



Bio information: **RAY RUSSELL**

Title: ***DANGEROUS BENDS*** (Cuneiform Rune 553)

Format: CD / DIGITAL

www.cuneiformrecords.com

FILE UNDER: **ELECTRIC JAZZ / JAZZ ROCK FUSION**

**British Guitar Hero
RAY RUSSELL
Navigates *DANGEROUS BENDS*
With a Sleek Ensemble of U.K. Studio Heavyweights
Including Longtime Collaborator SIMON PHILLIPS**

*"I believe in the sonic signature. Gil Evans used to say,
'Everyone has a cry. Without it, only notes come out of the instrument.'"* – Ray Russell

The first thing you're likely to notice when you hear **Ray Russell's *Dangerous Bends*** is his sound, his extraordinary guitar sound. On guitar, he flies at heights only attempted by **David Gilmour's** soaring melodies, navigating musical twists and turns with the nuanced filigree of **Jeff Beck** and the angular fluidity of **Allan Holdsworth**. No surprise, though: This is no list of heroes; Jeff Beck, Allan Holdsworth and David Gilmour are Russell's coequals, his peers. And while Russell's name might not have reached the same kind of household status as that trio of legends, his guitar playing has.

You've heard the teenage Russell's guitar on vintage **James Bond** soundtracks, seven films starring **Sean Connery** and **Roger Moore** recorded back in the '60s and '70s when Russell was a member of the **John Barry Seven**. His presence accompanying, producing and/or composing for the silver screen spans his career—you can even hear him on the soundtrack to the modern comedy classic ***Anchorman***. His film and TV projects have received awards from the **Royal Television Society**, **OFTA** (Online Film & Television Association), **BAFTA** (*A Touch of Frost*), **Oxford International Film Festival** (*One Note at a Time*), **ASCAP** ("Most Used Music in an American TV Series" for *Hard Copy's* "New Blood"), **British Phonographic Industry** (*Rock Follies 1976 & 1977*), **MIP** and other professional bodies.

But Russell's list of first-call studio and stage credits may still supersede that work. To only briefly touch on his credits feels like an impossible task, with names like **Tina Turner** (*Private Dancer* [5 times Platinum!], *Let's Stay Together*), **Heaven 17** (*The Luxury Gap*, *How Men Are*), **George Harrison** (*Hunting of the Snark*; *Monty Python's Life of Brian* & other **HandMade Films**), **Phil Collins** (*You Can't Hurry Love*, *One More Night*), **Cat Stevens** (1967 tour w **Jimi Hendrix Experience**), **Robert Plant** (*The Honeydrippers*), **Art Garfunkle** (*Bright Eyes*) and **David Bowie** (*Space Odyssey*, *Labyrinth*) vying for mention.

Russell has used his own name to release records that appeal more to his personal forward-leaning tendencies. His albums have captured the rapt attention of taste-making experimental cognoscenti such as **Jim O'Rourke**, who has famously praised Russell and overseen archival releases. On ***Dangerous Bends***, his newest studio recording, he continues to forge ahead, his ever-evolving Strat sound on full display, making a case that though he's a player who quite literally has done it all, there's still more to discover.

Dangerous Bends is Russell's fourth album as bandleader/composer/guitarist on Washington DC's **Cuneiform Records**, following the studio albums ***Fluid Architecture*** (2020) and ***Goodbye Svengali*** (his 2006 tribute to Gil Evans), and Cuneiform's 2021 reissue of Russell's 1972 ***Secret Asylum***. In addition, Cuneiform released two of Russell collaborative projects: ***Stacked*** (2026), a live improv recording by Russell, drummer **Eddie Prevost** and guitarist **Nathan Moore**), and ***Celestial Squid***, an avant-improv project he co-led with guitarist **Henry Kaiser** and a band. Russell also appears on Cuneiform's archival **Nucleus** release, ***Live in Bremen***, featuring recordings from 1972.

Russell's inspiration for ***Dangerous Bends*** was to do a quintet record mostly live off the floor, sharing the melodic frontline with

saxophonist **Tim Whitehead** (**Nucleus**, **Loose Tubes**). For a rhythm section, he tapped **Laurence Cottle** (**Black Sabbath**, **Bill Bruford**) for the bass slot, **Jim Watson** (**Kurt Elling**, **Sting**) on keys, and drummer **Ian Palmer** (**Randy Brecker**, **Climax Blues Band**) for most of the record, who collectively provide what he calls “a telepathic thing—they know where you’re going when you start.”

That connection between players lends an airy, agile feel to the performances on *Dangerous Bends*—a feeling of sleekly navigating the dynamic peaks and valleys of Russell’s dimensional compositions. It’s by design that Russell wanted to compose to the live feeling of the band, so he wrote quickly to encapsulate the feel of the ensemble. He brought a lesson learned from his work with **Gil Evans** along with him. “When Gil made *Out of the Cool*,” he recalls, “a solo section would come up, and there was always this memory of the composition. When you played your solo, it was always to deal with that tune. And it’s not confining because you can break out of it. I tried to do it that way.” That fluidity can be heard as Russell and Watson—on electric piano and ARP Odyssey here—take turns with guest **Johnny Thirkell** (**Level 42**, **Jamiroquai**) on trumpet and flugelhorn to blur the lines between composed and improvised forms on the simmering “**From Here to Dexterity**.”

Melody lives at the forefront of the ballad “**Airscapes**.” Russell’s mournful, reverb-drenched dyads evoke the late guitar legend **Steve Cropper**, as if the intro to **Sam & Dave’s** “**Soul Man**” was slowed to glacial speed to serve as a central theme for meditation. “I knew him just a little bit from the old days of playing R&B with **Georgie Fame and the Blue Flames**. I watched a rerun of the **Blues Brothers** and got thinking about him.”

Drummer **Simon Phillips**—known for his own extensive list of credits that put him aside members of rock royalty including **Toto**, the **Who**, and **Joe Satriani** to keep it to a true few—is one of Russell’s longest running co-conspirators. He and Russell keep their collaboration fresh with a pair of tracks on *Dangerous Bends*. Together, the pair composed the moody, shifting opening track “**Just For Clicks**,” with Phillips appearing in the drum chair. The drummer’s hard-hitting groove proves a perfect foil for Russell’s sinewy, plasma-like melodic solo that, while it stays “inside” the harmonic framework of the tunes, offers a good example of why all the experimental guitar heads cling to Russell’s work.

They also co-wrote the title track, which finds **George Baldwin** subbing in on bass. Atop a highly motivated, hard-rocking jammer is a winding melody of big intervals. As it gives way to angular chord breakdowns and vast synth-scapes, Russell’s guitar issues scorched interjections that show off his command not only of technique, but of mountain-moving sound. As a final touch for the album, Russell brought in a producer – **Greg Walsh**, with whom he’d worked with while playing on **Tina Turner’s** *Let’s Stay Together*.

Dangerous Bends isn’t just a welcomed new entry into a vast discography from a preeminent 6-stringer, it’s proof that Russell continues to develop as a player and adapt his sound to fit a few years ahead of our contemporary times. His well-oiled band not only supports, but helps lift him above the clouds.



"Like contemporaries Sonny Sharrock and Terje Rypdal, Russell makes it sound as if the guitar is not enough, as if he's reaching for something wilder, something that can't be contained within the 6-string cage."

– Jim O'Rourke