



(Header by Sven)

Ian's Tour Blog - Russ Ballard tour DE and CH 2025

Day One-Sunday 27th April

Me and the band (Roly Jones, PJ Phillips, Marc Rapson & Johnny Miller) meet at Russ's house at midday in readiness for our airport transfer. With all guitars, keyboards and a snare drum plus cases to get us through two weeks, the van is in overload.

RyanAir check in has never been so much fun with all that lot 🤪



(Photo by Ian)

A quick 75 minute flight and we are in Hamburg and greeted by Patrik and Michael Bisping from [a.s.s.concerts](#) . The weather looks like it's going to be kind to us. Unusual for Hamburg we are told.... Patrik and Michael take us to dinner at a local Indian (where else!) and the food is great. The Duke (Roland Hertzog) joins us and distributes his usual Swiss chocolate gifts. 🍫 . Time after for a night cap at the hotel. 🍷

Day Two-Monday 28th April

A nice leisurely day for the guys today as we are already in situ and sound check is not until 4pm. Russ is invited to spend the morning with his old friend Michael and they catch up in the sunshine.

Sven and Yasmine Kramer are here for the gig and we see them at breakfast. (We saw them briefly last night when we arrived too). Also a lady from Florida, a fan from Argent days, Nancy King ,has flown over for the first 3 gigs, and was introduced to Russ.

I go with Robin (our brilliant back line stage man and driver) to grab the Merch boxes that have been delivered to a.s.s. There are a lot of boxes! Back to the hotel and Russ is back from his sightseeing trip with Michael, they had a great morning together but Russ has to sign 50 Vinyl and 50 CDs for the Merch stand tonight.

During lunch there's a mystery phone call, you will have to wait for Munich to find out more.

4pm...sound check...

Apart from the Holey guitar, Russ has brought with him a Gibson Les Paul Standard 1958, 2001 Reissue that was previously owned by the late, great Gary Moore. He tests both guitarsand they sound amazing....

We are running behind and it's a rush to order in our food for dinner and fitting in an interview Russ has with Dirk Leukroth NDR local radio. It's a challenge to find a room that's quiet enough as Michael Voss (support act) is now sound checking.

IT'S ONLY MONEY
NEW YORK GROOVE
PLAYING WITH FIRE
DREAM ON
IN THE NIGHT
RESURRECTION
ON THE REBOUND
FIRE STILL BURNS
COURAGEOUS
LIAR
WOMAN LIKE YOU
NO MORE THE FOOL
HOLD YOUR HEAD UP
SINCE U BEEN GONE
VOICES
TWO SILHOUETTES
CAN'T HEAR YOU NO MORE
ENCORE
GOD GAVE RNR TO YOU

SHOWTIME

The audience are a lively bunch and well up for it. Russ walks on stage and the band rip into “It’s Only Money” the Argent classic. The tour is well and truly underway.

“Resurrection” and “Courageous” the new tracks from “Songs >From The Warehouse” make their live debut and are well received.

After the show Russ is covered in towels as he relaxes in his dressing room... where Shuji Tohyama, who has flown from the UK for the show gets to meet him, all arranged beforehand by Sue Robinson.



(Photo by Ian)

The Merch sales have gone well on our first night! T.Shirts and signed CDs are the biggest sellers. If you are coming to any gigs, remember it's CASH ONLY.

After Robin has packed everything away and loaded up the van, we leave the venue just before midnight....I guess we got to bed around 1am. We are leaving for Nuremberg in the morning and it's a gruelling journey to the south. Probably around 9 hours as the bus can only be driven at reduced speed because of all our gear on the trailer.

Everyone is really looking forward to the next two gigs (Nuremberg and Munich) which are being filmed and recorded for a future DVD release.

Signing off now....writing this on the bus during the 9 hour journey.....it's only rock and roll but we like it.....

Day Three-Tuesday 29th April

So we wake up and prepare to undertake the longest journey of the tour by far. Robin our front line man and driver tells me it could take up to 9 hours....

It actually goes quite quickly given the banter on the coach and various other shenanigans. We are also treated to PJ's phone making a sound whenever somebody arrives at his house....🤔

We have a comfort break at not a particularly salubrious place (by the bins 🤔) but Russ entertains us with his stretching routine. John also entertains the coach with his rendition of AC/DC singing the "Hokey Cokey".

We arrive in Nurnberg at 5.30 pm and get straight to our rooms. We have a Thai meal booked for us in town, so that's something to look forward to after the journey.

A fun night is had by all, and we return to the hotel ready for our beds, and of course, it's night one of the DVD filming and recording tomorrow....

Day Four-Wednesday 30th April

The weather is glorious, but the down side is that the band are going to be hot on stage tonight.

