



(Header by Sven)

July 2024

A big welcome to our new readers. Please feel free to make a contribution to the newsletter.

After a big flurry of gigs in the last few months, life has become a bit quieter for Russ and he is back in the studio finishing tracks and making new music.

Many of you will have seen, via the Zombies social media, that Russ's former bandmate and friend, Rod Argent, has just retired from live performances and will concentrate on writing and recording in the future. We have a little tribute to Rod on his performing retirement and send him very best wishes.

Sue

THIS MONTH - RUSS'S DIARY

I wish Rod Argent all the very best...I look forward to hearing some great new songs from him in the coming months and years.

'Bridges To Classics'

On June 8th I played a Festival in Germany. It was similar to the 'Rock Meets Classic' tour, however, 'Bridges To Classics' was slanted more toward Classical....The great Classical musician/writer, Handel, was born there, and so, the festival has been held for 41 years as a homage to him.

I had Zoom call two months before, with Conductor, Bernd, Promoter, Guiseppe Cassella, and arranger and Keyboard player, Benni....They said they would like me to sing four or five songs, however, they would like to include other songs of mine as a tribute, but members of the choir would sing them. That was fine with me, as the singers were really top class....In the end the orchestra and Choir played and sang brilliant versions of 'I Surrender,' (I'm sure Ritchie Blackmore's Rainbow would have cheered 😊). Then there was 'I Know There's Something Going On', which Abba's Frida took in to the charts. I was standing backstage, but I could hear the crowd singing along. Then came "So You Win Again' - 'New York Groove', and lastly, 'The Border', a song that I wrote for America. When I produced the America version, I used The London Symphony Orchestra ,however, Bernd and The Handel Orchestra were equal to it. I want to thank all those wonderful musicians, and people behind the scenes for making The Handel Festival a fabulous memory, which will always be there.

Russ medley by the choir: <https://youtu.be/rKKcuQ7Ju8Y?si=0OWOh8hzilU6ahxY>

RUSS - LIFE STORIES

Hi, I'm continuing the biog from 1964, having completed a 'one nighter tour', with 'The Searchers' - 'Dave Berry and The Cruisers', we went again into Abbey Road Studios to make more singles with Adam, both Chris Andrews songs, 'If He Tells You' and 'I Love Being in Love With You'. The songs had good melodies but the sales took a downward turn, and Evie found a Bacharach and David song, which was already a hit in America for Lou Johnson. Tel liked the song and we recorded it, in studio 3 at Abbey Road. The song was 'Message To Martha', a downbeat song, which again, we didn't play on, however we did sing backing vocals, along with three young women, who seemed to be doing most sessions in the mid sixties.

When it was released the record received good reviews, and became a top ten hit. We appeared on all the usual radio and tv shows like 'Easy Beat' and 'Parade of the Pops' on radio, and TV shows like 'Thank Your Lucky Stars' and 'Ready Steady Go'. We also continued with one nighters. Tel was taking more time off, and the problem was, he could afford not to work, but we couldn't. Sometimes, he would take three or four weeks off.to be continued.

Message To Martha: <https://youtu.be/YTmX3C75TyE?si=2kUN16FV1lZi0t-u>

ROD ARGENT

by Dave

Sad news for Argent fans this week. The Zombies have announced that Rod Argent suffered a stroke recently, after returning from a tour of the States. As a consequence, Rod is retiring from live touring with immediate effect. We will truly miss his live performances, something we've become used to since Colin Blunstone coaxed him back onto 'the road' in the year 2000.

Rod will spend the next few months undergoing recovery, and it was some consolation and encouraging to hear that the day after he left hospital, he took to his piano. It just goes to show, you can't keep a good man down. I'm sure all newsletter readers will join me in wishing Rod a full and speedy recovery and offer our best wishes to his immediate family including his wife Cathy, and children Elsa and Mark and grandchildren.

Hopefully Rod will be able to continue writing and recording in his studio, and all being well, we will get to hear more of his music in the future.

INTERVIEW OF THE MONTH

Earlier this year Russ did a long online interview. This has been put up on YouTube under different platforms and in different sections. If you can find other parts of the interview, they sometimes overlap. Here is around ten minutes of Russ talking about Since You Been Gone on the channel Backstage Pass Rock-News.

<https://youtu.be/rkpauW2jO1k?si=88-CGPjb4lF0k0XD>



LYRIC OF THE MONTH

Do you know which song these upbeat lyrics are from? Here is a clue - 1985.

**Get up, get up, get back on your feet
Bang the drum and start the beat
Get out, get out, get out of your seat
Dance away your troubles out on the street**

Zoom down to the end of the newsletter for the answer.

