

(Header by Sven)

November 2022

Welcome to our many new newsletter readers this month.

What a month Russ has had! Having had a short break following the Portugal and UK gigs he flew off and charmed his German audiences. There is a lot to read about here. In fact, a sit down with a tea or coffee while you are reading might be a good idea. As well as feedback from the German tours we have an article about McVicar/Russ from Dave and a piece about Alan Freeman/Russ from Liam Wilson with a little more about the Edinburgh show. I think we will have more from Germany next month. Please feel free to make a contribution if you would like to.

It would be interesting to know how far people travelled for the gigs. I know Roman and his son travelled from Prague just for the Munich show. Please send me your story if you travelled a long way. Even if it just to tell us where you travelled from.

Thank you to Dave, Liam, Rainer and Hank for your contributions.
Sue

THIS MONTH FROM RUSS

Thank You, Everyone for the birthday wishes for 31st October. It's always uplifting to receive cards, presents and to have celebratory dinner in the evening, however, this past Halloween I began a two week tour of Germany with my band, PJ Phillips (Bass), Marc Rapson (Keys), Roly Jones (Guitar) and John Miller (Drums), so, instead of the usual restaurant dinner with family, locally, here we were, five musicians sitting in an Indian restaurant in Munich, with two German friends.....Promoters Michael Bisping and Patrik Mertens at a table for twelve, so we were waiting for five more guests.....We ordered drinks [a bottle of wine and beers] and poppadoms - - Ten minutes past, when in came our friends, Ian Street, Sven Kramer with our friends to be, tour managers, Rolf Pfau and Holger Brandes....After another ten minutes, my good friend from Switzerland, Roland Hertzog arrived, and, before sitting down, gave everybody a Toblerone chocolate [a nice touch].. Five minutes later Happy Birthday had been sung...Two and a half hours later.....After Food, Wine and Beers demolished we took taxis back to the hotel where we partied for a while before retiring to our beds.....Thanks, Michael for dinner.

Nov. 1st Muffatwork Munich - *First night of the tour.....After sound checking [5-6] we had two hours to kill before the show, enough time to have dinner [in the dressing room] and meet some friends backstage. It was soon 8 o'clock, show time....so, we took to the stage and the audience were fabulous....I said, "It's Good To Be Here" [The title of the latest album], when the audience started to sing, "Happy Birthday" - It was such a warm atmosphere. I felt relaxed and could feel the same with Roly, John, Marc and PJ....The time on stage flew by. In one hour fifty we were back in the dressing room, feeling a little tired but 'Buzzing'. After changing clothes and signing albums, CD'S and merchandise, we were back in the hotel...Wow, this gig felt amazing, audience with us all the way through....does life get any better than this...Not for me!*

Nov. 2nd Nürnberg Hirsch - *Another great night.....I always loved playing shows in Southern Germany, the audiences have always been very 'Buzzy' - Again, for me, quite thrilling to be with people I hadn't met for years but were as warm as in the 1980's.*

Nov. 3rd - Bensheim Musictheater Rex - *For me, writing songs has been my main source of income for forty years....However, playing live, has always been a thrill for me. It was the reason I wanted to play....To be in a group and be on a stage....The writing came later, then the production....It's all magic! My good friend, Ingrid, came backstage after the show. Ingrid was married to my friend,*

Michael Wood, who sadly couldn't be there. They both lived near to me in East Herts, North London. Ingrid introduced a tall good looking guy and asked me...."Do you know who this is?" I remember she had a brother who was tall and good looking..."Andreas", I said,.. "Haha!! No, it's Louis, she laughed" - Louis is Ingrid's son and I hadn't seen him since he was 10 years old.... While we chatted, another man came and sat down for a chat, his name is Rainer Heungerle. We had never met although we had exchanged emails...There wasn't much time to talk and I could see the guys in the group were just about ready to leave for the hotel. It was another very 'up' feeling as we made our way to the bus, then the hotel.

Nov. 5th Aschaffenburg Colos Saal - Another wonderful audience.....Good vibes.....singing along with the songs - It doesn't get any better.....When there's no separation between the audience and the stage....Nobody is thinking about their problems or tomorrow.....We're All - "In The Moment" Magic.....

