

Society Concert – Dunkirk Hotel 10/11/25

Second Floor 205 Harris St, Pyrmont

The November **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. The Monday nights were still back upstairs to the second floor where we started.

On the SSA night on the 10th of November there were eleven players booked with only three not doing original songs in their set.

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 cornucopia of talented songwriters playing and Russell thanked the following supporters of songwriting that he knew: "And thanks to Jack Peck, Linda Chesher, 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.

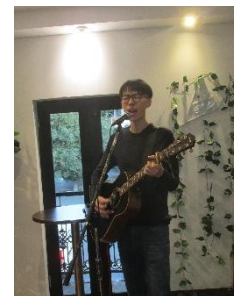
Jocelin and I video every Songwriter, with permission, on the Society Concert nights and the full video of their performance is available to Society members – there is a 20 second video attached to each review, but you have to become a member to gain the full video.

Russell was back on duty as our illustrious sound engineer and M.C for the night. This meant that the white board was back on board this month. Al Crew had lent his deft hand at calligraphy to write each performer's name clearly for all to see – are you sure you weren't a teacher at some time in your life, Al? Your board work is incredible. Maybe a future career in another lifetime, or maybe even a past career??

Paul Li: Paul likes going on first, or early, when he plays at open mic nights. Starting with his classic, "*Vagabond*" with it's drone like beginning which has a whimsical edge to it. Then the song builds with the vocal delivery. The chorus features a superb melody, which is really catchy having a Pixies intensity. Then the vocal becomes almost mysterious and



haunting showing Paul's deft hand at musical dynamics. This is one song that is excellent from start to finish. Even though sung in Mandarin it is still so catchy that understanding the lyrics doesn't matter. My partner, Jocelin who can speak both native Cantonese and Mandarin, is always amazed that Paul can write songs like these as she can only write them in English. Paul told us that he written "*Mixed Feelings*" with a rapper. So, the song has a soft soul delivery with English lyrics and is a real foot tapper. The chorus has a funk feel which then morphs into the rap verses. Such a super chorus it has a Bruno Mars energy and is extremely catchy. Paul said his last



song, "*Passing By*" is a sad song. Once again with Chinese lyrics it has a soul deep emotion. Paul, as usual plays very rhythmically and I really like the dynamical range change in the vocals – rise to loud then back to soft. Such great builds that lift then fade with passion. Its always great to hear Paul deliver his material on stage. [Paul Li on Stage](#) – The full video is available for members in the Member's Section.

Sparkle: Some people have so much verve and energy it literally emanates from them, and Sparkle adds to the effect by wearing very sequined clothes – "Lady Gaga" said Jocelin. Starting off with the traditional greeting, "Guys and girls, groovers, cool guys and girls." Then onto a "*Pathway Of Dreams*", which is a new song that Sparkle has not played live before. It starts quietly then does crescendo build to the chorus before falling back again. A very poignant dreamer's song. We all have dreams about what we'd like to achieve and it's a hard road if you are on that journey, however its very satisfying. Off that pathway and you enter the comfort zone, where everything feels great, but something is missing that nags at you like a siren's call and you come back again to the dream path.



"*For the Dreamers*", from the musical "*Back To The Future*" always get me as it has the same theme – Jocelin plays it to me off the internet as it's so inspiring. So, Sparkle's song captures that same essence and to borrow a line from "*Back To The Future*" – "This one's for the dreamers like me." I'm not sure if Sparkle's second song, "*Angel Man*" is also a dreamer's song but it uses a standard verse in a fluid 4/4 beat. I like the off beat style used in the chorus – is it in 5/4, not sure? However, it creates a great contrast and



juxtaposition between the verses and choruses. I have feeling of "*Take 5*" ("*Take Five*" is a jazz standard composed by Paul Desmond and originally recorded in 1959 by the Dave Brubeck Quartet). I like how Sparkle diversifies with different styles and in "*Don't Fight With A Bus*" Sparkle enters the world of comedy. Based on a true story of an incident that Sparkle had with a public bus, where she tripped while getting off a bus and fell – sounds like something I'd do! Using a claw hammer technique the song's rhythm had Al Crew a drumming on the table. An embarrassing experience becomes a great song. Sparkle ended her performance with "It's better than falling from a moving train!" Once again, your positive energy added that extra sparkle to the night, Sparkle.

