

Society Concert – Dunkirk Hotel 11/05/26
2nd Floor 205 Harris St, Pyrmont

The May **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 2nd 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 11th of May there were ten players booked with nine doing original songs in their set. The tendrils of Winter had yet to unleash their full cold fury yet, yet a change of season was definitely in the fresh air.

For songwriters, the Society Concert is a great time to listen to how others approach songwriting, become inspired, all the while socialising and networking to find out what's happening in the world of songwriting. A number of songwriters come along just for that and don't actually play.



There were many talented songwriters playing on the night and Russell thanked the following supporters of songwriting that he knew: "And thanks to Linda, and everyone else who came along!" 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.

As well, I video every Songwriter, with permission, on the Society Concert nights and the full video of their performance is available to Society members – there is a 20 second video attached to each review, but you have to become a member to gain the full video.

Russell was spot on with his P.A, sound engineering and MCing of the night. So, when the P.A was ready then the first act of the night, Sparkle, was asked up to the stage.

Sparkle: Sparkle gave the audience some songwriting news as she was getting ready for her performance. Apparently there is a nightclub called Shawn & Dolly's (Basement Level, 220 William Street, Woolloomooloo -just a 1-minute walk from Kings Cross Station and the Coca-Cola sign) that has an open mic session on Tuesday afternoons from 1.00 pm. Apparently there are bar bites (like their famous meatball sub), and pizza, although Sparkle said she only saw chips. However, Sparkle said it has its own sound and stage. She also remarked that you can't see the audience as the stage lights are so bright. Looking at their website (<https://seananddollys.com/>) it looks like you have to book in half an hour's sessions. Thanks for the sharing of info, Sparkle. Russell then got up and announced that we should give a big round of applause for Sparkle as she started with "My True Love's Hair" which she'd written when she first started writing songs. Played with a minstrel's flair of folk picking there is great imagery in the lyrics that captures the scene. The song's delivery really quietened the crowd with a ballad from a yesteryear style – "I was too young to be a widow". A tragic, romantic fable. Then it was the clawhammer techniques in "My Heart" with its torn heart syndrome – "You killed my heart". The quieter audience atmosphere lent itself to Sparkle's performance with its part operatic style – "Hope for the future, I had no plan." The song has a good chorus, although quite dark. Sparkle's last song ventures into a different genre, this time its humour about her adventures with the bus service in "Don't Fight With A Bus". All the imagery of minor bus accidents – "The hem of my dress got caught in the door." Done in a 2-beat style the best line is "It's better than falling from a moving train!" Based on a true story that happened to Sparkle. Because of a few number of acts tonight, typical winter scenario, each act got four songs. Sparkle's last song is "another romantic one" called "Listen To My Heart". The song has a great, memorable melody over a picked guitar which has an almost Classical feel. However, it is most definite folk based, which quietened the crowd. The repetition of the hook line embeds it well in the listener's mind. A very entertaining act tonight, Sparkle.



Rory Faithfield: Sad to say that Rory may be going back to Ireland mid-June after a few years living and playing live in Sydney. Hopefully he'll come and play at our June Concert before he leaves a few days later. Rory started by "Climbing The Walls" in Db.



A folk song but Rory's massive vocal tone is so persuasive especially with such an expressive chorus melody. "May you rise above the burning house" – Rory has such a brilliant way with his lyrics and imagery. Very atmospheric like Neil Finn's material – "You can be the fire I can be the gasoline." A story of young love and the "flames of fever." Rory's second song was "Come On Out Of The Blue And The Rain" which was brim full of brilliant lyrics and metaphors all in Db. Then the chorus seriously hits before dropping back to the verse. Not really sure what the song is about but it is mesmerising. "If you could be anywhere else but here." Super vocal annunciation in the outro chorus. Al crew did me a big favour so I could go and tune up and reviewed the rest of Rory's performance: For "To Be Your Darling", Al wrote: "It's interesting how a song can be quiet and poignant yet strong and powerful at the same time. This song is one of them. Often it's what's not said that makes what is said more relevant and important. As this song's lyric's say, "The writings on the wall but the paint's still wet." Then Al noted about Rory's last song, "Window In My Mind": "A song re Bobby Sands – "I've got a window in my mind". Great words, well put together to a golden melody. A top-notch song with excellent metaphors. I hope the window had an aluminium frame." As usual a stunning performance, Rory.

