

(Header by Sven)

January 2023

Happy new year to you all. Let's hope 2023 is more normal (again!). And welcome to our new readers. Please join in.

We have great news about the Wrinkly Rockers vote. Thank you if you voted last month. It worked!

Thank you to Rainer, Ronnie and Dave (as always) for your contributions. It is the contributions that make this newsletter. We welcome contributions from all our readers, as long as they are Russ related. You have an extra opportunity now...read on!

Sue

THIS MONTH FROM RUSS

I recently had two days writing with Ricky Hanley and David Fremberg. Ricky I've known for some years - David Fremberg is Swedish. Both Rick and David have been writing together for some years...David has a group called 'Reggae Kiss', and they've already released an album of songs which have been hits for 'Kiss' including 'Creatures of The Night', 'Love Gun' and a reggae version of my song 'New York Groove'. Dave said he'd been a fan of Kiss for many years. I must say, he's the fastest recording engineer I have ever worked with, also an accomplished musician on guitar and bass.

As you may know, most of my song writing has been a solitary process, me and a piano or me and a guitar, however, I've found writing with others has it's perks that come with it....You share the vibe of writing together and at the end of the writing day we decided to adjourn to my local Italian restaurant, where we got to know more about each other and of course I've made a new friend.

Another couple of new friends I've made are two members of the group 'Space Elevator', namely, David Young who's guitar player and leader. Also Julie, singer and lyricist. We met three years ago when just before the pandemic hit Europe, Space Elevator were ready to support me on the German tour, when just two days before the tour was to start it was cancelled. A very deflating time for everyone. At the moment we have two really good songs that will probably be included on the new 'Space Elevator' album.

I've had some shows offered for 2023....One is on a Ship in Stockholm and includes 5 or 6 groups...This short festival is called, "RockNytt" and takes place April 21st. There are more later in the year....The Beaverwood, Chiselhurst, HRH taking place in Great Yarmouth and Wimbourne Theatre. So, I look forward to seeing so many good friends again in 2023....

I'll be back with you next month.

Love,

Russ

RUSS - LIFE STORIES

Hi everyone.....This month I'm continuing with my biography and the life changing process of becoming a professional musician....[or is it ?]....

So, it seems I'm now a professional musician, officially lead guitarist in Adam Faith and The Roulettes. I say officially, because one of the first appointments that was made for me was with Dougie Millings, 'Tailor to the stars' - he'd been making a name for himself for two years. He made The Roulettes one set of blue and one set of black stage suits. It was decided that second rhythm guitarist, Henry Stracey's suits would fit me with a little alteration. [Henry had been with The Roulettes for a year and was now leaving the group. Now it was a trip to Piccadilly Arcade to John Erickson, shirt maker, if not to the stars, this time, to four professional musicians.....John Rogers, Peter Thorp, Bob Henrit and Russ Ballard. The shirts were blue cotton with huge collars and frilly fronts.....frilly fronted shirts seemed to be the order of the day in 1963 ...well they were in show business and pop music at this time was show business....the

Blues and Rock scene hadn't come up from the underground.....To be honest, I wasn't keen on the showbiz side but it was the normal way in the early sixties.....Groups were becoming popular and were often touring in variety shows. After rehearsing for some days at The Metropolitan Theatre on London's Edware Road, we embarked on a five week tour of theatres around England, namely, Manchester Palace, The Princess Theatre Torquay, The Sunderland Empire and The Coventry New Theatre. Playing in The Roulettes was very different to playing with The Daybreakers. Since my accident three and a half years before, I'd become quite introverted and didn't move about much on the stage, letting the guitar playing be my 'showmanship' but I was not only expected to play guitar in The Roulettes, but also give the audience something to look at, basically smile and make the music look harder to play than it really was. In Adam's show - [Remember this was 'Show business'] - we put together two medleys, one was a 'hit' medley, the other a history of Rock and Roll, where we started with 'Rock Around The Clock', then 'Heartbreak Hotel'. After this tribute to Elvis, we did 'Peppermint Twist' and lastly, 'I Wanna Be Your Man' as a tribute to The Beatles and The Stones, who were just beginning to make it big. Adam said, "Russ, during the 'Peppermint Twist' The Roulettes should dance The Twist and in the guitar solo of Heartbreak Hotel I want you to leap to the front of the stage to play your solo".....Well, I remember trying to keep cool....I think my exterior probably looked coolish, but my interior was hot and sweaty at the thought of dancing while playing the guitar....anyway, the more I did it, the easier it became. Only a week or two after joining Adam and The Roulettes we played to an audience of 7000 at The Wembley Arena.....It seemed a long way from Cheshunt Boys Club..... TO BE CONTINUED NEXT MONTH

Lots of Love, Russ

WRINKLY ROCKERS CLUB

Last month we gave you the opportunity to vote in the Wrinkly Rockers Club 2022 awards. Russ was nominated in the "Best Rock" category. Thank you for voting.

