

(Header by Sven)

April 2024

Welcome to our new readers.

As I write this, Russ is in Germany on the Rock Meets Classic tour and he is having a great time. If you have been lucky enough to go to one of the shows please feel free to tell us about it. Just send your "review" to me here at this email address. Our Team RGB Ian is with Russ, acting as his PA for the duration of this tour. He is writing a diary and sending photos and videos. If you are on Russ's Facebook page you might have seen them already as Carole is putting them on there as we get them. If so, just scroll down past the diary for Dave's Cover. For the many of you who are not on Facebook, I am including all the diaries up to the Munich show. It's a long but easy read....get your cuppa ready. (Apologies to those who don't like long newsletters!) I am including a few photos but there is a limit to the number I can put in the email so you will have to go to the Facebook page for more, lots more. There are also some videos on YouTube.

Scroll right down for the Cover from Dave which is very relevant. A beautiful song you probably won't know.

Russ sent me his diary and biog before he went to Germany.

Sue

THIS MONTH - RUSS'S DIARY

On looking back over the last couple of months My Diary looks rather sparse...I can assure you I do work (actually it's play) most of the time. Writing, recording and playing live are magical and there's nothing more I prefer to do.

I've spent most of the time in my studio trying to complete some songs that I've had for sometime. I had to take some days off to journey to Wolverhampton to see my Grandson, Emilio, he plays at the Wolves football academy. He recently had an injury for which he's receiving treatment every morning. As he hasn't been playing in matches, he was coming back to the hotel after treatment and the evenings we've been eating out. Emi now is coming back to fitness and playing in matches.

I was asked to take part in a Podcast called Vintage. Paul Stephenson asked questions about my career. He seemed very clued up and was good company for forty five minutes.

Well that's it...What could be better than spending time watching football, making music and eating curry in Wolverhampton?

I'm taking part in a Rock meets Classic tour of Germany, for most of April, which I will tell you about in four weeks.

Stay safe and enjoy Spring. Love, as Ever, Russ xxx

RUSS - LIFE STORIES

My Biog continues - SayIng goodbye to the Brid Summer Season.

The season ended and we packed to come home. However, before arriving home we drove to Birmingham to perform a song recorded four months before we started the summer season...it was "The First Time". The song was written by a young man called Chris Andrews - Apart from being a strong writer, Chris was a great singer, leading his own group called The Ravers. The TV show on which we appeared was called 'Thank Your Lucky Stars'. I believe it was the first show in a series. "Lucky Stars" became an important show to do for an artist or group. It was popular and was seen every week by millions of music fans. After arriving at the TV studio and finding our dressing room we looked for the restaurant. As we queued for lunch, we noticed a familiar face ahead of us, it was Rolf Harris who was at the studio to perform his latest record....[I think it might have been 'Sun Arise'] While we were eating, we saw a group walk into the restaurant ...the individuals I didn't recognise but the makeup girls told us they were called 'Them' and they'd driven from Ireland to promote their first recording.....and a very good one it was too - a song called "Baby Please Don't Go". I watched their rehearsal as they lip synced. I thought the singer had an amazing, hard voice. The record became a big hit, and years later the singer pursued a solo career, his name, Van Morrison. The show also had a spot called 'Spin A Disc,' where members of the public reviewed new singles and marked them from one [bad] to five [fab]. ''The First Time'' was accepted well and everyone seemed to think it would be a hit. The problem with "Thank Your Lucky Stars", it was difficult driving out of the building as there were always hundreds of kids blocking the way. They jumped on the bonnet of the car, pulled at the door handles, broke off the radio aerial.... it was quite scary.

I'll BE BACK WITH YOU NEXT MONTH - ENJOY SPRING....

PORTUGAL

Another reminder, as if you needed it, that Russ's next gig will be with his usual band, at the Casino Estoril in Cascais, Portugal on 10th May. Also playing will be Brian Spence. Here is the link for tickets.... <u>https://ticketline.sapo.pt/evento/</u> <u>russ-ballard-and-band-brian-spence-live-202-79213?</u> <u>fbclid=IwAR2VsN5a0il2oZiTIKXEndXfaNdTdNJX8dzNMaITEuwtFQyOLuQDrtZLTOg</u>

GERMANY 2

Lucky people in Germany, getting Russ twice in 2024! In June Russ will be returning to Germany to play at an event which marks the end of the Handel Festival in Halle. This is, once again, with an orchestra and is billed as Symphonic-Rock-Concert, "Bridges to Classics" and Firework display.