Nov. 6th Day Off..... We....[That's Roly, John, Marc, Holger and PJ, Roland H. and myself] set off to see the sights of Ashaffenburg. We didn't have far to walk when we found ourselves in the heart of the town, a very historic place with many beautiful buildings. After half an hour of walking we decided to have a stop for a coffee, [In PJ's & my case, a bottle of red wine...thanks Roly H.] In that hour or so, I chatted to Holger quite a bit and felt I'd got to know him.....A tall, tough looking man....[he could be a screen actor] I did tell him he is an impressive looking man...he smiled, however, it was very disarming that he turns out to come across [to me] as very soft and gentle....[A great combination a, tough demeanour and gentleness].

Nov. 7th Spectrum Augsburg - What can I say.....Another magical evening, with an audience that seemed to have a sixth sense...., to know the fact....."What Love comes down to us from the stage....We will give it back to you" - [I've found that to be true....What we give in life , we get back].

Nov. 10th Dortmund - Same story! A lot of Love from the crowd - It's the feedback from them that makes the atmosphere.....More "It's Good To Be Here" CDs to sign, more vinyl albums and books, some Roger Daltrey and Leo Sayer Vinyl too!!

Nov 11th Bonn - Harmonies - It can't get better.....A great gig to finish on.....An interview before the show with Marcus....it was good being with you

M. Some other friends came backstage, Pistol and Andrea and Markus and his family.....Hope to see you all, before long.

THANK YOU ALL FOR MAKING OUR TWELVE DAY TOUR OF GERMANY SO UPLIFTING - I HOPE IT WON'T BE LONG BEFORE WE CAN COME AND DO IT AGAIN.....

LOTS OF LOVE TO YOU.

RUSS

RUSS - LIFE STORIES

1962

We [The Daybreakers] played as far as Birmingham and Derby in the north midlands. I met Bob Henrit after he'd toured with Adam Faith and The Roulettes [The Roulettes was the name they decided to give Adams backing group]. I felt a little envious of the life he was living since joining Adam. The Roulettes had played weeks in a pantomime in Bournemouth then some one-night stands and best of all, a one month long tour of Australia, New Zealand and Hong Kong, where The Roulettes had also backed John Leyton. During our conversation Bob said "Do you fancy playing guitar for The Roulettes?" I said "Yeah". After our chat I thought about what turning professional would mean - Leaving my brother and my good mate Bernie behind, however, Bob and I had been like brothers for the previous three years. After talking to my family, including Roy, about turning pro. and leaving home for the first time, they all agreed, I had to do it.

Johnny Rogers had become leader of The Roulettes and he came with Bob to the flat above the shop to talk about it. John explained, I'd have to meet Adam and if he liked me I'd be in the band. It was decided I'd meet Adam on a Sunday at his house in Esher. John picked me up in the Ford Thames 15cwt. bus that usually carried The Roulettes equipment. On the way we went to pick up Bob and we were on our way. I felt a little bit of excitement, I'd been watching Adam for the previous three years on television, and along with Cliff he was the biggest 'star'. When we were about four miles from Adam's house, we stopped at a set of traffic lights to see Adam pass in front us with a stunning starlet in the passenger seat. I remember thinking lucky sod. He was driving the first Mark 10 Jaguar I'd ever seen. He slowed down and wound down his window

and called to John, "See you at home". When we arrived at his house, it looked very impressive, a mock Tudor mansion that cost 30,000 pounds a fortune in 1963.

We were greeted at the door by his valet, Vincente, and he asked if we'd like to wait in the snooker room....where Adam's dad was waiting. He shook hands with me and we played a frame of doubles. He seemed a very ordinary 'down to earth' man, totally unaffected by his sons amazing success. I think he was still a bus driver at that time. Adam came in to the snooker room, he shook my hand and said, "hello Russell". Apart from that moment I don't think he said anymore to me for another hour. While playing a frame with his dad, he asked him if he was staying for lunch, he said he wasn't, then he looked at John and said, "Are you staying for lunch?" John said "Yes" on our behalf and forty minutes later we sat at a beautifully set table in the dining room. As we sat waiting for lunch, Adam, who was sitting at the head, looked at me and asked, "What kind of music do you like Russ?". Strange as it seems I'd been asked that question before.....I replied, "Anything that's got a good tune". He didn't ask me anything more, as far as I remember. On the way home, John said, "He liked you". I didn't have to play anything but it looked like I was in The Roulettes. One thing I noticed, people close to Adam called him Tel or Terry. It seemed that he like to keep his private life and his public life separate. I thought, "How about that, I'm a professional musician".