<https://www.wrinklyrockersclub.com/>

This is from The Wrinkly Rockers

"We reviewed both of [Russ Ballard](#)'s "It's Good To Be Here" UK tour gigs at London's [The 100 Club](#) and Chislehurst's [The Beaverwood](#) last February

(pictured), and consequently the ex-Argent vocalist/guitarist has been voted our 2022 [Wrinkly Rockers Club](#) Best Rock performance."



GERMANY CONTINUED....

From Rainer Huengerle

Russ' performances in Germany seem to have been well received overall. I send you for your information a concert report from 2nd November in Nuremberg (Hirsch Music Club) in the German music magazine '**Good Times**'. This magazine is published every two months. This concert report is in the December/January issue.

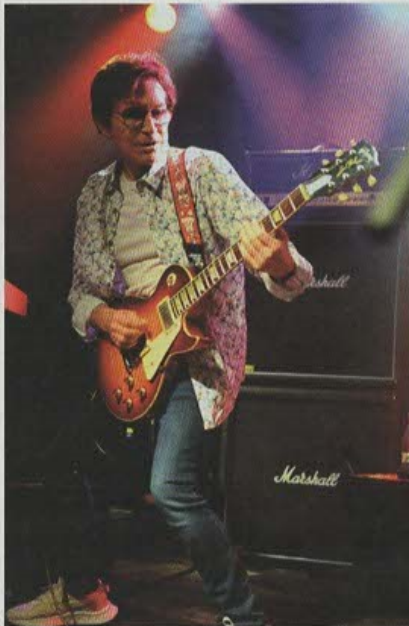
RUSS BALLARD

Auch mit 77 brennt noch das Feuer!

Nürnberg, Hirsch, 2. November 2022

Zwei Tage vor seinem Konzert im Hirsch konnte der Gitarrist, Komponist, Sänger, Arrangeur und Produzent Russ Ballard bei bester Gesundheit seinen 77. Geburtstag feiern. Der 1945 in Waltham Cross geborene Allroundmusiker scheint in einen Jungbrunnen gefallen zu sein. Man sieht und hört ihm sein Alter nicht an, als er mit dem von ihm als Punk Rock charakterisierten "Rene Didn't Do It" losrockt! Seine Stimme und sein Gitarrenspiel sind auf der aktuellen Tour „It's Good To Be Here“ stark wie eh und je. Beim Auftritt im proppenvollen Kult-Club in Nürnberg zelebrierte er mit einer soliden Band all seine großen Hits und erklärte beim ein oder anderen Titel genüsslich, wann und für wen er diesen herausgebracht hat („da waren viele von euch noch gar nicht geboren!“). Bei den ersten beiden Songs benutzte Russ Ballard seine besonders geliebte „Feline“, eine Fender Strat Gitarre.

Doch bereits ab der dritten Nummer des Abends, "Playin' With Fire", wechselte der kommunikativ aufgelegte Ballard zur fetter klingenden Gibson Les Paul aus den Heritage Series mit dem Wumms im Overdrive inklusive Marshall-Turm für echte Rocknummern: "The Fire Still Burns!" – Ballards Tour- und Lebensmotto im Alter. Alter? Kein Problem, Russ Ballard empfindet es als Segen! Dazu passend



die Argent-Nummer "Hold Your Head Up" mit den präzisen Keyboards von Marc Rapson, samt Nachruf an den verstorbenen Bassisten Jim Rodford. Jetzt ging es in Ballards „Time Machine“ – auch kompakt als Medley – Schlag auf Schlag durch die Musikgeschichte. Darunter gerne von anderen Stars gecovert Klassiker wie "I Can Do Magic" (America), "I Know, There's Something Going On" (Frida von Abba), "New York Groove" (Hello) und viele andere. Besonders kurios der Titel "So You Win Again", den ihm die Plattenfirma mit den Worten „that song ist not for you“ wegschnappte und lieber gleich an die Disco-Boys von Hot Chocolate weitergab – mit großem Erfolg. Das Publikum sang zunehmend voll mit – I can hear "Voices!" Der Sound angenehm klar und transparent.