Thanks to our newsletter friend, Markus Linten in Germany for sending a link to an article about Russ's appearance. The article is in German but there should be a button for an English translation. Maybe not on a phone but I get it on my laptop. Markus has provided me with a translation...let me know if you would like it.

Russ Ballard als Stargast bei "Bridges to Classics": Legendärer Musiker zu den Händel-Festspiele - HalleSpektrum.de - Onlinemagazin aus Halle (Saale)

ROULETTES and FRIENDS

One more event for Roulettes fans that has to be included in this newsletter... Bob Henrit is the driving force behind this one. There will be stories and music. Russ, Bob and Mod will be there with a little help from Roly. Go to the Lowewood Museum Facebook page for further updates.

https://www.facebook.com/lowewoodmuseum



VOICES OF RUSS BALLARD PODCAST

Here is part 2 of Sven and Ian's podcast with Graham Bonnet. Listen here via Russ's website or wherever you usually listen to podcasts. <u>https://l.facebook.com/l.php?</u>



ROCK MEETS CLASSIC - GERMANY

lan's tour diary.

Day 1-Sunday 7th April

Russ and I take a taxi to London Heathrow Airport and catch a flight to Frankfurt where rehearsals will take place for the next few days.

I pinch myself.

This is no ordinary taxi. Ryan has driven Russ for over 20 years . He tells me that he has provided the coin for "Hold Your Head Up" countless times (Russ uses a coin against the guitar strings to make the sound effect towards the end of the song).

We meet Robert Hart (Manfred Manns Earthband) in the airport lounge giving Russ and Robert a chance for a long overdue catch up. They made a brilliant album together back in 1992.

Robert should be on the stage (oh hold on, he is \checkmark) non-stop humour....a lovely and extremely funny fella. He tells us it's not his real hair (it is). He also tells us that the former lead singer of Marililon is not a real fish

🗬 and that the singer Seal is not a real Seal 🏹 😳.

He's missing Dusty (his dog). We are picked up at the airport by the wonderful Joe Cassella and driven to Wurzburg, our home for the next three nights. Russ and I watch Manchester United v. Liverpool on my iPad. I wake up Robert and Midge Ure's assistant when United score. Russ, Robert and myself find a quirky Indian for dinner (Russ hasn't eaten since Denny made him breakfast). We are joined for a quick drink by Joe Cassella (who has been looking after us) and Manfred, the brains behind Rock Meets Classic.

Finally retire for the night after a very long day but not before meeting the RMC house band who are in the hotel lobby drinking.... 🗊 💷

Day-2 Monday 8th April

Morning off as Russ and Robert are not being collected for rehearsal until 2pm. Breakfast and a walk into the town...Russ (and Robert) are determined to exceed 10,000 steps a day. Amazing weather and a stroll for a couple of hours along the River Main. Stunning. A coffee in town and a church sightseeing visit completed our morning.



Russ tells us about his dream last night where he illegally entered Buckingham Palace and sat with the Queen, Prince Charles and The Duke of Edinburgh. Apparently they didn't have any booze so he offered to go down the "Off Licence" for them. "No, it's OK thanks".

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We talk about the Film Soundtrack for Mcvicar which gives Robert some thought about writing a rival version....working title, "Mcvities The Musical" Würzburg is a city in Germany's Bavaria region. It's known for lavish baroque and rococo architecture, particularly the 18th-century Residenz palace, with ornate rooms, a huge fresco by Venetian artist Tiepolo and an elaborate staircase. Home to numerous wine bars, cellars and wineries, Würzburg is the center of the Franconian wine country, with its distinctive bocksbeutel.

(OK, it's a fair cop, I googled that paragraph 😕 😁 😅).

I see Midge Ure in reception and invite him to dinner with us, which he accepts. No regrets.