Next month I'll tell you all about the first months of Touring, One night stands and T.V. shows.....

GERMANY

From Rainer Huengerle

It was a great concert in Bensheim and I had the opportunity to meet Russ personally backstage afterwards. He is an incredibly likeable person, very pleasant and down-to-earth and of course a full-blooded musician. I also find his attitude very remarkable. He also told quite a bit as a transition to his songs. For example, in 'Dream on', he is convinced that dreams come true if you firmly believe in them. I think he has a positive attitude towards life, which is very important especially in the current global crisis. I am totally amazed by Russ' guitar playing. It's absolutely perfect and he also had a great sound after the effects units failed and he had to play directly through the Marshall. Not everybody can do that in such a short time, because among other things the volume control for solo parts is not that easy anymore.

While most newcomer guitarists concentrate more on shredding, tapping, double-tapping, etc., Russ plays even his fast licks precisely and cleanly with incredible ease. His vocals were also top. I was totally blown away and enjoyed the concert from the first to the last minute. I think the other fans felt the same way. The atmosphere was definitely great and people were really looking forward to certain songs. After 'Fire still burns' there was a standing ovation. That says it all.

I really enjoyed the concert and the band is also top. I knew most of the tracks. I have to say I have been waiting for a few years to finally see Russ live.

VIDEO

Have a taste of the German shows. Here is the hits medley from Nurnberg on 2nd November.

<https://youtu.be/Cb9We9S8G8k>

There are lots more videos on Russ's Facebook page and on YouTube.

ROCK CRUISE

I sent this out as an extra mailing in case anyone wanted to book early. As a result of the recent gigs, we have had a number of new readers sign up since then so here are the details again. Russ is going to be playing on a one night rock cruise, 21-22 April 2023, leaving from Stockholm and arriving in Mariehamn. The ship, as ships go, is small and there are eight bands, so it is likely to get booked up quickly. The website is in Swedish but there is a button to translate it into English and several other languages.

<https://www.rocknytt.net/nyheter/138628-russ-ballard-klar-for-rocknytt-cruise>

ROCKNYTT CRUISE



STOCKHOLM - MARIEHAMN 21-22 APRIL 2023



21 TIMMAR - 2 SCENER - 8 BAND

RUSS BALLARD

DARE



PLAYING THE ENTIRE ALBUM THE PLAGUE



PERFECT PLAN



YTTERLIGARE 2 BAND PRESETERAS INOM KORT!

QUESTION OF THE MONTH

From Hank

Ok, Sue. Here's a question I've asked you before: Why doesn't Russ do a US tour or maybe just limit it to the Northeast? Seems like there would be a lot of interest given the Zombies revival here over the past few years. Or better yet, why not tour with them here?

Russ: *The only tour I played in the U.S. (with my own band) was 1976. It only lasted three weeks, that included five days at 'The Bottom Line' in New York - five days in L.A. at 'The Roxy'. The other week consisted of a club and a college. The shows went very well, however, without a major record company for many years I no longer have communication with American promoters.*