Natürlich trieben die beiden Welthit-Kracher von Blackmore's Rainbow "I Surrender" und "Since You've Been Gone" die Stimmung auf den Höhepunkt. Der Argent-Klassiker von 1972 und das von Kiss 1991 erfolgreich gecovert "God Gave Rock'n'Roll To You" schienen den grandiosen Konzertabend zu beenden, doch folgte zum Schluss noch als passende Zugabe in D-Moll "I Can't Hear You No More".

Text & Foto: Helmut Ölschlegel

MARILLION

Opulente Klanggemälde plus unerwartet viel Humor

Stuttgart, Liederhalle, 3. November 2022

Eigentlich erstaunlich, wie lange das schon gut geht bei Marillion. 1989 war's, als Steve „H“ Hogarth die Nachfolge von Kult-Sänger Fish übernahm – stattliche 33 Jahre also herrscht bei den englischen Prog-Rockern bereits diese merkwürdige Bandkonstellation zwischen vier distinktierten Herren, die ihrem Job mit britischer Zurückhaltung nachgehen, und einem Frontmann, den man eher in einer Aufführung der „Rocky Horror Picture Show“ vermuten würde. Extrovertiert, fast schon zappelig und alles andere als so, wie man es angesichts seines Alters von auch schon 66 Jahren erwarten würde, gibt sich Hogarth auch beim Gastspiel in Stuttgart: ein Kobold am Mikrofon, der so viel Humor in seine Bühnenpräsenz mischt, dass man eine solche Figur im klassischen Fach als Buffo, den in Oper und Operette für den nötigen Schuss an Komik zuständigen Sänger bezeichnen würde. Doch der Auftritt in der ausverkauften Liederhalle zeigt auch, warum Marillion in dieser Aufstellung so gut funktionieren. „H“ ist eben auch ein absolut notensicherer Sänger, der mühelos von der Bruststimme ins Falsett zu wechseln und seine Theatralik songorientiert einzusetzen vermag. Und er zieht die Aufmerksamkeit des Publikums so vehement auf sich, dass seine Kollegen umso ungestörter ihrer Arbeit nachgehen können. Und das tun sie 130 Minuten lang auf Top-Niveau. Heimlicher Star des Abends ist natürlich der unscheinbarste von allen: Liebevoll, zärtlich und

unspektakulär virtuos krault der eher gemütliche Steve Rothery seine Gitarre in der Tradition von Genrelegenden wie David Gilmour oder Steve Hackett. Mark Kelly sekundiert mit weiträumigen Keyboardklängen, Pete Trewavas untermalt diesen Sound mit mächtig-melodischem Bass und macht zudem eine prima Fi-



gur als Zweitstimme, und Schlagzeug-Altmeister Ian Mosley glänzt mit enorm flüssig geklöppten Rhythmuswechseln. Auf der aktuellen Europa-Tournee assistiert zudem der portugiesische Perkussionist Luís Jardim mit delikaten Klängen von Glocken, Tablas und Congas. Opulente Klanggemälde stellt dieses Sextett so auf die Bühne, voll schwelgerischer Melodielinien und sinfonischer, fein verwobener Keyboard-Gitarren-Arrangements – und klingt dabei mal so eingängig wie die mittleren Roxy Music, mal so vertrackt wie die späten King Crimson. Die erste Stunde gehört dabei dem aktuellen Album AN HOUR BEFORE IT'S DARK mit "Murder Machines" und dem vierteligen, Pandemie-inspirierten Opus "Care" als Höhepunkt. Auserlesenes vom Meisterwerk BRAVE ("Wave", "Mad", "The Great Escape") oder der Titelsong aus AFRAID OF SUNLIGHT verzieren dann Teil zwei des Abends, ehe die 1500 restlos begeisterten Fans ihre Lieblinge zu "Sugar Mice" mit Ovationen im Stehen verabschieden.

Text: Christof Hammer, Foto: Frank Witzelmaier

Here is the English translation of the concert report.

Even at 77 the fire still burns!