Cameron Alcorn: Cameron took to the stage with his faithful Fender Acoustasonic Telecaster. He told us “*Scenic*” was a very short song which was written last year. The song’s performance featured a hypnotic, drone like bass line and nimble picking. Once again Cameron gave forth his amazing vocals which are both atmospheric and demanding of attention. On guitar Cameron uses some tasty high string riffs in different sections of the song which contribute well to the song’s emotive package. Cameron told the audience his second song, “*What If Life Was Contrived*”, which was influenced by watching the movie, “*The Truman Show*”. I really like how Cameron explores songwriting themes outside the norm, this time on a philosophical musing. The song’s performance used expressive dynamics with a softer lower vocal range for the verses, then a higher range for the chorus. “Just for a moment it feels like the whole world is watching” – maybe the slight edge of paranoia in an excellent song. Cameron told us he’d been reading quite a dark book which influenced his next song, “*Window Seat*”. Featuring lower register vocal for the verse and a picked guitar it then launches into a higher register for the chorus. “Ain’t it funny I’ve been waiting my whole life” – is such a great line for this song. I also like the use of “so peculiar” as a line in the lyrics. As usual, Cameron is brilliant in his performance and in his songwriting craft – a definite talent who we hope will one day break through. [Cameron Alcorn on Stage](#) – The full video is available for members in the Member’s Section.



Gav Fitzgerald: First off, a big thank you to Al Crew for doing the reviews and Jocelin for the photography as I was performing. For the review Al wrote “Under the influence of alcohol so it doesn’t hurt so much”, not sure if Al was songwriting as it’s not a line in any of my songs? Al wrote about “*By The Seaside*” a powerful “Gav” riff right off from the bat. A new song destined to have a movement and permanent position in Gav’s repertoire. A great and steady groove conjures up an image of similar waves rolling into and after each other. Solid rock with a powerful surge.” Gav’s second song was “*A Foolish Heart*” for which Al scribed: “A strong, strum laced rhythm with a clever lyric and a singalong chorus. ‘Sometimes I start to cry for someone who’s more than a friend, but I had a foolish heart’ The song has a nice guitar outro.” Gav’s last song of the set was “*6.30 (In The Morning)*” which prompted Al to note: “‘Livin’ not dyin’ : the song has very descriptive, emotive words throughout perpetually capturing this particular time of day. The middle eight has an effective monologue and a call for audience participation. Gav’s trademark chord progression and powerful groove persist as always taking the listener on a shared journey. It’s the kinds of song you are compelled to stay with and enjoy till the very last note.” Thanks, Al, for the great review and Jocelin for the photography while I was playing. [Gav Fitzgerald on Stage](#) – The full video is available for members in the Member’s Section.



Jocelin Chan: Jocelin started off with the fresh, breezy full of youth pop, “*You’re My Dopamine*” where every note and word seem to be in perfect balance and grab the ear. The mistress of melody strikes again with her vocals announcing each syllable with a ubique vibe. Oh, to have that vigorous outlook on love and life again, where everything is in romantic black and white with no challenging grey areas. Each note has a sprightly bounce to it as if enthused about every aspect of the song’s theme. Full of innocent bottled energy this performance enlivened the audience and put a smile on all the listening faces. “*How To Be Human?*” is the next instructive lyric which haunts this philosophical piece underlined by a very strong melody with thoughtful ideas – “From the highway to hell to the stairway to heaven” where you be with “My friends by my side with a glass of wine.” A darker toned song, but full of pep, vibe and life that its uplifting. The rhythm is hypnotic that it has the edge of Gospel in this delivery. Jocelin’s last song was “*The Bond’s Song*” about her boyfriend’s undies. Even the situation has a humorous take on the idea and look at Gav who shrugs in a stoic fashion. There is a Calypso feel to the song and brilliant lines that say a lot – “Occasionally I find a hole in one when I fold them for him.” This could be a great advertising song for Bond’s as the hook line is “My boyfriend loves wearing Bonds” which is true statement. It’s funny what can set off a song’s writing, this time intimate apparel. A great way to end the set, Jocelin, to leave them all laughing. [Jocelin Chan on Stage](#) – The full video is available for members in the Member’s Section.