DAVE'S ARTICLE

Uncharted Territory

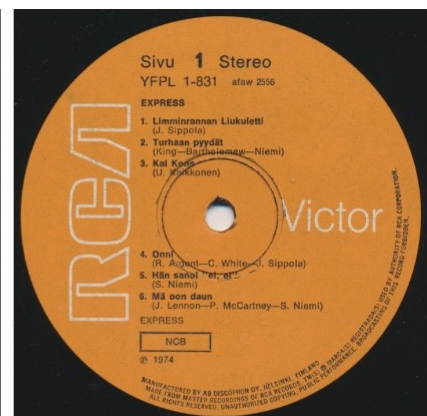
All the time, whether it be comments made on Facebook, a recent rock journal interview or maybe an old press article from an earlier period of his career, I keep seeing Russ described as “underrated”. Its not something I like to see. For sure, I often look back at that time after Russ left **Argent** and reflect on those occasions when his new single releases such as **Since You Been Gone** and **Treat Her Right** were announced in the music papers with a half page advert placed by Epic records and selected as BBC Radio One’s “**Record of the Week**”. Indeed, even if one of his singles didn’t pick up a Record of the Week award, it invariably made it onto the Radio One playlist, which guaranteed that the record would receive lots of airplay, and an increased chance of becoming a chart hit. So often, myself and a few other Russ Ballard fans I knew at the time, would buy the Record Mirror to study the latest Top 100 “official” chart, to see if the latest Russ Ballard offering had crept into the lower reaches, from whence we could watch it rise in the coming weeks to the point of an appearance on BBC’s Top of the Pops. Time after time, it failed to happen, though **On the Rebound** and **Voices** did make the lower reaches. Simultaneously, other artists like **Hot Chocolate**, **Kandidate**, **Elkie Brooks** and **Rainbow** found big chart successes on the back of his compositions. It was a frustration, not least because without a hit, Russ was likely to remain, pretty much, invisible. No appearances on **Top of the Pops**, comparatively little in the way of music paper coverage, and certainly no hope of any major concert hall tours. Whilst, to this day, I can’t understand why such a talented singer, songwriter and multi-instrumentalist, with the pop start “look”, didn’t make it to the very top, I also wonder how things might have been had things panned out differently. One

major chart hit can change an artist's overnight. As Ian Gillan of Deep Purple once explained, "it changes your entire life. It changes your environment. It changes the people you're mixing with. Your friends are pushed aside as new friends take over. You're needed every minute of every day for something or another, and you have more money than you've ever dreamt of and a lot of new friends to show you how to spend it". Similarly, Marc Bolan once explained, everyone is with you on the journey to stardom, but once you are at the top, nobody is there to help you deal with it, and certainly not when you've peaked and, on the back down. It's easy to see how so many stars become casualties. Because of that, I take some consolation that Russ chose family over stardom. Yes, I still believe that had he been more visible on the concert circuit, it might have helped achieve the breakthrough, but I flatly disagree with comments that Russ is underrated. On the contrary, I believe Russ is very highly rated, especially among his peers. As for Russ himself, I'm sure if he had his time again, he wouldn't want to do things differently, though I've no doubt that he wouldn't have turned his nose up if just one of those two minor hits had crept a little higher in those Record Mirror charts.

DAVE'S COVER QUEST

With the sad news of Rod Argent's current health issues, it's maybe an appropriate time to feature a cover of a song that featured on Argent's **All Together Now** album.

No.71



Kova kundi Raksilasta by Express

Finnish pop rock band **Express** released their self-titled album in 1974 on RCA.

The line-up of the band as follows:

- Bass, Vocals – Pekka Huttunen
- Drums – Jouni Kesti
- Guitar, Vocals – Seppo Niemi

- Piano, Organ – Urpo Kaikkonen
- Producer – Heikki Virtanen
- Recorded By – Jouko Ahera
- Violin, Lead Vocals – Juhani Sippola

Kova kundi Raksilasta, as you will recognise on hearing it, is a cover of Argent's **He's a Dynamo**, with lyrics re-written by lead vocalist Juhani Sippola, giving him a co-writing credit with Russ Ballard in the process, just as **Kiss** did with **God Gave Rock and Roll to You**.

Not only did Express cover **He's a Dynamo** on their album, but the band also recorded their interpretation of one of Rod Argent and Chris White's songs from the first Argent LP. **Onni** is their version of the beautiful song **Bring You Joy**, with lyrics again credited to Sippola.

Their album features a mix of covers and self-written material. They have an active You Tube page. Here are links to the two Argent covers:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nnpfCh7fCRY> (He's a Dynamo)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CopYlp6HAh8> (Bring You Joy)

LYRIC OF THE MONTH - ANSWER

Your Time Is Gonna Come from the album, **The Fire Still Burns**. Did you know? Try singing those lyrics now.

<https://youtu.be/o5e8Blp9a4E?si=czGYKrc0xgYZaQTf>