„Two days before his concert at the Hirsch, guitarist, composer, singer, arranger and producer Russ Ballard celebrated his 77th birthday in the best of health. Born in Waltham Cross in 1945, the all-round musician seems to have fallen into a fountain of youth. You can't see or hear his age as he rocks out with "Rene Didn't Do IT," which he charted as punk rock! His voice and guitar playing are as strong as ever on the current tour "It's Good To Be Here". At the gig in the prop-filled cult club in Nuremberg, he celebrated all his big hits with his solid band, and with one or the other track he gleefully explained when and for whom he had released it ("many of you weren't even born then!"). For the first two songs Russ Ballard used his especially beloved "Feline", a Fender Strat guitar.

But already from the third number of the evening, "Playin' With Fire," the communicative Ballard switched to the fatter sounding Gibson Les Paul from the Heritage Series with the power in overdrive including Marshall stack for real rock numbers: "The Fire Still Burns!" - Ballard's tour and life motto in old ages. Old age? No problem, Russ Ballard considers it a blessing! Fittingly, the Argent number "Hold Your Head Up" with Marc Rapson's precise keyboards, complete with obituary to the late bassist Jim Rodford. Now it went in Ballard's "Time Machine" - also compact as a medley - blow by blow through music history. Among them were classics gladly covered by other stars such as "I Can Do Magic" (America), "I Know, There's Something Going On" (Frida from ABBA), "New York Groove" (Hello) and many others. Especially curious was the title "So You Win Again", which the record company snapped away from him with the words "that song is not for you" and rather passed it on to Hot Chocolate - with great success. The audience sang along increasingly full - I can hear "Voices!" The sound was pleasantly clear and transparent.

Of course, the two world hit smashers by Blackmore's Rainbow "I Surrender" and "Since You Been Gone" drove the mood to its peak. The Argent classic from 1972 "God Gave Rock'n'Roll To You" successfully covered by Kiss in 1991, seemed to end the grandiose concert evening, but "I Can't Hear You More" followed as a fitting encore in D minor at the end.“


PODCASTS

You can find Ian and Sven's podcasts on Russ's website or from wherever you usually listen to podcasts.

From Ian...."We are proud to be back and have an outstanding start to 2023 thanks to an extra special guest on the Voices of Russ Ballard Podcast with Ian and Sven, the one and only **Leo Sayer** who has just celebrated 50 years in the music business.

This is part 1 of two Podcasts with Leo himself before we feature a fascinating conversation with Leo and Russ in the final episode."

You can listen here...<https://russballardmusic.com/podcast>

	<p>Podcast - russballardmusic.com</p> <p>The Voices Of Russ Ballard Podcast, the official podcast with well known guests like John Verity, Chris White and many more.</p> <p>russballardmusic.com</p>
--	---

QUESTION OF THE MONTH

From Ronnie

"Russ, when The Roulettes split with Adam and before you all went off to support Richard Anthony in France ,for me at least the band went off the radar. I was wondering during that period what the mainstay of the bands performance programme was? Did you for example revert back to more Rock based songs like Stubborn Kinda Fellow/You Don't Love Me/This Little Girl. Or did you do a mix of stuff including some of Chris Andrew's heavier material?

I know it was a long time ago but if you can recall it would be interesting to me as I tried to follow the development of the band back then best I could."

Russ: *When we parted from Adam....*

We (The Roulettes) delved in some strange areas. We found new management, where they decided it would be a good idea to get us some weeks in cabaret (not something I enjoyed). We also played a lot of session work - One period of sessions was two weeks backing Lulu, Marianne Faithful, Mark Wynter and

Richard Anthony.....This particular work was in fact a TV Show called "A Tale of Two Rivers", a light music show where UK artist were filmed singing their songs by The Seine river in Paris, while French performers sang theirs along the banks of The Thames. In the case of Richard Anthony's appearance, after he arrived at the recording studio he said he'd like to sing "Concrete & Clay" (Bob Henrit and I didn't tell him that we had been The Plus Two on the original number one of that song , by Unit 4 Plus 2). After recording, he was very impressed and said he was contracted to play a long tour of France from May to September of 1966 and would we like to back him? - We didn't hesitate for long after he told us we'd be based in St. Tropez and we wouldn't have the problems of International airports as we'd be flying in Richard's own Piper Aztec, which was conveniently based at the St. Tropez airstrip (about the size of two football pitches) and the tour would also take in International Cities, like Madrid, Paris, Marbella, Rome, Sardinia, Corsica and lots more. So, we said 'Yes' before he told us we we're actually to be paid well for the experience. It was great fun and something Pete, Bob, Mod and I often reminisced about in our get togethers.

