Society Concert – Dunkirk Hotel 12/10/26
2nd Floor 205 Harris St, Pyrmont



The October **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 12th of October there were ten acts with one cover duo, some other covers and even others who did at least one original. Unfortunately, Russell forgot the textas for the billboard, so the name order were written on a piece of paper which I missed photographing. It was good to see old Jack back after four months, even if he only does covers as he's a bit of an institution at the Dunkirk open mics as well as Deb up from Tasmania with her uke covers. It was a steamy 32 degrees day, and you could feel a storm brewing in the atmosphere. Summer had appeared early and made me feel I was back in the tropics of Sri Lanka – a great trip by the way!



One of the superb things about playing at the Dunkirk is the great food, especially the specials. The roast beef with thyme with vegetables in a mustard cream sauce was so tasty I forgot to take a picture of it! It had thick slices of roast beef which had been refried, something I usually don't like. However, it had been so well done, with the thyme gravy that it was something it was imperative to eat, so yummy.



For songwriters, the Society Concert is a brilliant time to hear to how others approach songwriting, become inspired, all the while socialising and networking to find out what's happening in the world of songwriting. Many songwriters come along just for that and don't actually play. Could that be you next month??



There were many talented songwriters playing on the night and Russell thanked the following supporters of songwriting that he knew: "And thanks to Steve Walsh, Illya Szwec, 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.

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. Go to the new **SSA (Songwriting Society of Australia)** site at https://songwritingsociety.com.au/ to read the reviews and join the membership.

Russell was kicking goals again with his P.A, sound engineering and MCing of the night. So, with the P.A a humming away the perfect storm of songwriting was just about to erupt.

Paul Li: The first crack of thunder in the musical onslaught was Paul Li whose first two songs were originals. Starting off with his classic *"Vagabond"* and its double beat bass riff, which is a harbinger of one of Paul's greatest songs. Then the song morphs into a light, atmospheric vocal and heavy chugged guitar that is very melodic. This then builds up to the defining chorus before dropping back to the verse – a superb use of song dynamics. Almost like an emotional roller coaster. Although sung in Paul's native Chinese the song is so good it transcends the language differences almost like *"99 Luftballons"* (Nena) did. Then the outro comes back with that great bass riff from the intro. Paul's second song, *"Passing By"* was also a great example of his prowess as a songwriter and performer. Done with a more pensive feel, with a languid strum and falsetto tone that emphasises the great choral melody. Once again sung in Chinese but the song's passion again grabbed the audience's attention and ears, quietening them to focus on Paul. He has such a super ear for a mesmerising melody. That soaring build is so great it almost has a Blues edge. Paul's last song was a cover, but he does his own material so well I don't know why he bothers doing covers – leave those for when you busk. A powerful songwriting start to the October Concert, Paul. Paul Li on Stage – The full song video is available for members in the Member's Section.





Rory Faithfield: It's always superb to see Rory get up in front of a microphone as you know you'll be in for a musical treat tonight. There were so many spices and herbs in the musical stew that is *"The First To Four."* Along with Rory's sonorous, warm persuasive vocal, super melody and incredible dynamics you know you are witnessing a master at work. Rory features a great vibrato on his voice which works well with his material. This song is an oldie he's dusted off. Rory said that "I live for stepping off the edge of a cliff", by challenging himself but identifies himself with the Tarot card's "Fool". This song is "My ANZAC song", written for the 100th. *"Fall Before You Fly"* was Rory's next song and started with a smooth, fluid chordal change. Based on the thought that when you are the most down that life picks you up – an "every cloud has a silver lining" idea. The song features an outstanding repeated chorus, along with Rory's strong vocal really made everyone listen. Rory gifted us one of his best songs, *"Your Eyes Adjust To The Dark* ",as his final song for the night. Even the beginning chords tell the story – "Who would have





thought." Apart from having a brilliant melody and a kick arse chorus the lyrics are amazing. It's about when you realise something after believing the opposite and truth is revealed. These self-same lyrics then build to the knockout chorus that you'll want to sing along to – "When your eyes adjust to the dark." Once again Rory has given a master class in both performance and songwriting. This is one of the reasons to come along to the Society Concerts as songwriting skills like Rory's are so inspiring to hear.