Al Crew: Al is once more reunited with his trusty side-kick **Russell Neal** on lead guitar and backing vocals. The combination thereof proves the rule for a great musical combination that $2 + 2 = 6$! Both are brilliant on their own, but the combination is supersonic in a country folk fashion. Especially as Al’s lyrics and melody are so outstanding, while Russell’s riff nuances are the deft touch of a master and hooks unto themselves. Starting of with the waltz-like “*Yesterday When Today Was Tomorrow*” is such a clever play on words but also say so much even without the melody. Al’s phrasing slides them like dancers to the rhythm and the tinge of sadness tell you, you have a man of experience singing his heartfelt emotions to you about the past. This is Al’s “*Yesterday*” as it has regret, nostalgia and all that goes with that. A pensive, languid song that’s just sooo catchy. Done in Tulsa style a la Crew & Russell it will haunt your memory. Russell’s Hawaiian style slide starts off “*Unmaking Love*” which details all the small things that ultimately destroy a strong relationship. – “I’d catch you crying when I’d be denying.” The sound of Al and Russell playing this together is utter brilliance, so good. Pathos and grief are rarely so succinct and listenable at the same time. Charlie Chaplin did pathos so well with his “*Little Tramp*” that he became a much-loved character. That same essence occurs with Al’s songwriting where you sing along with memory of a similar experience haunting you making you reach for the comfort of mother whiskey. Russell’s Hawaiian



lead punches through like a Hula blues. “Our hearts were broken when words were spoken,” “Turns out, turns out, we were unmaking love.” So sad, but also so so catchy you are driven to sing along. Think of the authenticity of Jimmie Rodgers and you’ll get it. Last song of the set was “*Christmas In New York*” which is the ballad of “Della & Jim” and their journey of “True love”. Some great slide playing from Russell that reminds me of George Harrison’s best. The story of two young lovers, though very poor, who sacrifice all they have for each other – “True love never runs cold.” Russell touches the right spot with his vocals as the harmonies are superb in this one. “True love lasts till you are old.” A sleeper that captures you subtly and keeps you warm in its glow. Is there any songs that these two perform that are filler?? Nope! Another great performance from Al & Russell. [Al Crew on Stage](#) – The full video is available for members in the Member’s Section.



Rory Faithfield: It was good to have Rory back on the Society stage as he’s a very talented writer and performer. His first song is called “*To Be Your Darling*” which is done in a 6/8 fiesta giving it a very Irish groove. “Is it too late, too late, to be your darling somehow?” Rory emanates a real presence when he performs with lyrics like “Listen to your sweetheart”. Al Crew commented, “I really like this song.” In the next song, “*Windows In My Mind*”



where Rory tries to get into the mind of IRA hunger striker, Bobby Sands who starved himself to death in 1981. Rory left Australia when he was young to see his connections to his ancestral country of Ireland. While there he’d heard the story of Bobby Sands who’d been burnt out of his home so joined the IRA. However, in fighting the monster he became the monster. His hunger strike death started the peace process. It was a lightly strummed piece about how Bobby Sands was also a songwriter and a poet. Rory wanted to see the world from Bobby’s Sand’s perspective and put it into a song: “I am a prisoner,” full of Irish passion, “My heart is free.” I like that there is so much depth in Rory’s songs: “My heart is free.....I have a window in my mind.”