LYRICS OF THE MONTH

We thought we would have some fun in the new year with "lyrics of the month". What are your favourite Russ lyrics? Just a line, not a whole song. Maybe you just like the sound of them or maybe they have a special meaning to you. Please send them, along with anything you would like to say about them, to me at this email address. Then, separately, tell me the song they are from and I will include them in the newsletter along with a link to the song if possible. I will put the name of the song at the end of the newsletter so everyone else can test their knowledge.

I will start this off with a really easy one, a favourite for me. I just love the way these lines flow. Which song is this from? **"I thought you might show your face or have the grace to tell me where you are."** Scroll down to the end of the newsletter to find the answer...as if you didn't know!

CREDIT WHERE IT'S DUE

From Dave Williams

January 13th – 15th saw what could prove to be the last ever **Great British Rock and Blues Festival** at Butlins, Skegness. The 2023 event was a sell-out following last year's reduced audience following the pandemic, and featured approximately 58 artists and bands over the 3 days. Rarely does the event pass by without some reference to, or connection with, Russ, whether it be one of his songs or an artist that has worked with him. This year, former **Phoenix** members **Ray Minninnitt** and **John Verity** were on the bill, the former performing with Full House, the late Frankie Miller's backing band, and the latter playing in his new band **Verity Bromham Band** featuring fellow guitarist Del Bromham of Stray.

For those who aren't aware, John Verity replaced Russ in **Argent** following his departure in 1974. This was on Russ's recommendation, and the two have worked together on various studio projects over the years. In his new band, JV and Del Bromham perform a show made up of rock classics, and with both being great vocalists as well as great guitarists, each got the opportunity to take the limelight on some of their favourites. Needless to say, JV got the crowd going with a performance of **Hold Your Head Up**, but it was **God Gave Rock and Roll To You** that got the biggest reception. John made a strong point of telling the audience that the song was NOT written by Kiss, as they'd have you believe, but was **"written by the great songwriter Russ Ballard, who I later replaced in Argent"**. The audience approved of this statement, and when it came to the chorus, little encouragement was needed to get the crowd singing, just as we were singing to Russ's version at his recent concerts. I know it rankles with many Argent fans that changing a few lyrics and adding a 2 to the title enabled Paul Stanley, Gene Simmons and producer Bob Ezrin to credit themselves as co-writers, so a big thank you to John Verity for setting the record (no pun intended) straight, as Rod Argent also does when The Zombies perform the song on their shows.

Incidentally, the Verity Bromham Band performed the song magnificently, and they were one of the many bands and artists that paid tribute to Jeff Beck following his recent passing. Sadly, it appears that Butlins have decided to discontinue this well supported festival together with the rock and folk festivals. They feel that more revenue will be achieved by attracting a younger audience with 2000s weekends, a decision that hasn't gone down at all well with artists as well as punters.

AMATEUR HOUR

by Dave Williams



Here's an amateur on the road to becoming a professional. Tove Styrke is a Swedish singer born in Umeå on 19th November 1992. This film clip features her TV appearance on Swedish Idol in 2009. Performing a rousing version of Russ Ballard's **Since You Been Gone**, she finished in 3rd place. Failing to win didn't stand in her way of future success though, and Tove, who also writes her own songs and plays piano and guitar, was immediately signed up by Sony Records. She has so far released four albums and several successful singles and has collaborated with many other artists including hitmakers Clean Bandit. At 30 years old, Tove has already performed live concerts in London and toured the United States, as she continues to gain new fans. Her single **Say My Name** was

