than that it being great obviously.

I'd originally planned to attend the Marquee gig in London on the previous night. I'd seen the advert, but it would be challenging. I couldn't order a ticket, nor could I be sure that I could get to London in time, given that I was working that day. If I travelled and couldn't get in, it would prove to be a costly disaster. So, I made the decision to write a letter to Russ, addressed to the Marquee, hoping that if I did arrive to find a full venue, he might make a provision to get me in. It went into the mailbox on Thursday, sent first class, but even so, the likelihood of it reaching the Marquee by next morning was slim. No sooner had I posted the letter when I read that Russ was playing another concert the next day at St Albans City Hall. That suited me a lot better. A weekend, no need to rush, better train times, and slightly less miles to travel.

I set off just after lunch on the London express train, alighting at Bedford, to change to a slow train. This was necessary because the London bound train goes through St Albans City without stopping. I doubt British Rail would have made an exception, even for Russ Ballard! So, the remainder of the journey was painfully slow, as the train stopped at every station before reaching St Albans. I remember looking out of the train window at parched fields. We'd had a scorching hot UK summer in 1975 and 1976 was to be even hotter and drier. Already the grass was golden brown, yet it was still only Spring.

On arrival at 5.30pm, I set off to find the venue and the box office. The sun was bearing down from a clear sky. The heat was intense. I found the City Hall, nowadays known as the Alban Arena. At least I knew where I was going, and the show wasn't due to commence until 7.45pm, so I had time to kill. A chance to

explore this fine city with Roman origins, and enough time to get something to eat. I heard faint music playing. Was that really “It’s Only Money” that I was hearing? I wandered around the perimeter of the building towards the noise source. A Luton van belonging to “Rickmansworth Van Hire” was parked next to the backstage door, and the band were carrying out a soundcheck. I recall an elderly couple were seated nearby on a bench. I distinctly heard one say to the other “That singer has a lovely voice”. The hairs on the back of my neck were standing on end. Impossible these days sadly. Nowadays I can only manage goosebumps or butterflies in the stomach. I knew right then that the decision to make the journey was the right one.

A few minutes later, the stage door sprung open, and one of the guys from the band came outside to cool off. It was drummer Alan Wickett and he was happy to chat. He was interested to hear I’d travelled so far. Hardly impressive nowadays with fans travelling from overseas countries for his UK appearances. Within the next half hour, I met just about everybody except Russ. Sadly, he didn’t come outside to cool off. I guess being ‘cool’ already, he didn’t need to! After a few minutes, the guys disappeared back inside to resume their soundcheck, leaving me with a cheery “hope you enjoy the show”.

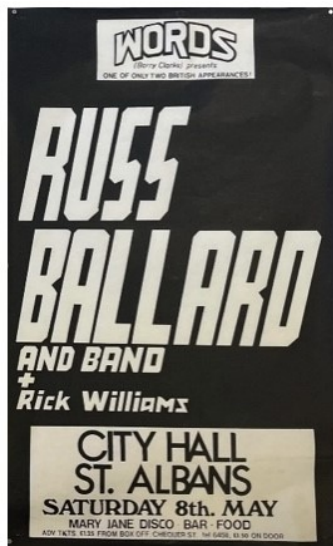
I hit the high street for a wander around the city. Metal tubes were clanging as the open market stalls were being dismantled for the day. I looked out for names of places I might recognise from the music paper gig lists; The Goat Inn and The Horn of Plenty being two. I had a walk outside The Abbey and saw the school that Rod Argent would have attended. I then headed back to the centre with the intention of buying some chips to eat outside in the late afternoon heat. Suddenly I froze. A group of guys was walking directly towards me. I realised it was the band and the roadies. Lagging behind them was Russ and his road manager Fred Wilkinson. This was my first sighting of Russ in the flesh. Before we reached each other, the cheery bunch turned left into the entrance of a pub. To respect their privacy, I walked on, and avoided the temptation to intrude. I bought my bag of chips and then I had an unstoppable desire to check that I wasn’t dreaming. I walked past the pub, and yes, Russ and his colleagues were visible, sitting at a table with a plate of sandwiches being presented to them. I remember thinking that was a lot healthier than the fried chips I’d just eaten. Isn’t it strange how we are influenced by our idols? I decided to amend my diet. If you want to be a singer or play guitar, eating fatty food won’t get you far. I decided healthier food is the way forward! After a promising start, my altered

eating habits lasted precisely three weeks. If I'd have stuck with it, maybe I wouldn't be twice the man I used to be!

By now it was time to make my way to the venue. On arrival, a queue was already forming. Some lads in from of me were obviously schoolfriends of Steve Rodford and were discussing his musical abilities in glowing terms. When, at last, the doors opened, you could choose to stand downstairs or sit in the balcony upstairs. I wanted to stand upfront near the stage, but first there was the support act, Rick Williams (no relation). I sat in the balcony for a few songs before deciding to quench my thirst with a drink at the balcony bar. I found myself standing next to Jim Rodford. We engaged in conversation, and I asked if Argent had split up. He said not officially, but it would be a long while before they do anything together. He told me that he, John Verity and Bob Henrit were doing something as a 3 piece and planned to release an album in July. This was referring to the band that would later be named Phoenix. He added that it wasn't public knowledge yet, so I felt quite honoured. On learning that I'd travelled down from the Midlands, he said "I'll tell Russ when I see him later. He will be thrilled". He then insisted on buying me a beer.