RUSS'S MUSIC HISTORY

By Dave Williams

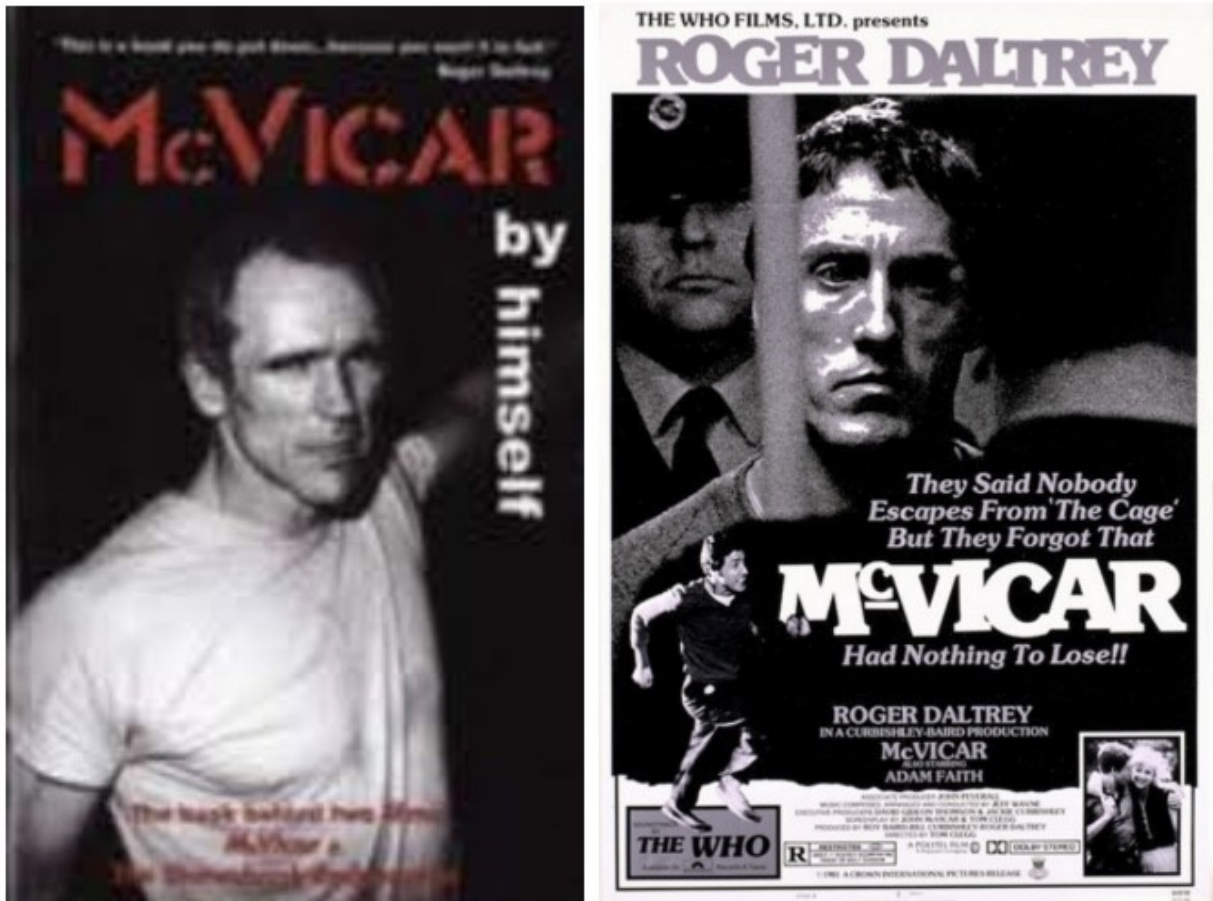
Time well served

Amid all the news coverage on the passing of Her Majesty the Queen, there was another death two days earlier that may have gone largely unnoticed. On 6th September reformed convicted armed robber John McVicar, once dubbed "Public Enemy No.1" by Scotland Yard, died at the age of 82.

Born in London on March 21st, 1940, just a few months before The Blitz, McVicar's criminal career began when he was a 16-year-old, committing theft from cars and breaking into shops, quite ironic when you consider that his parents were themselves shopkeepers. He spent time in remand as a young offender, but instead of mending his ways, he went on to commit armed robbery, and was sentenced to 8 years in prison in 1964. He managed to escape from Parkhurst, the top security jail on the Isle of Wight. Whilst on the run, he attempted to rob an armoured security van but got caught and received a 15-year prison sentence, which was added to the 8 years he was already serving.

He was moved to the "escape-proof" E Wing at HM Prison Durham maximum-security jail, only to escape again, spending two years on the run before being rearrested. He was made to continue his 23-year sentence, during which he studied for a BSc in Sociology. He was released on parole in 1978. Turning his back on crime, he studied for a postgraduate degree at the University of Leicester and went on to become a respected journalist. He also wrote his

autobiography, **McVicar by Himself**, which was scripted into the 1980 film **McVicar** directed by Tom clegg. The film was accompanied by a soundtrack, which featured three songs written by Russ Ballard, including the single **Free Me**, which made the Billboard charts in America.