Rory’s last song was “*Four Of Gold*” who said, “I figure I’m a folk singer and I have gold in my socks.” Once again Rory gave out a superb vocal display with stunning vibrato and an intensity of tonal flavours. A super chorus of, “Gold On The Inside.” Rory’s music asks, “Where’s your pint and where’s your heart?” Such great singalong material and I like the pull back at the end. A fantastic performance and stunning writing from Rory.



Ken D’Aran: With a dapper air Ken Took to the microphone with his Takamine Classical Acoustic. Starting off with “*A Little Water, A Little Sun*” which featured some rhythmical picking in a jazz fluid elasticity. Is this a drought song?? Ahh, its more Central American with bars, Ceviche, mescal, a lazy sun, girls walking past in string bikinis, its not Ipanema but close with a Mexican beer like Negra Modelo or Dos Equis (XX) Amber (Corona is like Mexico’s Fosters, no one local drinks it as its only for the tourists!). Such a great laid back summer feel in a song. Then Linda Beagrie popped in for a surprise visit as she’s just back from a reviving visit to Young. Then it was Ken time to pull out some of his classics starting off with “*The Blame Game*”. Starting with the audience banter of “What drugs are you on? Dunno, what have you got?” Then onto the serious theme of who is to blame? Him, her, he, she, them/they?? Whose to take the responsibility? I dunno, move the blame down the chain. A major executive makes a mistake knocking billions off a company’s stocks – sack the coffee boy as he must have distracted me in my decisions. Pass it on down the line to the weakest individual who’ll break. This song says that all with a strong compulsive melody and a chorus that locks in on target for your memory cells. Then it was time for the second Ken classic, “*Simple Means*”. WE live in a world where we are encouraged to buy the latest and greatest, especially technology. Ken harks back to a time when the simple things in life gave so much joy – “Drifting to an existential state of mind”, where life carries on regardless, where magpies sing, etc. I like the dynamics of this song, especially the rhythm changes that are cooking cool. All of the technology, the computers, the mobiles, etc all take us away from reality. A simple means puts us right onto the real life and we get so much more pleasure from it. Great philosophical songwriting, Ken, and well performed. [Ken D’Aran on Stage](#) – The full video is available for members in the Member’s Section.



Russell Neal: Our M.C and sound engineer ends off the songwriter’s night being the last songwriter to play after Ken. Russell talked about his Ukelele Festival memories from last month and ended off saying, “You can’t play the Blues on a ukulele.” To which Gav piped up and said, “Yes, you can” as he’s written some on uke. Russell asked if he could do one of his late brother Terry’s songs, which we are all happy with as it honours his brother’s talents, called “*Please Don’t Go*.” A plaintive song with a strong melody that was well picked and brim full of emotion – “I’ll tell you anything you need to know.” Russell infuses his brother’s songs with his own inimitable style that brings out different nuances to how Terry played them. Having lost two brothers, myself I know they you want their memory to stay alive and Russell playing Terry’s material is the ultimate way to honour his life. Especially as Russell does it so well. Russell’s next song is in memory of an ex-girlfriend, “*Trish*” that has a ballad story telling style that goes from when they first met, (“You didn’t care I’d lost the car”), to their original dates, (“You chased me till I caught you”), their fights, the ending of the relationship and the nostalgia of the relationship (“It’s really good to see you, Trish.”). There was a call for another one of Terry’s songs which Russell delivers so well, called, “*Broken Down Again*”. Such beautiful lyrics about a broken-down car in the middle of the country and a philosophical theme – “I turn the key on in the ignition,” “There’s a killer on the road but I’m out here on my



own.” “I’m like this old car broken down again.” There was a call from the audience for another song so Russell pulled out his classic, “*Antidote For Love*”. I’m feeling the lines right now, “When your sweetheart gives you the shove” and “The hair of the dog that bit you.” The audience applause was palatable as the song was so good and a great way to end the November Concert.

Russell Neal on Stage – **The full video is available for members in the Member’s Section.**