Arrive at rehearsal....some autograph hunters waiting patiently outside (having somehow found out the rehearsal venue....its a School hall!)..... I mention them to Russ....he's out there straight away. Robert too.



Rehearsals were absolutely unbelievable. Russ starts with "Voices" (that's all I'm going to say at the moment so I don't spoil what's to come.

Russ really is made for this gig. Robert nails it too.

Back at the hotel after a long afternoon we chat with the Supertramp guys who have just arrived and they are off to see Dune 2 at the cinema next door. Paul Shortino of Quiet Riot is also just in from LA (as you do).

Russ invites to dinner one of the excellent backing singers, Alessandro Del Vecchio (who sang "Since You Been Gone" with him in rehearsal) another lovely and talented guy who Russ has taken a shine to. It's an Italian Restaurant in the main square, lovely evening

in 21 degree heat, fascinating conversation.

We have to wait ages for the starter and they forget the Vegan option (no cheese) but it gives us a chance for a long chat and enhances the bonding process.

We have a day off tomorrow, gigs start on Wednesday.....

I pinch myself again. Yep, it's real.

Day 3- Tuesday 9th April

Day off.

At breakfast Midge Ure expresses a wish to be part of "Mcvities, The Musical". That takes the biscuit.

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A long walk around town is planned. It's all about Steps today. Well, it would be a "Tragedy" if it wasn't and it's "Better The Devil You Know".......The count begins...."5,6,7,8"

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After our long walk this morning we all retire to chill for an hour or two in the room. At 4pm Russ uses my videos of rehearsal to run through all his songs. He plays along with them on the guitar (and sings!) just to make sure they are perfect going into tomorrow's opening night.

In the evening we are all invited by Manfred for an Italian dinner. He takes Russ and I to his office upstairs. He is a proud man with 40 years in the music business, having put on no less than 50,000 shows!



Russ signs the huge RMC poster on the wall for him.

The dinner is dominated by Paul Shortino from Quiet Riot who is clearly enjoying the hospitality and all I can say is that my noise cancelling headphones will be on the bus tomorrow.

On the way home, Robert Hart tells that Midge Ure has bought a kettle for him. Robert was saying how there wasn't one in his room and he couldn't make tea. I

What a lovely man! This is so rock n'roll 😳

We leave the lovely town of Wurzburg tomorrow at 11....Ludwigsburg next stop....first gig tomorrow night !

Day 4- Wednesday 10th April

The bus arrives....Wow! Luxury indeed......

Around a couple of hours and we arrive at Ludwigsburg, another beautiful German town.

The weather has cooled a little but blue skies.

The Hotel is very nice indeed and a big difference from Wurzburg (apologies Ibis).

Quick turnaround and on to the bus (3pm) for the 15 min trip to the venue. Soundchecks start at 15.45, dinner 18.00, showtime 20.00.

The venue is brilliantly organised, catering already in place, dressing rooms designated, all as we arrive. Russ's dressing room is like a basketball changing room but comfortable. Soundchecks are perfect, the stage show is amazing. Lighting, sound and even

pyrotechnics....

We hear that a big fan of Russ's Sam from France has driven to see him. Carole passes his details to me and I take Russ to meet him. There's him and another German gentleman there and I take photos for them.

Paul Shortino opens the show and manages to strain his hip in the first number. Pure Rock n Roll. (I managed to get a lovely picture of him playing the guitarhe wanted to hold it.). His cane (originally for stage presence) comes in useful as a walking aid

after his performance. He also has a marriage licence to marry people in Las Vegas, where he lives. Quite a character.

I manage to catch Midge's performance....powerful vocal and a great guitar player (ok, who knew he was in Thin Lizzy?). I have to go and get Russ during "Hymn" so the guitar can be prepared and Russ sits waiting to go on. Midge comes off stage with a big smile and Russ walks on.

All the acts perform magnificently and go down a storm. The audience that started sitting is now on its feet and give a standing ovation at the end. And quite right too.....what's the finale with all on stage? God Gave Rock and Roll to You.

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There's a nice video of them all being hugged by Manfred the promotor as they come off stage. Paul is his usually self as he steps off.....

On the Bus and we get back to the hotel at just before midnight.....more autograph hunters at the hotel and Russ obliges.

