



# The LORDS of 52nd STREET



## **RUSSELL JAVORS**

Russell Javors was born in Brooklyn on Friday the 13th, June 1952. Soon after, his family moved to Plainview where Russell spent his childhood. After seeing “The Beatles” perform on “The Ed Sullivan Show,” Russell decided to devote his life to music. In Junior High School, Russell’s band, “The Aggregation” recorded original songs and played in many of the local Battle of the Bands competitions.

At 15, Russell began going to a popular club in Plainview called, “My House” where many local bands performed. Two of his favorite bands were “The Hassles,” featuring Billy Joel and “The New Rock Workshop,” featuring Liberty DeVitto. Russell was so impressed by a musician in one of those bands that he was determined to play with him. So, Russell and Liberty became friends and spent many afternoons at Liberty’s house in Seaford trying to put a band together.

In high school, the great Syosset keyboard player, Dean Kraus, introduced Russell to Doug Stegmeyer. By that time, Russell had written quite a few original songs and was looking for musicians to bring them to life. Russell’s parents, Geraldine and Sol, were tremendously supportive and their house became a haven for Russell’s musician friends. He and Plainview guitarist, Howie Emerson, would sit for hours-on-end working out guitar parts and arrangements to Russell’s songs.

Eventually Russell, Howie, Lib and Doug would all get together to play. Doug’s brother, Al Stegmeyer, a musician and an accomplished engineer, was very generous to Doug and the guys. Thanks to Al, the group was fortunate to get recording experience laying down tracks in a studio at de Servisky Center in Old Westbury where Al was working. These tracks were the beginning of the chemistry the guys developed as a recording band. This was the band that would eventually be known as “Topper.”

In 1972, Howie Emerson played some of Russell’s songs to veteran Atlanta producer, Buddy Buie. Buddy flew Russell and Howie to Atlanta for an audition and immediately offered Russell a record deal with the provision that the Atlanta Rhythm Section be the back-up band. Even though Russell admired the work of the Atlanta Rhythm Section, he turned down the deal because he believed so strongly in the musicians he was already working with. But, getting another record deal didn’t turn out to be as easy as Russell thought it would be. In fact, he was even turned down by fellow inductee, Clive Davis, at Arista. The band continued to play in and out of the studio, but they struggled.

In 1973, Russell and Doug shared a house in Dix Hills with Russell’s then girlfriend, Suzanne, where they could devote themselves to their music. In 1974, Russell and Suzanne were married and Doug was Russell’s best man. To Russell, this was more than a band – It was like a family. It was in 1974 that Doug did a tour with Billy Joel and soon became an important part of Billy’s future. In 1976 when Billy decided to record with New York musicians, he turned to Doug. Doug brought Liberty in first to lay down the basic tracks to Turnstiles. Later, Howie and Russell came aboard to add the guitars. At the same time, Doug also brought Richie Cannata into the fold.

After the Turnstiles tour in 1977, Russell signed a publishing deal with 20th Century Music and his friend and advisor, Charlie Brucia, raised money for a recording project. Russell, Lib, Doug, Howie and even Billy recorded with Russell during the same period Billy was recording the Stranger album. One of the songs from these sessions “All Because of You” would later appear on Karen Carpenter’s solo album, along with another one of Russell’s songs.

Through Billy, Russell went on to live his rock ‘n’ roll dream of playing rhythm guitar with the band he loved, both on records and on the road. His staccato rhythm is the pulse of “Still Rock And Roll,” “Pressure,” and “Sometimes A Fantasy.” His classic lick on “You May Be Right” sets the table for one of Billy’s best-loved rockers. His sensitive acoustic guitar on “Goodnight Saigon” which takes the listener into the barracks as the Vietnam story unfolds, and his “in the pocket” rhythm on “Keeping the Faith” are just a small sample of what Russell has contributed to Billy’s music.

Away from Billy, Russell has also worked with artists such as Karen Carpenter, Slash, Phoebe Snow, Iggy Pop, and others. After leaving Billy’s band, Russell pursued other interests. He wrote and developed shows for television, became involved in the toy industry and eventually settled in Hong Kong where he became a Vice President of a large Chinese manufacturing company. He later handled Entertainment Relations for Gibson Guitar Company throughout Asia. Hong Kong became Russell and Suzanne’s second home, where they spent many wonderful years making lots of great friends and fond memories. Russell even sat in with Billy during his first ever Hong Kong concert.

In March of 2014, Russell and Suzanne celebrated their 40th Wedding Anniversary. Their son Jesse, a talented guitar player in his own right, is living in Knoxville, Tennessee with his wife Lauren. Russell and Suzanne are the proud grandparents of Jake and Luke Javors. Russell is currently working in television. He continues to write songs and work on his music, a passion that has always been his first priority – other than the New York Yankees, who run a close second!