Gav Fitzgerald: I'd like to thank Rory Faithfield for doing my reviews and to Johnny G for the photography. Gav played three



original songs all of which are to be found on his just released album, *"To Travel On"* which can be purchased as a CD from Gav our as downloads at his website (Gavsta60.com). The first one off the guitar and microphone is *"Two Feet"* a Bluesy number about male attraction, especially for a walking woman he's involved with. All the males in the audience would possibly empathise with this idea. As Rory wrote: "Gavin is Bluesy, ballsy, gutsy and committed, taking no prisoners." Gav related a story from his teaching where a small comment redirected a student and how he's experienced this a number of times coalescing into the song, *"Save Me"*. With drones a plenty from a weird G chord and riffs there's an almost Celtic feel to the song with the middle eight owing more to some jazz roots. Even though Gav plays it live in an almost acoustic fashion on the album it uses loops. Rory added: "Gav's song titles can suggest a deeper sensitivity which is always present." Gav's last song of the night was his piece about getting older called *"Falling From Airplanes"*. This is one of Gav's more popular songs and getting older starts from when you are born! The song is bookended by a falling chordal riff to emphasise life's changes. Rory noted: "Gav always projects the idea that he has no time to waste, this is revealed in *"Falling From Airplanes"*". Many thanks to Rory for the reviews and to Johnny for the images.



Gav Fitzgerald on Stage – The full video is available for members in the Member's Section. Gav's website is at **Gavsta60.com**

Ilya Budovsky: It's been a while since we've seen Ilya on our Society stage as he used to be a regular last year. I think its because



he's been playing a lot of other open mic nights. Ilya has brought along his 12-string guitar and said "No covers for me tonight". Although he did do a bit of *"Here Comes The Sun"* for his sound check – cheeky! Ilya's first song, *"Brighter Than Before"*, was an attempt to write an Irish song. The 12-string jangles along nicely to the jaunty rhythm and it suits Ilya's style well. The sound very much reminds me of Ken McClean's material who also used a 12-string to great effect. "My eyes have seen the light, brighter than before". Then Ilya goes into some tasty solo riffs, a la The Byrds, that have great timing with the foot stomps. Jack clapped enthusiastically afterward the solos. The song featured dynamic interludes and a strong, driving rhythm. Ilya's second song was *"My Love"* which predates the Paul McCartney song of the same name. The song is semi-English and come from when Ilya was a school kid and the teacher gave the class English poems to recite out loud. It has a Medieval feel, its atmosphere reminding me in part about Russell's song, *"You know Where I Want To Be"*. Is this one about unrequited love as well? I like the rhythm changes as they add texture to the song journey. Ilya has taken the English poetry style and added interesting chordal changes. Ilya's last song of the night was *"The Talk Of Silly Men"*, which had a bit of a capo problem until Ilya used Gav's capo. A rollicking ride, especially on the 12-string. For this song the balladeer and the riffs come out better with this type of guitar – was the song written on a 12-string? Foot tapping stuff as ably demonstrated by Ken. I like the "how ah how" bridge as it adds an extra ingredient to a more-ish mix. Ilya ended by saying "Gav thinks the song is about drunks!", well that was how it was introduced once. A super set of songs, Ilya.



Ilya Budovsky on Stage – The full video is available for members in the Member's Section.

Nathan & Maureen: We have some visitors from up in the mountains, in Nathan & Maureen, who only did one original with the others being covers. *"Golden Wonder"* was about Cougar Mountain, smoke and mirrors. The song featured some interesting harmonies that are quite different but gains on the ear as the song continues. Think Smashing Pumpkins done in a folk genre. I like the dynamics of the quiet interlude before Nathan & Maureen delve back into the rhythm. Hopefully we'll see this duo again in the future with more of their original material. Nathan & Maureen on Stage – The full song video is available for members in the Member's Section.





Jae Magsipoc: It's been a while since Jae has played at our Society Concert so its great to see him back again. He wasn't feeling the best, so he only did one song tonight. *"It Did, Hope Came Again"* was done in a light falsetto a la Michael Jackson. The dynamics of the rhythm works well. The Bo Diddley style rhythms are definitely a Jae trademark. Jae treated us to a breakdance session at the end of the song. I challenged Jae to write some reggae again as I think it would work with his style.
Jae Magsipoc on Stage – The full song video is available for members in the Member's Section.