Gav Fitzgerald: Next up was yours truly and Al kindly kept the reviews going for me and Ken D'Aran did the photography. Al wrote for "*Danny McCrocker*": "A Celtic Blues that opens with a riffy, unapologetic drinking orientated song with an infectious Celtic lead interlude. A great sing along song if ever I've heard one." That was followed by an audience request for "*Kate's Friend*", Linda's favourite, for which Al mused: "'Whoa Ho Ho' is the catchcry. A straight-ahead rhythm holds the song from beginning to end. This song would feel very much at home in a bar, or den of iniquity anywhere in the world where people love music. Especially 'call and response' music." Next up was "*Foolish Heart*" which originally was written six years ago at the beginning of a long-term relationship that recently ended so once again appropriate. Al voiced his opinion: "Never underestimate the power of a breakup to fuel a good song. In Gav's song it's nice how the words always find their way back to the centre of the song – 'I've



got a foolish heart." The power ending makes the point most effectively. Rory said the last two songs would definitely be festival material." Gav's last song was about culture clashes in the song "*My Girlfriend's An Alien*" which was influenced by the movie "*Cowboys & Aliens*." Al thought: "My girlfriend's an alien" could be the catch phrase for every male on the planet as well as a bestselling t-shirt. A well inserted monologue emphasises the narrative. Some may regard this as a bit of a novelty song when in truth it is probably one of the most serious songs ever written. Great beat and lyrics." Thanks again Al for the reviews and to Ken for taking the photos. [Gav Fitzgerald on Stage](#) – The full video is available for members in the Member's Section.



Jon Morrow: A lot of time Jon plays covers of which he did two tonight and which we don't review as this is a songwriting site. However, all credit due he did play two originals so good on you. First off was "*I Don't Know*" which features a nice drive on the guitar. The melody is quite more-ish although it's hard to hear the lyrics clearly. The song features good chord exploration. Jon's second song was "*I Don't Know 2*" which was written in the past week. Once again it features a good chordal drive, and the melody sounds great in a Coldplay style. However, Jon's vocal need more projection, maybe singing lessons would help with that? It sounds like a great song if you could only hear the lyrics clearly. Keep working at your craft, Jon, and you will eventually have a breakthrough. [John Morrow on Stage](#) – The full video is available for members in the Member's Section



Ilya Budovsky: Whenever I heard Ilya's accent, I feel transported back to Europe and in need of some spirits. Starting off with "*Getting Our Lives Right*" which has jazz like intentions and a soulful delivery. The phaser/reverb effect sounds great and really works with Ilya's material. Then the song delves into louder Beatles-like picking that sounded good. The dynamics of the song work well as there is a fall back to the chorus then it rebuilds. My phone had space issue so this song will have spaces in the video so my apologies. This was followed by "*The Ghost*" which came across quite exuberant and joyous with Russian exclamations. An extreme foot tapper that had Rusty Tempo up dancing. People started singing along with the "Hidap ta ta da" then Ilya started doing a whistling solo. Then it was into "*900 Silly Men*" which I think is about a big night drinking. Yeap, a night on the town getting drunk and crazy. The song was picking which sounded excellent with the effect pedals. A definite numbers song and you can tell Ilya is having a lot of fun with it. Then it was time for Gav to go get a beer as the last song was a cover. A great set of original songs, Ilya. [Ilya Budovsky on Stage](#) – The full video is available for members in the Member's Section



Rusty Tempo: I then raced back, beer in hand, to review the next act, Rusty Tempo, which I think is a great stage name – if you ever get out of beat and someone complains you just say it's in my name. "*The Back Of Your Face*" was only finished this week, so a newie which is always great to hear as a Society concert. Rusty used a backing track to play his guitar along with. This was played in a tasty lap steel style. The rhythm had people clapping along and Ken whistling with his red wine. Rusty introduced the next song, "*Her Eyes*" as "remarkably in some key that was started in the 1990's and only finished recently. It took me a while to find the right lyrics." I like the harmonies and especially the great chorus. "She keeps me bye." Make me think of my current relational situation. I'm from the country town of Moree and my family had a property halfway between that town and the next, Collarenebri, on the Gwydir Highway. So, when Rusty starts telling tales of country towns his songs come from, I know what he's talking about. I've actually been to Trundle a few times which influenced the next song, "*Up Near The Bogan Way*". Rusty had some great backing tracks for this



one. As he'd lived in Trundle the imagery is very accurate – "If you've ever been to Trundle, its like you've never been away." Rusty's last song also is a tle from Trundle. The song is about a character who tried to run the local pub..badly. Yeap is "*When Trixie Lee Left Town*". Once more we are in the C & W field hearing a ballad of what happened to the town pub. A town's pub is probably the most important social place, especially in a small town. I know they have a Services Club, but pubs are less formal drop in and drop out places. A place to meet your mates after knock off. For someone to mismanage that important facility would be considered a horrendous crime. No wonder Trixie Lee had to make a bolt for it as there might have been a noose involved. Rusty captures the situation with admirable style and innuendo. I apologise for the video cutting out due to my phone's capacity limit being reached. A great set of songs, though, Rusty. [Rusty Tempo on Stage](#) – The full video is available for members in the Member's Section