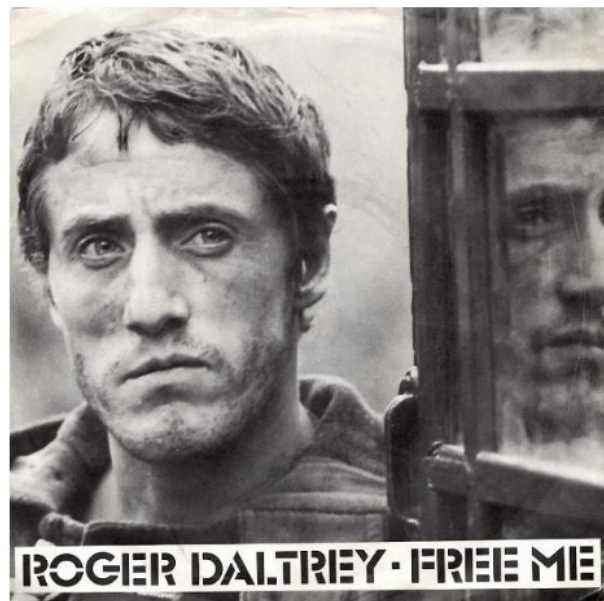


John McVicar's autobiography (left) and (right) an advertisement for McVicar the film.

In the film, **Roger Daltrey** played the role of McVicar. The first half of the film is set in Durham prison and focuses on his relationship with the prison staff and inmates, as well as the plot for his eventual escape. For fans of **The Roulettes**, I ought to add that **Adam Faith** plays the part of Walter "Angel Face" Probyn, a fellow inmate and tunnel digger.

The second half of the film covers McVicar's two years on the run before his eventual arrest following a tip off to police from a fellow criminal. The soundtrack was released as a solo **Roger Daltrey** album. In addition to **Free Me**, there was a cover of **Just a Dream Away**, released years earlier by Russ on his **Winning** LP. The lyrics were slightly altered to fit the script. The third song written by Russ is **My Time is Gonna Come** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?>

[v=YaA---phC90](#) , not to be confused with Russ's own release, **Your Time is Gonna Come**. Other noteworthy tracks include Bitter and Twisted written by Steve Swindells, and Waiting for a Friend, one of four songs written by Billy Nicholls.



The McVicar Soundtrack LP release (left) by Roger Daltrey and the single Free Me (right) released by Polydor Records

John McVicar later admitted that the film script features a lot of inaccuracies, probably because Roger Daltrey adapted it to depict how he wanted the lead character to play. The film tends to focus on the criminal side of him and features very little of the period that saw him turn his life around, which was pivotal in his early release on parole.

Daltrey once said in an interview that he had to commit to doing the soundtrack to raise the money to make the film. He made the film, then realised he had to do the soundtrack. He said he felt that the film might have been even stronger had it not had the soundtrack, as “the film was cross-collateralised against the soundtrack to get the money back”. Regardless of whether he is right or wrong, the McVicar soundtrack album went on to achieve healthy record sales peaking at No.20 on the Billboard charts.

John McVicar allegedly lived out the rest of his years in a caravan in Althorne, Essex with his dog, who he was walking when he suffered a suspected heart attack on 6th September.

ALAN "FLUFF" FREEMAN AND RUSS / EDINBURGH

From Liam Wilson

This Sunday, 27th November 2022, marks the 16th anniversary of the passing of arguably the UK's greatest ever Rock DJ, Alan "Fluff" Freeman. He was unquestionably unique with his mix of classical music and rock music broadcasts, manifested weekly on the BBC's Saturday Rock Show. He was awarded the MBE for services to broadcasting, which speaks for itself. Suffice to say, they broke the mold when Fluff was born and we may never see his like on the radio again. RIP Alan "Fluff" Freeman, MBE. Without a doubt, he was a significant musical catalyst in the emergence of Argent and Russ in the early 70s.

So what is the connection between Fluff and Russ?

Inter alia:-

1. Fluff played and promoted relentlessly the single **"Hold Your Head Up"** for more than 6 months providing Argent's big breakthrough in April 1972, launching into the spotlight one of rock music's coolest front men, lead singer, all round musician and prolific writer. All this skill-set wrapped up in the mesmerising image of Russ's long hair, hip shades and iconic holey guitar. .
2. He regularly interviewed Russ. He plugged intensively the **"God Gave Rock and Roll to You"** single, making it his **Freeman's Fancy** (his record of the week) on its release. (See promo advert from NME).



3. He manufactured 2 musical Jingles, for The Saturday Rock Show on BBC, out of Argent's In Deep album, specifically from the tracks "**God Gave Rock and Roll to You**" and "**Be Glad**".
4. He collaborated with Russ in telling the story of one of Russ's most memorable pieces of music, "**The Fire Still Burns**", which Russ still plays regularly e.g. on his most recent tour.
5. Fluff had a solid foundational grounding in classical music. As does Russ, with e.g. Moonlight Sonata.
6. The above list is not exhaustive.

