

Society Concert – Dunkirk Hotel 9/06/25
Ground Floor 205 Harris St, Pyrmont

The June **Songwriters Society of Australia** (SSA) monthly concert was at The Dunkirk Hotel (205 Harris St, Pyrmont. On the corner of Harris Street and Pyrmont Bridge Rd) on the ground floor. It is held every 2nd Monday of the month – Russell has his SongsOnStage concerts every other Monday night.

On the SSA night on the 9th of June there were sixteen players booked, but only nine had original material.

For songwriters, it's the perfect time to listen to how others approach songwriting, being inspired, all the while socialising and networking to find out what's happening in the world of songwriting. A lot of songwriters come along just for that and don't actually play.

As usual here was a profusion of talented songwriters playing and Russell thanked the following supporters of songwriting that he knew: "And thanks to Jae Magsipoc (sorry you couldn't stay to play!), Illya Szwec, Linda Beagrie, John Lagerlow, John Wright, Lesley McCann, and everyone else for coming along to listen!" If you ever want to book at the monthly SSA Nights then contact Russell at songsonstage@gmail.com, which is good for any of the weekly open mics or any of the SongsOnStage gigs as well.

Sparkle: Sparkle was the first original songwriter on the night. Resplendent in her bright red sparkly top and bright blue pants she certainly stood out. Sparkle started out with "*Know That You Are Loved*" with her trademark unique phrasing, stylish picked guitar and soaring vocals. Sparkle does folk with pizzaz and sophistication. Next up was one of Sparkle's better-known songs, "*Groovy Boy*" with its heart definitely in the late sixties. Featuring 2-beat picking with lines like "Groovy, groovy, groovy boy." The consistent refrain makes it very catchy – smooth sailing for 60's seduction. Sparkle's "*I Get Around*" has nothing to the Beach Boy's song. This one involves a folk ballad with tasty riffs and once again a soaring vocal. There are some delicious picked chordal changes to intrigue the listener. This one is much darker than The Beach Boy's song with a more Gothic flavour. A great songwriting start to the night, Sparkle.



Jon Morrow: Out of the three songs Jon played tonight only one was original, so we can cover that. Jon's song "*Endless*" started off with a lot of "ooohs" and then ventured into Coldplay like ambient music. Jon demonstrated great rhythm in his guitar playing with Jocelin wondering if Jon was wearing one of those heat intolerant t-shirts as it changed colour as he was performing. Good to hear one original, Jon, I hope we hear more of your own writing material in later Society Concerts. [Jon Morrow on Stage](#) – The full video is available for members in the Member's Section.



Roger Dileria: Or Roger D, as he likes to call himself, always looks the part with his Gibson Marauder. Starting off on the lighter side with "*Good Morning*" which had that lazy Sunday awakening feel as the picked capo-ed guitar simulates the golden sunbeams dappling a bedroom, especially with the phaser, or flanger, at the ready. This one almost made me want to make a cuppa tea with toast and marmalade as you wake your loved one from a solid sleep. Then, with capo and phaser, or flanger, still set Roger started rocking out with "*If I Had A Time Machine*". Quite melodic in the story of wanting to go back to when a relationship was young, fresh and exhilarating. Over time relationships can dampen down, although love stays it changes with heartbeats not quickening whenever the partner walks into the room. It would be nice to go back, but then again, the steady comforts of a long-term relationship are hard to beat as well. Roger's last song, "*Red Hot Mama*" (Shades of Robert Johnson? Especially the "She's red hot" chorus) is a new one where Roger got the audience to sing along in a blues rocker. The crowd enjoyed the pace as there was a plethora of applause at the end. As usual, a real mix of styles showing Roger's command of the songwriting field. [Roger Dileria on Stage](#) – The full video is available for members in the Member's Section.



Al Crew: Al was once again backed up by the **Russell Neal** riffs that have such a great flavour in this dynamic duo. Starting off with the classic, "*Is There Another Word For Lonesome*" which Jocelin reviewed as I was off tuning up: "The song was played in waltz time, with the singer dancing alone. 'I don't want to be lonesome again' – this part touches people's hearts." Definitely Al is the deliverer of some great white man's Blues. "Whiskey, oh whiskey" is really needed in this post breakup song. Russell's slide work adds those tasty refrains to balance the song and give it a 1930's atmosphere. Al is the maestro in capturing the pathos of a sad man that also makes you want to sing along. "*We Had Some Fun Times*" is more of an up-tempo rocking foot-tapper that had Jocelin



drumming along. As per usual with Al the immediately catchy and the crowd ploughs in definite Country spice in this mix of a song that work together well. Russell introduces slide guitar as Al's laconic delivery adds the three songs are a trilogy about the same steel feel to it. 'Heaven's above' this is a super As I said before Al is the master of lyrical pathos and with Russell they were in fine form. [Al Crew on Stage](#) – The full video is available for members in the Member's Section.



chorus is almost singing along. There's a looks back but smiles. Russell and Al's vocals "*Unmaking Love*" both verbally and with his emotion to the lyrical tale of woe. I wonder if woman? Russell's slide work has an almost lap song about a relationship on the downhill slide.