I need to get some more CDs and Vinyl signed...so Marc very kindly helps me remove the shrink wraps....then Mr. Ballard once again does the signing honours. Silver and Gold Sharpies seem the best.



After a walk in the park (so rock and roll...🎸) it's time to get on the bus for the venue.

The place looks amazing, and we are greeted by Hubert Pflumm, who is the director of the video project. This is the first of two shows for a DVD and possible live album release. We met Hubert at "Rock Meets Classic" last year, and he films their shows every year. He has also hired the services of a top sound recording engineer to ensure we capture the best sound quality. No less than 20 channels are available for the sound mix. The band has to wear the same clothing on stage tonight and tomorrow, just in case the footage is utilised across both venues. Hubert records the soundcheck, and we watch it back...the camera angles are amazing8 cameras in all, and only two are humans!





After setting up the Merch stand, and we entice Russ for some fun pictures. The venue catering do us proud ,and we eat some lovely food, sitting outside in the sunshine.

I bump into Mario Gebert, the Rock Meets Classic conductor who is here for the show.

At 8.45, Russ goes on stage to great crowd, superb atmosphere, and very, very hot. (The low ceiling doesn't help) The intro was a little more nerve-wracking than usual given the film cameras, but I think it goes ok. Russ initially has technical problems with his pedals but quickly recovers to deliver a blistering set in the heat. Hubert is happy!

When the band comes off stage after "I Can't Hear You No More", I have some water and towels ready for Russ.....he needs it!

We finally leave the venue at gone midnight...all aboard the bus and thoughts now go towards tomorrowMunich. It's film night again and probably the largest audience we will have on the tour.

Oh, and Robert Hart is imminent....   

Day 5 Thursday May 1st

After breakfast, it's time to board the bus again. Today is a fairly short trip to Munich and excitement is building. Russ always goes down a storm there and has a special fondness for the place.

However, we don't have a great start to the day....Russ has left his Electric Toothbrush behind (although I get the blame for not checking his bathroom!) I manage to get a couple of "travelling" single use ones from the hotel to keep him going.

On route we stop at a service station and Roly and I see toothbrushes and toothpaste for sale. We use the discount voucher provided by the toilets (if you go to the loo in German service stations, it cost a euro....you get a receipt which is worth one euro, redeemable against purchases on site). I get back to the bus feeling pleased with myself that I have solved Russ's teeth cleaning dilemma (a "gap" in the market?

😄) only to discover he saw them too and bought a set. "Now I've got four" he says.....😬😬

Stop Press.....he found it. It was in his bag, he had it all the time!!!!

Robert Hart texts to say that he's landed and waiting for his driver. It's around 2pm. He's staying at our hotel.

We want to get to the venue early as Russ wants to make sure his pedal board is working properly. Having arrived at the venue gate (which is closed!) and dropped off by our taxi, I recognise Alex Werkmeister from "My Rock World" who greets us. Liam and Natasha Wilson have also flown from Ireland for the gig great to see them again. Russ signs photos and Vinyl from fans waiting patiently for him.

After dropping stuff off in the dressing room it's time to test the guitar and the pedal....sounds great.



Then...there's a noise from the back of the hall and it's Robert Hart making a grand entrance...he is off to grab "Binky" (Russ)....on the stage (while he's playing) and get a cuddle. Old friends😂

!



They then rehearse the songs they plan to sing. They are doing "Since You Been Gone" and "God Gave Rock And Roll To You".

After dinner in the dressing rooms it's almost showtime. I film Russ and the band on their way to the stage which who knows, might be used on the DVD. The "human" camera operators are in place and it's time for the intro. Whoops I walk on and accidentally pick up PJ's mic (there is an extra one on stage for Robert) and it's not switched on.....then I go on Russ's and it works fine. Luckily Hubert the DVD director is master of a good edit.

After keeping Robert company backstage for a little whilemy phone rings....Paul Shortino is on the phone from Las Vegas...video call too! I tell him he can't speak to Russ at the moment as he's onstage but he can speak to Robert! I head to the dressing room and the two of them catch up in the only way they can.....😂

Russ and the band totally smash it all evening and Robert's appearance is the icing on the cake...if you weren't there well, look out for the DVD later this year.....🙏

It's time to head back to the hotel as we are off to Ludwigsburg tomorrow, for our third gig in a row! Record night for Merch sales! Danke Munchen!

Day 6 - Friday May 2nd

Ludwigsburg....what a lovely place!

We are playing at the Scala Theatre this evening and it's exactly that, a theatre style setting (seated) with tons of character.



The balcony is closed off but they allow me access and it's a brilliant view of the stage so I filmed a few songs and took some pictures. The sound is really good in the hall.