(1) Alan 'Fluff' Freeman plays RGB's "Chained" from Argent's 'Ring of Hands' album, May 22nd 1976

At The Caves, Edinburgh, Oct 9th 2022, we were invited backstage to meet Russ and the band. We discussed with Russ, and Roly, some of the great pieces of music Russ had written for Argent, including 2 tracks, from "**Ring of Hands**" Argent's 2nd album, i.e. "**Where Are We Going Wrong**" and "**Chained**" and whether there was a possibility of "**Chained**" being included in a future set-list for Russ in his next tour. The latter track, "**Chained**", was a favourite of Fluff's also, and attached is a link where he played it on May 22nd 1976.

<https://youtu.be/DLwlpFiZUQk>

(2) The Making of RGB's "The Fire Still Burns", narrated by Alan Freeman

There are few pieces of music which bring me to the edge of tears. This is one that certainly does.

This is the story behind the making of *F.S.B.*, as narrated by "Fluff". It takes one on a musically emotive journey from Russ's country studio, via his notebook of lyrics, his creation of the original tune, then heading into the Abbey Road Studios, where he was faced with, inter alia, a technical world of 96 faders and other musical dials. Fluff takes the listener inside Russ's head on how *F.S.B.* was envisaged, conceived and musically delivered. He describes how electronic cellos, harpsichord, Russ's Gibson Guitar, the effects of digital echo on Russ's

voice and his chanting all weave together to form this remarkable piece of music. There are no words to describe how fantastic it was for me to experience the musical journey of *F.S.B* from embryonic beginning to its coming of age as narrated by Mr. Freeman. No other rock DJ could have pulled this off in the way that Fluff did. I defy you to listen to this and keep your feet still and your emotions in check. On this recording, Russ and Fluff were a marriage made in heaven. For me this version of *F.S.B* is a masterpiece.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fLzVx_xMOM8

(3) I Don't Believe in Miracles, RGB at The Caves, Edinburgh, Oct 9th 2022

<https://youtu.be/7J6fAK4twyQ>

We travelled over from Dublin to Edinburgh for this gig and it was the first time we had seen Russ since RBE1 (The Russ Ballard Experience) in Ware. Such excitement.

Even more exciting was being invited backstage after the gig where we attempted to put the world to its rights with Russ and the boys. A cherished memory indeed and one which is indelibly printed on my mind. Big thanks to Sue for facilitating.

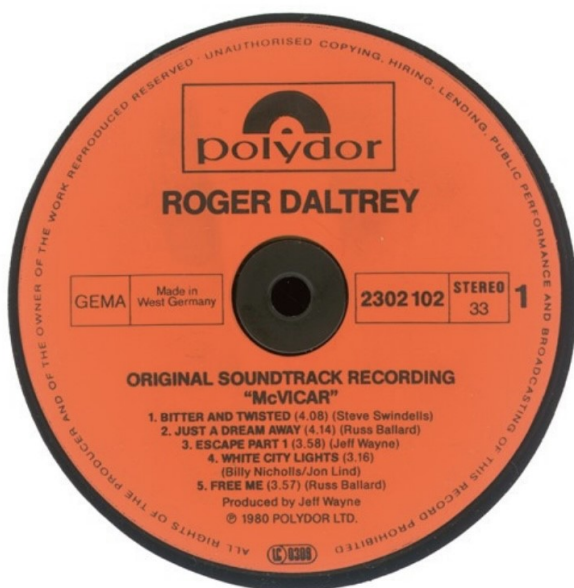
See special photo "*Russ & Liam*".



DAVE'S COVER QUEST

Continuing on from the news of John McVicar's passing a few weeks ago, the cover quest choice this month is one of three Russ Ballard songs featured on the film soundtrack.

No.50



Just a Dream Away by Roger Daltrey

When we associate Russ Ballard with the McVicar soundtrack, most of us immediately think of **Free Me**, which was released as a single. This version of **Just a Dream Away** by The Who's vocalist is one of the many songs covered from Russ Ballard's **Winning** album. Some of the lyrics had to be altered in Roger's version in order to make the song relevant to the film script.

<https://youtu.be/fmMHDzoQZOo>