We leave for Kempten in the morning, it's two and a half hours but on that bus....who cares!

Day 5- Thursday 11th April

Kempten, you are next!

We had a brief scare last night when we thought Russ had lost his passport....it was in some other trousers back at the hotel. I now take custody.

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Robert texts and informs me I'm mentioned in the programmeI pinch myself. On the coach for the relatively short journey and I'm privileged to sit in awe and listen to Midge, Russ and Robert chatting about their careers and experiences. Fascinating, great stories. Total legends.

Midge shows us his mini guitar amp/speaker that comes with an App for different effects and storage....amazing kit for 99 quid!

Midge agrees to come on "The Voices of Russ Ballard Podcast". And the Supertramp boys.

Robert does his pop quiz.....Russ gets all the soul questions right. We arrive at a very nice hotel to find our most unusual autograph hunter yet... one of the bedroom maids comes up to Russ (on his way to his room) with a couple of albums....her Dad is a fan and she promised to get a signature for him. Unbelievable.

Paul Shortino has recovered from his hip injury sustained on stage and is in great form. We really like Paul (can't not like anyone on this tour to be honest). Russ has an interview with a local radio station which starts well but is punctuated with Tarja Turunen in the dressing room next door warming her voice up...it's some voice (look her up) and I can't stop giggling at the back of the dressing room as they try

and conduct the interview as if nothing has happened.....알알알알알알 (I got some video of it) After soundcheck it's the usual hanging around and I ask if Russ has any requests from my portable Bluetooth speaker. To my great surprise, he asks for Rachmaninov Piano Concerto no. 2.

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Still bored we decide to go looking around and manage to jump into Supertramp's dressing room because I earlier spotted they had a piano....thats good enough for Russ and he immediately tickles the ivories. Paul S is with us and suggests a rendition of "Summertime"

.....l film it 😀

The Kempten show is sold out and it's customary (when this happens) that all the artists receive a cowbell with their name on (yes really). See pictures.....the local press are there to record the moment.

Right from the word go, we can tell this audience are up for it. Paul Shortino opens and nails it. I stand side stage and watch Robert go on and as soon as the first bars of "Davy's On The Road Again" are blasted out, the audience are on their feet.

Midge goes on and is amazing....as soon as he goes into "Hymn" it's time for me to take Russ from dressing room to stage....he goes on and you can see the audience love him and he's loving them. He deserves these size venues and audiences.

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A slight change today, the show finale was "GGRARTY" but it's switched with "Since You Been Gone". Right decision. Either way, it's one Russ song for another for the finale.

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The sound guys allow me to film at the side of the stage and I take pics and do a live broadcast for Russ's fans on the Voices Facebook Group.

After the show everyone is tired. The bus takes an age to leave and Russ is popular with the autograph hunters again on the way. I persuade Russ to go straight to bed......he agrees.

The Blog continues ...hope it's not boring anyone....😜

Guten Tag!

Day 6 - Passau Friday 12th April

On the coach early today (10am) because it's a long ish 4 hour journey to Passau.

The journey goes fairly quickly once again and a few people choose to use the "bunks" on the bus to grab some sleep.

Russ, Midge and Robert continue their music discussion and Robert shares some of his favourite tunes.

We arrive to find that Russ's dressing room is in fact a caravan parked outside the front door. Fridge, bathroom, beds and all the mod cons although there is to

be a sting in the tail....

We go for lunch prepared by the wonderful catering staff who are on the road with us. It's really warm today.

Russ soundchecks and sounds spot on. He retires to the caravan and enjoys a quick nap.

Robert is enjoying having his daughter Sophie with him. She's here for the next few gigs.

After dinner it's my turn today to choose music for the Bluetooth speaker and Russ gets to listen to King King (have a listen to "I will not fall").

Show time gets closer and the caravan gets warmer.....and warmer.....we turn the lights on.....and then they go off.....I fix them....and then they go off again.

I go to check who is on stage to gauge when Russ is due on....in the meantime, the caravan gets hotter and hotter....we have no choice but to move to Robert and Midge's room (thanks chaps) to escape....