We had a duo play, Julia & Ben, who met at a songwriter's night and decided to work together. Both are songwriters but tonight they only played covers. I'm hoping in the near future they'll come back and play their originals so I can review them. As a songwriting Society we don't cover covers except if there are exceptional circumstances like Russell playing his late brother's material, etc.



Craig Naylor: Craig did two covers then once again did an original as his third song which was called *"Keep It Rolling, Keep It Real"*. You can tell that Craig is a Bob Dylan fan due to who he covers with his covers. The original song had interesting chordal changes beneath the vocals, and you can hear some soul dynamics. I like how Craig allows the hook to come out naturally rather than pushing it. Hopefully we'll hear more of Craig's original material in future Society Concerts. Craig Naylor on Stage – The full song video is available for members in the Member's Section.

John Givins: AKA Johnny G now has his Panama hat as a slouch hat, so a bit more Aussie. Johnny likes to play songs he hasn't, or rarely, played. *"Guess She Never Will"* is one in that category. One of the song's facets are the interesting chordal changes over the keyboard's synth drums. In a way it tries to be Blues but with Jazz like keys intentions. I like the bridge musical pause – "I asked her to pay the bill, Guess she never will." This was accompanied by a big, toothy smile from Mr Entertainer. Johnny's second song he's played a few times before. Originally called *"Lady In Blue"* it is now called *"Sonata In Blue"* which suits it much better. Such a great song, one of Johnny's best and I'm not into ballads. However, Johnny's vocals over the flanged piano really brings out the song's best characteristics. A long slow song done in a Barry Manilow style. That's such a great hook – "Sonata in blue" – especially with the repeats. I the stomp part as it's a big departure from the main and enlivens the song. That's a superb pause just before the hook line is delivered. Then we headed into wild territory for the Indian zombie influences over a 12-bar rock'n'roll. It's all voodoo to me as the synth bass and drums kick in. Johnny takes on his inner medicine man, full of peyote, once removed from a trusty smoke house and place on the Society stage. So, lots of yahoos and incandescent noises as the spirits of yore go mystic over the high keyboards emulating Jerry Lee Lewis, or maybe even Arthur Brown. Johnny tried to get the audience involved in making zombie noises, but too few were left at that time……or were people a little scared they might start searching for brains? However, it was a fun excursion into a different songwriting dimension, and it was quite catchy. Come back from the stratosphere, Johnny, as you have to pack your keyboards off the stage for the next act. Johnny G on Stage – The full video is available for members in the Member's Section.





Ken D'Aran: Ken has some aspects of Dracula as he's calm, a gentleman, laid back and only comes in late. Is that wine, whiskey or plasma? Did Johnny G call you back from beyond with his last song?? Its no wonder he wrote his first song, *"Bored Out Of My Mind"*, as he waited till daylight ended so he could roam the different open mic nights. Back to reality as this is such a brilliant song to come from boredom. I think it's the Arabic melodies that send you "Going out of my mind." I wish I got this creative when I'm bored! Super pauses before the chorus hook's hit focuses attention on its power. "I'm bored" and the camel is worried as "I'm always searching for more." I really like those Jazz kickbacks. *"Critical Thinking"* is a relative newie for Ken, and he's been playing it a lot recently to "Get it out and dirty" as John Chesher says. Full of fluid picking and flavoursome chord changes. The dynamics in picking styles are quite atmospheric. I like the stop start of the bridge and "Critical friend." There's a tasty sliding chordal/vocal run just before the picking resumes. Ken's last song of the night, and coincidently the last song of the Society October Concert, was *"A Little Water, A Little Sun"*, which Ken explained was "a CoVid song." Starting with atmospheric picking it soon explores the different patches of the Blues experience. There was a 7/4 feel in parts – an offbeat style – which is kind of almost Mexican in nature. A kind of reconnaissance in a minor key. A great way to wind up the Society's October Concert, Ken. Ken D'Aran on Stage – The full video is available for members in the Member's Section.