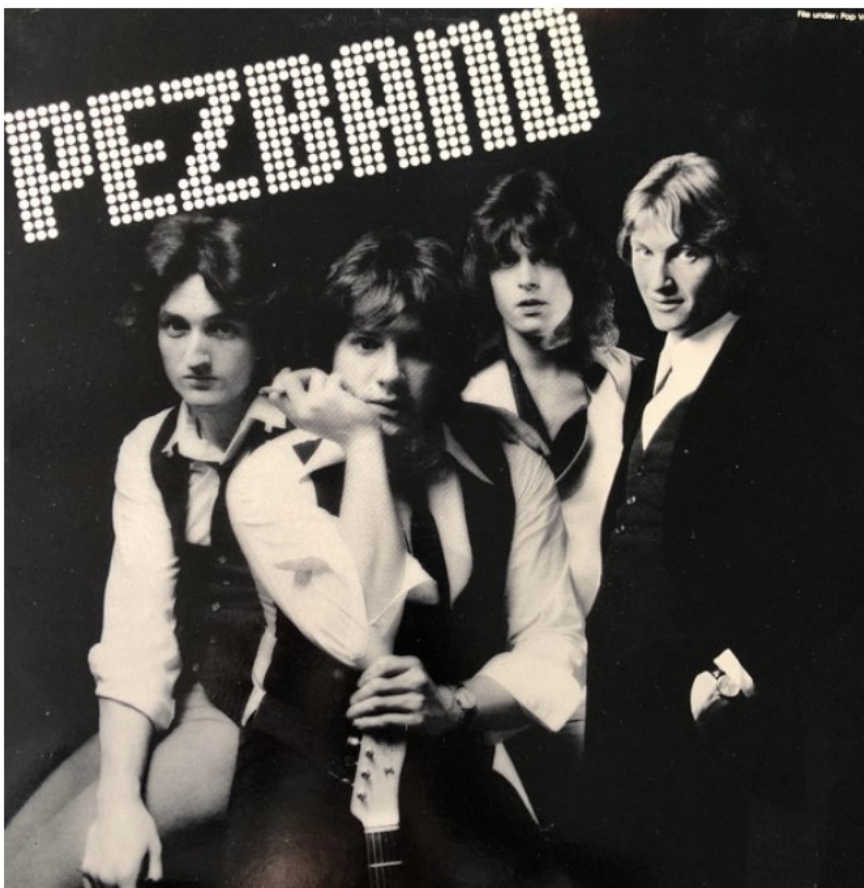
included in Rolling Stone's 100 best songs of the decade. Looking back, its pleasing to note that her teenage TV performance of this Russ Ballard classic has acted as a springboard to her success.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ci2FNvqKhZI>

DAVE'S COVER QUEST

Here's a nice find from the 1970s. Most covers from Russ's early solo work tends to come from his second album **Winning**. This month we have a "live" cover of a song from the first Russ Ballard album.

No.52



She's a Hurricane by Pezband

Originating from Illinois, Chicago, 5-piece pop rockers Pezband were formed in 1971, and consisted of Mimi Betinis (guitar and keyboards), John Pazdan (guitar), Cliff Johnson (vocals), Mike Gorman (bass) and Mick Rain (drums). Initially they

performed cover songs up to five nights in a row, playing four or five sets a night. Pazdan left the band at the end of 1972 and was replaced by Dan Wade, who was in turn replaced by Tommy Gawenda in the following year. By now, Pezband were writing their own material and widened their audience by playing further afield, first on the East Coast, then the West. Three albums were released between 1977 and 1979 consisting of songs written by the band members themselves. They still featured a few covers in their set, one of which was Russ Ballard's **She's a Hurricane**. A link below provides an audio clip from a show at the Bottom Line in NYC. The person who posted it suggests this show took place in 1975, but I suspect it might have been later. Get the full story here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tl22Qw0WSJs>



[Pezband She's A Hurricane - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tl22Qw0WSJs)

Here is a song didn't find online. It is from a live show at the Bottom Line in NYC from 1975. It is a cover version of a Russ Ballard song. Pezband are ano... www.youtube.com

The band briefly disbanded in 1980 but reformed the following year as a 3-piece consisting of Pazdan, Betinis and Rain, releasing an EP titled Women & Politics, but when a record distribution deal fell through, the band was put on hold. Since then, sporadic re-unions have been attempted, with further songs released in 2013 and 2016. Tommy Gawenda left to become a member of Tami Show, releasing two albums between 1987 and 1990. Drummer Mick Rain, real name Michael John Ruane, sadly passed away on 14th August 2021 from COVID-19.

LYRICS OF THE MONTH - ANSWER

Of course....I Dont Believe In Miracles.

<https://youtube.com/watch?v=44WhrixDVml&si=EnSlkaIECMiOmarE>

Let's have a harder one next month.