....it turns out that a helpful venue employee had come in and tuned the heating up full blast in case we get cold....and as a result there was no power left for the lights

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This disruption just before Russ goes on is not ideal....but he goes on stage and absolutely nails it, in my opinion his best performance so far. The crowd are on their feet the moment "Voices" begins. He is very popular in Germany.

After the show, the caravan has cooled down finally and we can (ironically) sit outside and have a post gig beer.

Tomorrow morning we leave for Regensburg (only two hours away) and the gig will be filmed for DVD....sadly just for the RMC crew



Early to bed.

Day 7 - Regensburg Saturday 13th April.

Breakfast outside in the sunshine. Glorious.

Have a nice chat with Midge about the merits of living in wonderful Portugal.

Russ has lost his iWatch and phone chargers and thankfully we have enough time (leaving at 11) to walk down the road in the sunshine to buy some new ones. Stop Press....iWatch found!

Short journey to the fantastic town of Regensburg....beautiful in the sunshine. We arrive and I go for a traditional Bratwurst in the square.....yum. That's not before we have trouble getting Russ into the hotel as he is the most popular with the autograph hunters

and there is quite a few of them. (Same problem when we leave for the gig.....). Arrive at the venue and it's a huge sports hall. Probably around 5,000 people and the third sell out on the trot.

Once sound check is over with, Russ and I watch the first half of Bournemouth v Manchester United. Thankfully he missed Spurs 4-0 defeat earlier today.

I notice a guy outside behind the fence standing on his own and he's been there ages. I approach him and ask what artist he is looking forRuss of course. Turns out it's Mereno from Italy and Carole texts me to confirm. He has a gift of a bottle of wine

for Russ.....if you are reading this, thanks again Mereno!

Paul Shortino ask me to video the start of his show and I duly oblige....he's a great showman.

Russ goes on after Midge and gives his best performance yet (again)....the crowd on their feet from "Voices" onwards. He's going down so well with these German audiences.

Back to the hotel around 12.30 ... we do have a lay in of sorts tomorrow...bus leaves at 12.

Tomorrow is the big one....Munich Olympiahalle and a 10,000 seater venue.

Day 8- Sunday 14th April

Wake up in wonderful Regensburg and realise it's my birthday. We are not due to get on the bus to Munich until 12.....which means we can actually digest our breakfast. It's been a long while since we had anytime to go for a walk....so Russ and I decide to head for the bridge and see the Danube river. (Once Russ has signed for some more autograph and photo hunters).

We see John Helliwell from Supertramp on the way and he directs us to the river. We start humming "The Blue Danube" by Strauss. Russ buys a Buddha in a local shop.

What an amazing place....if you get the chance to visit Regensburg, go!! Russ records a short video for his Facebook page in the square.

On the bus we approach Munich and see the famous architecture.

Reaching the hotel we are treated to lunch by Patrik from ASS, who took care of Russ's last German tour around 18 months ago....it's very quick as we have a 90min turnaround to get back on the bus.

We get off the bus at the venue and enter the famous Munich Olympiahalle. Dressing rooms everywhere. Each one has a shower.....oh and at last....some WiFi that works properly.

Russ has a couple of guests including Roland (the Duke) from Switzerland and he gives me Swiss chocolates for my birthday. Thanks Duke.

We are visited by some VIP guests of Manfred the promoter....they all make a beeline for Russ and signs a guitar.

At 6 we have an all tour party picture on stage, even me 😳.

Russ has an interview with Classic Rock in Germany at 6.30. I get a take away vegan chilli for him from catering as he doesn't have time to eat! Paul and Robert go on to an amazing reception....what a venue and what a crowd.

As usual Russ is due on after Midge who once again, gives a great vocal and guitar performance. I film Russ as he walks on and goes straight into "Voices". Russ trumps last nights performance and the crowd (yet again) are in the palm of his hand. I stand at the side of the stage and feel very privileged to watch this....at last Russ is enjoying the audience and venues he deserves.

While we wait for the finale, Jesse from Supertramp invites me for a beer (my first of the day) in his dressing room. I really like Jesse who has a dry sense of humour and of course extremely talented, great voice and multi instrumentalist. Finale done "Since You Been Gone" and it completes the perfect performance and day. The tired artists get on the bus and head for the hotel.

