

RAY RUSSELL BIO

Guitarist-composer Ray Russell has enjoyed two distinct careers: one as an esteemed session player and award-winning film and television composer, another as an ingenious guitar experimentalist and free-thinking collaborator. Russell made his professional debut as Vic Flick's replacement in the John Barry Seven, with whom he twanged the famous James Bond theme in several Barry-scored films, beginning with 1962's *Dr. No*. He went on to play a stew of jazz, R&B, and other styles with Georgie Fame and the Blue Flames, the Graham Bond Organisation, and the Mike Gibbs Band, where he worked alongside Chris Spedding and Jack Bruce. As an indefatigable session musician, he has recorded and/or toured with Lulu, Paul McCartney, Cat Stevens, Van Morrison, Bryan Ferry, David Bowie, Phil Collins, Scott Walker, Art Garfunkel, Marvin Gaye, Heaven 17, and Tina Turner (check out "Let's Stay Together" on *Private Dancer*). His exquisite playing on *TIME OF THE LAST PERSECUTION* (1971) clinched Bill Fay's position in the cult-folkie pantheon.

Russell was also part of the vibrant London jazz scene that revolved around Ronnie Scott's club. His 1968 solo debut, *TURN CIRCLE*, was the first of a series of increasingly free-wheeling albums ripe for rediscovery. *DRAGON HILL* (1969), *RITES AND RITUALS* (1971), *JUNE 11TH 1971: LIVE AT THE ICA* (1971), and *SECRET ASYLUM* (1973) burst at the seams with compositional invention, soundscaping expertise (he's reputedly the first English guitarist with a pedal-board setup), and a flair for collaborative mind-melding. During the seventies he played with prog-rockers and/or fusioners Mouse, Nucleus, and Rock Workshop.

He continued to record in a jazz-fusion vein throughout the '80s and '90s, employing long, swooping tones, lyrical meditations, sudden mood changes, Celtic fantasias, and old-fashioned shredding on albums like *WHY NOT NOW* (1988), *THIS SIDE UP* (1989), and *GUITARS FROM MARS* (1990). Russell returned to his modernist roots on *GOODBYE SVENGALI* (2006), a tribute to Gil Evans, with whom he'd played during the '80s. *NOW, MORE THAN EVER* (2013) offered Russell's restless, bristling jazz-rock conceptions and set the stage for *CELESTIAL SQUID* (2016), a collaboration with California avant-guitarist Henry Kaiser that marked a majestic return to Russell's outer-limits sensibility. Russell joined Kaiser again for *THE DUKES OF BEDFORD* (2020), a spontaneous live adventure featuring guitar-daredevil kinsman John Russell and bassist Olie Brice.