Merch is selling well....we have new RB T.Shirts, Tote Bags, Hats and of course a double CD of the new album...all personally signed by Russ. Unfortunately, the vinyl has sold out in Munich...😞

Day 7 - Saturday May 3rd

After three gigs in a row it's a well deserved day off for Russ and the band. We head for the town of Karlsruhe where we are playing tomorrow.

When we arrive it's free time until dinner this evening (which is a curry).

Our rooms are not quite ready so the band amuse themselves by sitting in some rather grand chairs in reception.



Marc heads for town on a Pokémon hunt....he and his son collect them and he's already had a record haul on this trip.

He also manages to go to the local Zoo...Robin takes him as it's his manor.

Russ and I go for a walk and check out the restaurant this evening to make sure it exists....it does! We also make a note of the bar next door and decide it's a good meeting place for a pre curry beer this evening. Good decision.

They are showing Borussia Dortmund on a big screen outside and we watch in the sunshine. Oh and we give Paul Shortino a call on speaker and he entertains the Germans in our vicinityif only they knew.....😂😂😂

The curry is fantastic , and made even better by the head waiter who has a magnificent moustache (Russ tells him and thanks him for being such a great host)..well done that man.

Robin says to me he wants “that starter we had in Hamburg”.....Chicken Tikka it is then.

Day 8 - Sunday May 4th

Day off done and it's back to the music.....

Russ has to sign another bunch of CDs at the hotel...they are selling well on the merch stand. He does a special signing for his great Portuguese friend, Emanuel D and his Father.

In the dressing room Russ passes time watching his favourite football team, Tottenham Hotspur, play West Ham...soon joined by John, another Spurs fan.



There are some nice Vegan snacks for Russ in the fridge.....

The temperature has dropped significantly and it's damp outsidewhere has that Bavarian weather gone?

It's Robin's home town gig and his Mum and partner are here to see him in action. Great picture of him taking it easy on his "Throne"He has done a brilliant job of driving us and the equipment around.

Gig goes extremely well and Russ as always looking the part, tonight in a "Fillmore" T. Shirt which is a nod to the 70s when Argent played Fillmore East and West...🎸🍌

Day 9 - Monday May 5th

We leave for Augsburg this morning.....this venue is a real fans favourite and Russ always sells out here. Tonight is no exception and the management tell me we could have done two nights....

Upon arrival we hear that the boys from the band Cutting Crew (who played here the night before with Maggie Reilly) have stayed behind especially to see Russ and the band this evening. Iconic venue. Before the band go in they do a "huddle" and hype each up with "boxing" ringside style dialogue. Not that I can repeat (or understand!) it

Another fantastic performance tonight and the audience are packed like sardines loving every minute.

Afterwards Nick Van Eede and the guys from Cutting Crew come back stage (it must have been something we said....). They are great fun and everyone enjoys a beer or two with them before heading back to the hotel.



Day 10 - Tuesday May 6th

So it's off to Freiburg today.....and quite a long journey too. Lots of bathroom motorway breaks so the one Euro vouchers help pay for the refreshments. That said we do have a "Van snack box" where any left over chocolate is placed. Oh and crisps too. I find out that John the drummer is a crisp monster like me.

Sore throats starting to kick in. PJ our fab bass man and very funny chap has some magnificent throat sweets that he has been using for years and tells me that Tom Jones put him on to them when he played with him.

I film the band at sound check playing "New York Groove" without Russ...

Tonight's food is a "buy out" which means that the venue pays for us to frequent a local restaurant and we head to an Italian where the boys have an enjoyable meal. I leave the gathering early to meet tonight's Merch seller as it's nearly 7 o'clock and the audience are about to enter the venue.

We have mixed luck on stage tonight. Marc splits his finger open during "Hold Your Head Up" and I leg it to the dressing room to get his plasters. He's properly prepared as it's happened before. The keys need to be wiped as blood has found its way on to them.

I catch our back line man Robin sitting down on the job again ...he's got this role properly sussed!

The third of three consecutive shows done....day off tomorrow and one more gig to go. Big travel day and an early start.

Day 11 - Wednesday May 7th

It's an 8.30 departure from the hotel and we head for the motorway....it's time to cross the German/Swiss border. Last gig tomorrow and it's in Rubigen, Switzerland.

Lots of naps on the coach as the guys get some well deserved rest. Marc and John make rolls at breakfast especially for the journey.

When we arrive we find out the hotel in Switzerland has a swimming pool and sauna, gym etc....However, all of us go to our rooms to crash out and catch up on some sleep.....not Mr. Ballard...I leave him in the gym ("I'm just gonna have a few mins exercise down here, I'll see you later"). Speechless.