Downstairs I spotted Jim, Bob Henrit, John Verity and John Grimaldi standing together in the audience. A few minutes before he was due to take the stage, Russ walked through the audience on his way to the dressing room. I wasn't used to seeing that. When I'd been to see other bands, the musicians tended to stay hidden before the show. I'd have thought Russ might enter via that stage door I'd seen earlier. He had a special presence and charisma about him that only certain people have.

St Albans being the spiritual home of his former band Argent, meant there was an added air of expectation, and his arrival on stage with the holey guitar drew loud applause and cheers. Russ looked happy to be back on stage again. My memory is that they opened their set with Danger Zone Pt1. After that, I can't recall a lot about the show itself. No mobile phones back then to take pictures or video. I'm not even sure that cameras were allowed. I know he was wearing a whitish woollen jumper, possibly the same one he wore in the Supersonic TV recording on You Tube filming Since You Been Gone. He was also wearing blue denim jeans and white Kickers. Back then Kickers and Pods were the footwear of the day, as popular with men as they were with women.



Left: A copy of a poster advertising the St Albans concert. Right: The awards that Russ was presented with at the Marquee featuring left to right, New York Groove by Hello, Another Year by Leo Sayer, Ride a Rock Horse by Roger Daltrey and Moonlighting by Leo Sayer.

I wore Kickers myself and they were without doubt the best shoes I ever owned, and at the price I paid, I wouldn't have expected anything less. I had to live on bread and water for the next month. The set included God Gave Rock and Roll to You, Liar, Hold Your Head Up, I Don't Believe in Miracles, Get Your Love (Roger Daltrey), Its Only Money and a selection of songs from his two solo albums.

All too quickly, the performance was over, and the audience began to disperse. I'd got at least an hour to kill before my train. I hoped Russ might come out and sign a few autographs, but it wasn't something that used to happen often back then. The traditional way to get an autograph was to get a backstage invite or stand outside to catch the band as they left. I can't recall planning on either. I did see invited guests being ushered backstage, so it was obviously 'invite only'. I was content to kill time by chatting to a few fellow fans who were standing near me. It was at this point that Russ's Road manager, 'Fred' Wilkinson, appeared with a bundle of framed artwork under his arm. He asked, "Who wants to meet Russ?". He said he needed some volunteers. He explained that Russ was having a little party with members of his family backstage, and he wanted to show them the awards he'd been presented with at the Marquee on the previous night. Four of us were each given one of the awards and Fred disappeared for a few moments. There were three silver awards for Roger Daltrey and Leo Sayer records that he produced, and a gold award for Hello's New York Groove. Fred came back and summoned us backstage. I was nervous but excited. We were led

to a small room. I was the last in line, and there was Russ sat just inside the door. Russ thanked everybody in turn and had a few words with each one before giving them his autograph. One by one they disappeared, and finally it was my turn. I introduced myself, and he asked, "Are you Dave that wrote to me at the Marquee?". I told him I was amazed it had reached him, and he said "Yeah, my aunt is reading it right now". His aunt waved it in the air. It was being passed around the table for his family to read. He introduced me to his mum and dad and a few other members of his family. We had a brief chat, which included some football chat and a discussion about some of the songs he's written. He asked how I was getting home and how long it would take, which was thoughtful. He gave me his autograph and said something along the lines of "Next time you come to see me play Dave, just come round the back and I'll get you in", which translates to 'I'll add you to the guest list'. I'm still waiting for that one lol. For the second time that evening I felt honoured.

I made my exit and headed for the railway station, avoiding any fast-food joints of course, and from there I had a long wait until my train arrived. I would be taking the last train out of London, which would arrive at St Albans around 12.30am. It was nicknamed the "Milk Train", though it was actually mail and newspapers it carried rather than milk. Regardless, it stopped at every station along the route to my destination, including a diversion to Nottingham where it then had to switch the loco to the opposite end of the train to take it back to the main route. The normal 90-minute journey time was stretched to 3 hours. Sleep was not an option, because if I missed my station, I would find myself deposited somewhere 'up north'. I got home at 4am the next morning, and the whole evening cost me around £10. Amazingly that covered bus, train and taxi fares, the ticket for the show, a couple of beers and that greasy bag of chips.