Jocelin Chan: Jocelin introduced herself to a noisy crowd of drunks and loud talk. However, her first song from real experience as a community pharmacist called *"More Than Just A Drug Dealer"* has such brilliant imagery in its lyrics. All the characters and personalities Jocelin has encountered over the counter really gives the song a tasty, sapid mix which drew the listeners into her world. It's time to step into a pharmacists' shoes and see everything from that side of the coin. Jocelin is not just the mistress of the melody she has also a keen observational eye and her attention to detail in the song gives it immense depth one of the reasons its fast becoming an audience favourite that's often called for. In both her university job and dealing with the regulations of pharmacy Jocelin encounters so much bureaucracy that it drove her to write *"Tick The Boxes"*. This aural comment on how modern life is organised, or should we say disorganised, is exceptionally good. There's the pathos of the person with mental difficulties who is lost to the sea of paperwork before she can get help all the way to how society squashes the dreamers to conform all done to a two-beat claw hammer picking. The repeated refrain of "Tick the



boxes" is extremely catchy especially with Jocelin's fluid melodic vocals. Last song is a venture into upbeat pop with her most requested song, *"Dopamine"*. Full of the youthful vibe of unrequited love and lyrics full of pharmacy terms this song has a unique slice of love laid bare at a composite pharmacy of emotion. Dopamine is a neurotransmitter essential for mood, motivation, movement, and reward processing in the brain, so lots of people call it the 'love drug' hence its use in this song. The song has a great melody especially in the "You're my dopamine" hook as Jocelin rocks out with this one. The audience was especially appreciative of Jocelin's performance. [Jocelin](#)



[Chan on Stage](#) – The full video is available for members in the Member's Section.

Gav Fitzgerald: As I was up next Al Crew took on the reviewer's mantle while Ken D'Aran did the alter ego as a flash photographer. Al noted: "A very Cross experience in the song *"6.30"*. There's a very nice guitar intro leading into Gavin's signature very strong vocals. There's an interesting, audience involving, monologue that breaks the "driving hard groove" but not for long – there's more powerful lyrics and intricate guitar picking. *"Falling From Aeroplanes"* is the song up next – not something you'd want to do in real life (Ed: *Maybe parachutists?*) – but an excellent song title. But an apt metaphor for how some of us live our lives – all supported by an ever present, underlying rhythm guitar. Gav's last song is *"Save Me"* – there should be a t-shirt! The song has a catchy chord/note combination riff with Gav's experienced words give the Dunkirk's front bar audience something to



enjoy as well as something to think about." Thanks, Al, for the kind words in your write up and to Ken for the photos. [Gav](#)

[Fitzgerald on Stage](#) – The full video is available for members in the Member's Section.

John McNeill: John was another performer who only one original song with the other two being covers so we can only review *"Looking For A Friend"*. This has a mix of themes, being both a travel song and one about looking for love. In all my overseas travels I have really only been in love once with a fellow traveller to Miyajima Island, near Hiroshima, Japan. This American girl from Boston and I hung out for a day having fun checking out all the sights. Alas, we had to go separate ways at the end of the day, and yes, I did get her email, but nothing further eventuated except a very fond memory. So, John's song struck a chord for me as you can travel the whole world searching for the bluebird of happiness and then find it in your backyard. Well, in Paddington RSL to be precise for me! However, that whimsical idea still rears its head in this folk ballad by John as we are all travellers on a journey, from birth to passing, that we hope to find love in. An intriguing original song, John.



[John McNeill on Stage](#) – The full video is available for members in the Member's Section.

Tony West: Tony was the next originals player to front the microphone. His songs tonight were ones written for his sixty-six-year-old mother. First off was *"Dream Melody"* an instrumental Tony played at his mother's funeral. I like the finger percussion on this one, as it's played with a lot of passion. The piece features some interesting dynamics that add interest. It sounds like a song celebrating someone's life. Nicely picking in a way that was deliberate and precise. Tony's next musical foray was *"Singing The Blues"* which was based on Edgar Allen Poe's poem *"The Raven"*. An Aussie blues with jazz intentions. Leading from the stop-start rhythm to the gravelly voice and there are overtones of Tom Wait's material. There's an Aussie band called The Mason Rack Band who play up on the North Coast – I've run into them a few times at the Bluesfest. They have rap like verses, a gravelly voice and interesting phrasing in a modern Blues style. This is similar to how Tony performs *"Singing The Blues"*. The "ah ha oi ai" refrain was a good start to Tony's last song, *"Home"*. This song really captures the excitement energy of a home coming. There's a good rhythm with the finger percussion, which is very catchy style. "I'm home" is such a catchy chorus that makes the song quite memorable. *"Home"* ends with a tasty outro to end of a great set from Tony tonight. [Tony West on](#)

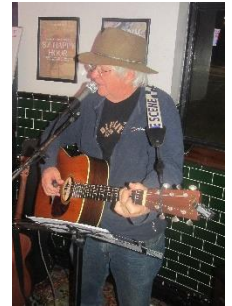


[Stage](#) – The full video is available for members in the Member's Section.