Upon arrival (after midnight), it takes me 45 mins to get him to his room due to more autograph and photo hunters.....we are all very tired. Tomorrow, we travel to Bochum (goodbye Bavaria it's been great) leaving for Bochum. It's an 8 hour journey (435km) but we can get dinner tomorrow

evening and who knows, even a glass of wine or two.

Day 9 - Monday 15th April

Day off!! A two night stay in a hotel!!!

It's a lie in too tonight as we won't leave until 3pm for the venue so that's total luxury. And an opportunity for a few steps tomorrow morning. But first we have to get the 8/9 hour journey out of the way. It goes fairly quickly

considering. Lunch is at a service station at 2pm....rock and roll!

Arrive in Bochum (it's near Dortmund) at 7pm after travelling all day. Robert knows an Italian within walking distance so

Joe Cassella, The Supertramp boys Jesse and John, Paul, Russ and myself take a 5 min walk in the cold (it's freezing) to the restaurant.

I get a birthday cake and another serenade!

We also see Tarja in the restaurant and Midge on the way back....he's had a Zoom call I think it's a late supper for him.

A quick nightcap and it's time for bed. Russ has an interview at 10am and I have been asked to coordinate it.

Sue: Here is that super finale with the whole company backing Russ on Since You Been Gone.

https://youtu.be/87VZFUnEM9s?si=fwif3PTNG9wtGKwm



DAVE'S COVER QUEST

This month's offering comes from a British singer and songwriter called Kevin O'Neill. Never heard of him? Well, if you've been following the **Russ Ballard Facebook** page, check out the guy watching on as Russ demonstrates the dance routine that The Roulettes were put through for their Summer Season at Bridlington in 1963. That's Kevin.

No.68



Angel by Robert Hart

British singer **Robert Hart** was born Kevin O'Neill in Bournemouth on 1st November 1958, and his beginnings in the music industry began when he signed to Island Records, collaborating with Chic's late bass guitarist and songwriter **Bernard Edwards** on several projects, including the soundtrack for the film The Burglar, starring Whoopi Goldberg. He then signed to Atlantic Records, which saw the release of his debut solo album **Cries and Whispers** in 1989, which featured songs co-written with **Chris Winter**, who we all know and respect through his work with Russ.

Robert's next move was to Hollywood Records, where he became the first English solo artist signing to the Disney owned record company. He worked with Russ Ballard, the pair co-writing a number of songs, which saw release in 1992 on his eponymous **Robert Hart** album.

This month's feature is one of those songs, **Angel**. I've chosen this particular song because Robert would later re-record the song as a single in 2005, as vocalist with **The Jones Gang**, the band formed by former Faces drummer **Kenney Jones**. The song was extremely successful in several countries, and is backed by another of their co-written songs, **Better than the Rest**.

Besides watching and admiring Russ's dancing skills, Robert has a strong rock pedigree, having worked with **Bad Company**, **Diesel**, and **Company of Snakes**, the band formed by former members of **Whitesnake**. He is currently the lead singer with **Manfred Mann's Earth Band**, who I was fortunate to see live a few years ago at The Great British Rock and Blues Festival in January 2016, as well as the Jones Gang at the same event a year later.

Video links to 'live' versions of Angel by Robert Hart himself, and The Jones Gang, are provided below.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kEjlsh6taiY



<u>Robert Hart - Angel - live in Oss, NL</u> 19 November 2022

Robert Hart with the song "Angel" live in Oss (Netherlands) on 19 November 2022. The song was originally written by Robert Hart and Russ Ballard for The Jones Gang and became a Number 1 hit in America in the year 2005. This video was filmed by me during Robert's concert with FRONTM3N, where he played it during his solo part of the show.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=1wGPz_svXcc

Finally, a reminder that Sven Kramer and Ian Street have recorded a podcast with Robert, which I have to admit I haven't had a chance to listen to yet. It is available at: <u>https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/russballardmusic/</u> <u>episodes/ROBERT-HART---The-Voices-Of-Russ-Ballard-Podcast--Episode-28-</u> <u>e2fbe20</u>