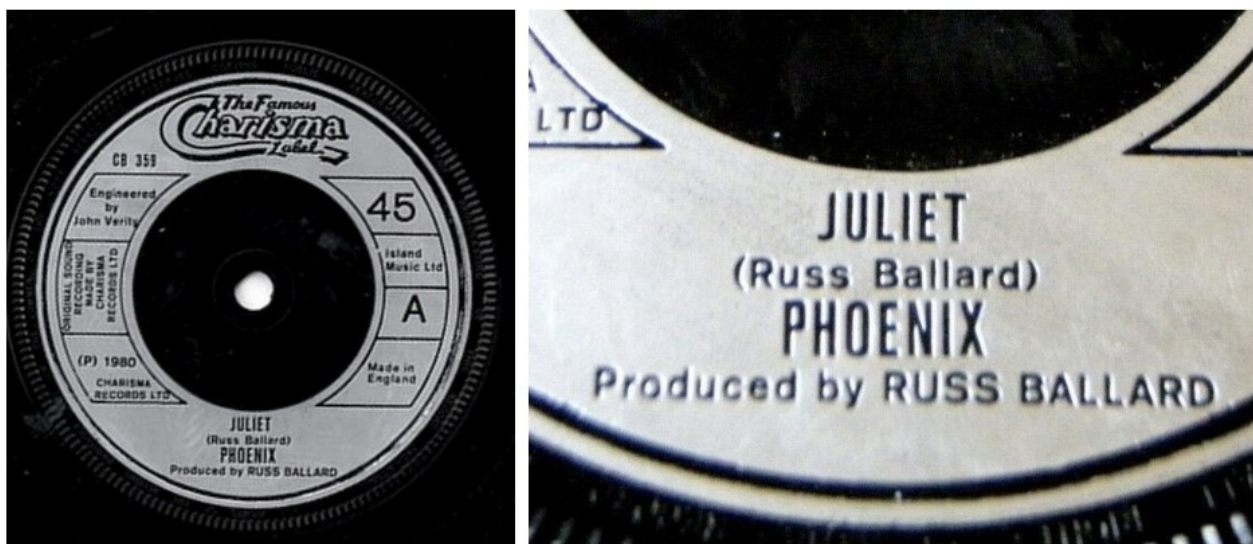
I guess we all have our personal accounts of meeting Russ. One final memory though. With lots of time standing on an empty platform while waiting for my train home, you'd have thought I would have had at least one Russ Ballard song in my head, but no, the music that was playing in my head was a guitar solo 3minutes 27 seconds into a Rare Earth song called 'Do It Right'. I'd bought their 'Midnight Lady' LP a few days earlier, and whilst it's nowhere near their best work, that guitar solo by Ray Monette, embedded itself in my brain in the same way that many of Russ's songs have done before and since. Every time I hear that guitar solo, I'm transported back to that deserted platform, and memories of a fantastic day. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jgksVPupUjw>

For the record, the 5-piece line-up consisted of Russ on guitar and keyboards, Bill Roberts (guitar), Wally Wilson (keyboards), Tony Lester (bass guitar) and Alan (Sticky) Wickett (drums). We've published interviews with Bill, Tony and Alan in previous newsletters. Wally remains elusive. Hopefully he's still around, and one day we might even get to talk to him.

DAVE'S COVER QUEST

When Russ Ballard decided to leave **Argent**, he recommended **John Verity** as his replacement. Well known to the band, John was recruited along with additional guitarist **John Grimaldi** and remained with them until they disbanded in 1976. He then formed **Phoenix** with **Jim Rodford** and **Bob Henrit**.

No.44



Juliet by Phoenix

Having launched themselves as a 'power trio' in September 1976, Verity, Rodford and Henrit promoted their impressive debut album with some concert dates in the UK and a support slot with **Aerosmith** on their European tour. By the time the second album, **In Full View**, appeared three years later, the band had left the CBS label to join Charisma, Jim Rodford had taken up an invitation to join **The Kinks**, and **Ray Minhinnett**, the former **Frankie Miller Band** guitarist, had been added as a second lead guitarist, John Verity taking on additional bass guitar duties to fill in for Jim Rodford.

At the suggestion of the record company, Phoenix recorded **In Full View** in America. The resulting product had a very different sound to the debut album, undoubtedly due to the Los Angeles influence. John Verity has since stated that he wasn't happy with the record and felt that better results would have been achieved if recording had taken place in New York. Most of the songs were co-written by Verity, Henrit and Minhinnett, but the most notable exception was the opener, Russ Ballard's **Just Another Day (in the life of a fool)**.

Sadly, the album was not a commercial success, particularly in the UK, where punk rock had taken hold. Few people might be aware that Phoenix released a second Russ Ballard composition single in the UK that wasn't featured on the album. This was titled **Juliet** and was produced by Russ himself and issued on Charisma in 1980. Again, it failed to find the charts, but even today it's well worth picking up a copy if you can find one.

I was unable to find a clip of this single, but as is the case with most Russ Ballard songs, it was covered, in this case by **Girl** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L4bQFw9AA_k and can be found on their 1998 CD **Killing Time**. No disrespect to Girl, but I do prefer the version by Phoenix.



Juliet

Provided to YouTube by HNE Juliet · Girl
Wasted Youth © 2020 Sanctuary Records
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Auto-generated by YouTube.

www.youtube.com

When I hear John Verity and Russ Ballard belting out vocal harmonies in unison, I can't help but wonder what heights a band consisting of Russ Ballard, John Verity, Jim Rodford and Bob Henrit might have reached in rock music. I guess we'll never know.