John Chesher: John, the master writer and performer, started off his first song saying it was about how much of what we buy these days, like fridges, microwaves, have become so throwaway not the long lasters of yesteryear. The idea for the song came from a fridge that broken down just after the warranty had expired – very annoying said John. Called *“A Day In Heaven Is A Day To Spend With Friends”* which seems fairly innocuous compared to original premise. However, the line – “Will we ever get home again” – seems to tie the ideas together. As usual John’s deep sonorous vocal, immense picking skills and impassioned performance really kick this song into orbit. *“On A Journey”* starts with strummed goods and a pumping rhythm – “You’re on a journey through time and space.” I like the pensive, philosophical edge to this song as it encompasses some of my personal ideas. My idea is that we are all on a journey, like John’s, but mine is a train ride. We get on at one station (Birth) then travel to the station we exit the train (Death). What we do on the train is all dependent on us, we can what life pass us buy, learn



reading books, do some work on the computer, chat amicably or even play an instrument. It doesn’t change our entry and exit points, but it can make the journey more worthwhile. John’s idea is that the Earth going through space is our conveyance, but the ideas are similar to mine in that there are entry and exit points to our journey and what we do with that limited time can make the journey worthwhile. A very intriguing song from a lyrical genius. Unfortunately, my close cousin, Collen, had just passed away. She was like an older sister to me and had met a number of Society members as she’d gone to concerts, birthday parties etc before she’d moved to the US with her new husband, Rick. I was still shell shocked when I’d informed John and Linda about her passing. John therein dedicated his last song “For Colleen” called *“When You Go”*. Written for a good friend who had exited at an earlier station on the journey. Brilliant lines that detail the feelings of grief, sadness and eternal questions – “When you go may you walk in starlight” or my favourite “I always thought I’d be the first to go”. That last line brings me back to my college days and we were all standing around the open grave in which lay one our best mates with our final goodbyes to him. As we walked away from the grave site, I said that exact line to my mates and they all laughed as they all agreed. Yeah, well, I was a little on the wild side when I was young. One of my mates said that was the only time he laughed the whole day and in later years said a thank you to me for it. So, that line resonates in my memory every time I hear John sing it in this beautiful song. I think Colleen would appreciate the dedication also and yes it brought a tear or two so my eyes as well. Thank you to John for an emotive, depth filled performance of songs that are built to make you think and ponder. [John Chesher on Stage](#) – The full video is available for members in the Member’s Section.



Kenneth D’Aran: I personally needed some cheering up after that last song and Ken’s easy going, happy jazz style provided the perfect antidote. A season appropriate song was first issued from the guitar in the form of *“Winter’s Sun”*. Light with a tight swing Ken delivered his unique sound that encapsulates the winter images so well. There’s the smoky atmosphere of a log fire, the dancing dust motes in warm, golden sunbeams and I can also hear the seagulls scream as they are hit with cold gusts. But where’s that definite Winter article? Whiskey I mean?? Next up was a song from a suggestion of mine. I’d said to Ken he should try writing some reggae to be different. It didn’t wind up in that style, but Ken came up with one of his best songs, *“Identity”* about how every time Ken has a beard, a shave and a haircut he has that male existential contemplational crisis “to shave it off, to cut it back.” A definite male dilemma about our facial grooming. This song has such a strong chorus that has the



girls laughing and boys thoughtful. I like Ken’s third song about his time as a hitchhiking itinerant worker going around the country – I wonder if he’d been influenced by *“On the Road”*, by Jack Kerouac as the wanderlust surely grabbed him. Coming from a country town, Moree, I know the nighttime filled with yellow streetlights, truck airbrakes that are “shifting through the night” and the impersonal nature of country towns at night in Winter – “I’m cold”. As they say, experience is the greatest teacher and Ken sings that “the road is my home.” All of this is done to a jazz rock blues so you can feel the movement, the stress, the excitement, the whole conveyer belt of emotions as you look down the far white lined bitumen with the heat shimmering distance calling you further. There was a little time left so Russell gave Ken one more song for being a regular and it was Ken’s absolute political classic, *“Tangled Tango”*. Done to a tango rhythm the song is about the political dance of egos, power, lust and money all encapsulated in the immortal line, “My gun’s bigger than yours.” All the tin pot dictators, tyrants and power-hungry people who dominate the whole with their psychopathic drive for superiority are included in this song and it is so funny yet at the same time so serious. It’s like a aural *“Dr Strangelove”* with all the temper tantrums, lies and red-faced anger of someone who really wasn’t disciplined as a child and demonstrates why spoiled cherubs never mature – why should they as they’ve always gotten their own way, bugger everyone else. A song that is as relevant today as it will ever be. A super way to end both Ken’s great performance and the night of the June Concert. [Ken D’Aran on Stage](#) – The full video is available for members in the Member’s Section.