Al Crew & Russell Neal: The favourite sons of the Society Concerts! When Al and Russell stroll onto the stage you can see all the smiles on the dials. It's funny as most of Al's songs have a sad edge to them, but they are delivered in such a way that they become instant sing alongs. Starting off with the classic "*I'm Here Where Are You*" which is about being places you and a partner used to go and the trigger sets you thinking. Russell plays a tasty riff over Al's insistent rhythm – "Took the Chevy out to the Basin". Superb imagery, so simple but so effective – "I'm still not over you." Such a sad, evocative breakup song, but the solid lyrics and the stunning sing along chorus grabs everyone every time. "Loved you more than I was supposed to," had Ken up and whistling again. Second batter was "*I Don't Love You Anymore*", which was handled with a light touch especially with Russell's leads. "Change the locks and change your mind." "I don't love you anymore, but I don't love you any less," is such a great line and I personally feel that way with my recent ex. Yeap, another brilliant break up song with amazing lines – "Broken plates and broken promises", or "I think of you time to time". Such a weepy, yet the audiences loves to sing its chorus. As you progress through life one thing you definitely build up is your store of memories, good and bad. Probably why "*Dancing With My Memories*" is such an emotive song whose hook embeds forever – "Three steps forward, two back to see, I'm dancing with my memory." Such a catchy, catchy song. Linda couldn't help herself and had to get up in front of the mic to sing in unison – "Keeps you sane this side of Heaven." Al has so many classic songs that everyone also knew, "*She Came From Texas*," a song of star-crossed lovers. Memories of Room 702 haunt them for the rest of their lives, not matter how successful. "They were looking for something, They didn't understand, They were looking for something, That slipped through their hands." You never know when you might meet your soul mate, there's that certain something. Then you let that feeling go due to how life gets in the way. There may be other soul mates but that special one always haunts your thoughts of "What if?" I think Al has captured that tragic romance perfectly where the connection was there, but the timing wasn't. A superb performance tonight, guys, and the ideas resonated so well with me tonight. [Al Crew & Russell Neal on Stage](#) – The full video is available for members in the Member's Section



John Chesher: It was the turn of former Society President, John Chesher, to strut his stuff, Canadian style. Staring off with "*New Found Freedom For Karen*" written for those who can't stand being by themselves. As well, its advice for those going through a relationship breakup so she can "Turn her life around." Its hard going from an intense loving duo to a cold solo journey. I know as that's where I'm currently in life at the moment. Yeap, you do feel a sense of freedom I agree, and you do have more time to do things, but I'd question whether that hollow emptiness that associates with the breakup is worth it. I know John is playing this folk acoustic piece as encouragement to a friend, yet the solo journey is still soul destroying no matter how good the music accompanying you is. Still, John plays and sings this song beautifully and Karen would have been pleased to have a song written about her pain. John's second song, "*Protection*", had its origins in an overheard piece of advice from one girl to another. John started it but found something didn't work then realised he'd forgotten to drop his D – "Ahh, that sounds better." Full of great riffs and lyric content, especially the infamous line, "You need a condom for your heart." The features some liquid lyrics like "Can't fall into oblivion each time I see your face," or "I'm falling far too into you." John's next song is so emotive in its tragic origins that you question your own decisions and how they might impact others. "*Circles Around The Moon*" has its origins when John told his girlfriend at the time, Angelina, that he couldn't see her that weekend due to family commitments and she decided to leap off a tall building to ease the pain. It devastated John who had to have years of counselling. Once you know that story and realise that John wrote this song about that circumstance then it becomes a whirlwind of overwhelming emotions. "Jesus, let her sleep in peace, Angelina is her name." Even the outro where John calls out to the ghostly Angelina is haunting. Sometimes I feel like the protagonist of the song, "*Old Henry*", where "the highway pulls on Old Henry" as this is the song for the traveller. Some people want to see what's over the next horizon. Maybe I'm too Cancerian, who need home bases to explore from and return to. Old Henry just had itchy feet and couldn't stay long but suffered the loneliness of the constant movement – a true rolling stone! Another brilliant set of songs, John. I apologise for the video cut outs as my phone was playing up. [John Chesher on Stage](#) – The full video is available for members in the Member's Section.



Kenneth D'Aran: The man who likes being last and leaves us all wanting more by the end. Playing his hollow-bodied Crafter electric tonight. Ken started off with "*Listen, Hear*" which had superb changes and an eerie angle to it which works well with the electric. "Write it down..." with great melodies in a song about the songwriting process. Then its onto "*The Blame Game*" with its off kilter start which sounds great. Then into the jazz influence in a song about blame and its influence. "It's so easy to blame, So so easy to play this game." Such a great song with a large dose of hidden humour. I like how the different levels of society blame those under them – brilliant observation piece. We've just started into the colder months, and Ken pulls out the song, "*Great Southern Spring*" which makes me wonder if this is a case of wistful thinking. The delivery is light, airy and breezy, but with an ideological message behind the happy jazz sentiments. Those snappy jazz chords done in a clawhammer techniques really contribute to the song's joyous nature. "Springtime is here, In the Southern Hemisphere." A song with superb imagery. Ken's last song and coincidentally the last song of the Society May Concert (Not last act as Jae did some break dancing after) was "*To Be Or Not To Be*". Every man's dilemma, should they shave or grow a beard, moustache, sideburns, etc. "To cut it off, to shave it back." It's a hairy male problem. All done in a rock jazz style a la Steely Dan with humour. "Grow my hair long and lank?" You could imagine Ken smiling as he wrote this one. Another superb musical set, Ken. [Kenneth D'Aran on Stage](#) – The full video is available for members in the Member's Section.