I go to my room to check on everyone for tomorrow's flight. The wifi isn't the best and I get all the way to the end and it crashesI have to start over again....6 people, passport details, baggage, you name it ...

Oh and by the way the hotel is proper old schoolnamely by way of the keys ...made of concrete and if you go out they need to be left at reception "Fawlty Towers" style. I personally think it's only because the staff voices can say.."I got the Key, I got the Key". Anyway, let's not look back, look straight ahead....

Whilst it's a travel day, it's also a day off so I've booked an Italian restaurant tonight in the town centre. John suggests we meet for a drink in the hotel bar before dinner. They provide crispsJohn and I consume them.

We want to say thank you to Robin for being such a great back line support on the tour. We decide the best way to do it is provide some hotel slippers as he seems to love wearing them.....Russ tells me he has a couple in his case so he brings a pair to the bar. I provide the black marker and everyone signs one for him.....no expense spared. Robin is of course present at the bar while this is going on but there is some very discreet "pass the slipper under the table" taking place.



We have a great meal.....Russ presents Robin with his slippers (goodness knows what the other diners must have thought!

😬😬😬😬)....after the presentation Robin is asked if he will keep themhe replied “no, I’m putting them on eBay”.

😬😬....he’s gonna go far this lad!

John can’t concentrate this evening as he’s hoping Arsenal lose in the Champions League semis which has already kicked off. We watch some of it in the restaurant bar before getting in a cab back to the hotel.

At the hotel the Arsenal game is still going on and as we arrive (22.40 local time) it’s showing in the hotel bar. Excellent. Well, apart from the fact that the lady behind the bar sees us coming and says sorry we are closing, no drinks. Oh, can we stay and watch the game we ask? “No, I’m turning it off in a minute”. 🏟️ We would like to thank the hotel for their unwavering support. Look out for the TripAdvisor reviews from myself and PJ.

An early night then.....

Day 12 - Thursday May 8th

Final gig day!! 😬😬

We have some free time before soundcheck.....so the guys chill. I suggest to Russ that we go into Bern old town.....we get a tram ...(Russ tells me it was his first time on one), walk around the museum building and the view in the distance is phenomenal. We have a light lunch in town before heading back on the tram. I am keen to ensure I get the tram number and direction right.....as it turns out it was the right one, just follow the signs for Wankdorf 😬 however, an English voice behind us sees me studying the map and says “can I help you?”. A lady from Blackpool no less!! Been living in Switzerland for 30 years.

She probably got home and said to her husband "Hey guess who I saw on the Tram today? It was what's his name....that bloke who sold 100m records and gave rock and roll to you " 😬

And what an amazing venue to finish with.... Mühle Hunziken in Rubigen, near Bern.

We arrive and even the garden is errr, different. John has a selfie with a scary statue.

Soundcheck and then Russ and the band rehearse with our support guys Michael Voss and Vanessa Van de Forst as they are coming on stage tonight to sing “Since You Been Gone” as an end of tour celebration. 🎉

We also all have an "end of tour" photo on the stage.



Afterwards, I decide to make a video of the venue simply walking around...half way through I bump into PJ and he contributes in the way only PJ can..... 😏 ... Lovely boy. It's five mins long but worth a look to appreciate the quirkiness ... (See Facebook)

The boys are on fire 🔥 tonight....and a nervous John is extremely happy to hear Spurs have taken the lead away from home in the second leg of the Europa semi. Could they be on the way to the final?

The band really enjoy the concert and afterwards it feels like a party atmosphere backstage. John is now over the moon....it's Spurs V. Manchester United in the Europa League Final.

Lovely food supplied by the venue by the way....

It's all over.....and it's an 8am start tomorrow....Zurich airport bound. Where did all that time go.

Day 13 - Friday May 9th

An early start after breakfast. Russ as usual, is first down.

Russ has a sore throat...he said he felt it going last night.

Traffic and road works contribute to a delayed journey that leaves me more than a little concerned for missing the flight but we make it.

In London, we have a large Ballardmobile waiting for us thanks to Denny. John however makes his own way on the tube, snare drum in hand. Everyone else jumps into the van and we head back to Russ's where all the cars are parked.

It's over....until the next time.

My thanks to the band for their understanding (no longer a Tour Manager virgin as John tells me) and for being such unbelievable musicians and top blokes.

Also to Robin, maturity beyond his years and attention to detail. (Let me know how much you get for the slippers on EBay 😊).

Thanks to Denny for all her hard work behind the scenes. Carole, Dave and Sue for flying the RGB flag as always. Sven for his usual design and other genius.

Robert Hart for his guest appearance....just look at you!

And finally, my thanks to Russ for his faith and trust (there's a song lyric there) and for being an example for us all in so many ways.

See you back in Germany in July!!! 