Society Concert – Dunkirk Hotel 14/09/26
2nd Floor 205 Harris St, Pyrmont

The September **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 14th of September there were nine players with only one cover artist and one other who played one cover. It was the start of Spring and that feeling permeated the Society Concert as well. For myself I was flying out for a Sri Lankan holiday the next morning so lots of anticipation.

One of the great things about playing at the Dunkirk is the great food. They have specials all the time and on the Society Concert night it was stuffed chicken which was really tasty. The Aussie Burger is a constant favourite.

For attending songwriters, the Society Concert is an excellent 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 you be one of them?



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



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 on the ball again with his P.A, sound engineering and MCing of the night. So, Russell went on first to check the sound:

Russell Neal: Russell didn't want his performances videoed tonight as he was using the Society Concert to practice up his ukelele skills for an upcoming uke festival. So, he played some of his better-known songs, but ukefied Starting off with *"Family Secrets"* with all of Russell's family skeletons all nicely lined up in the closet – "My mother told me all this stuff…". "But back then they were deep dark, deep dark family secrets." All families have their secrets, but Russell has allowed us into his family's confidences in a remarkably intimate exposé. All the trial and tribulations now driven by a ukelele. Russell's second song, *"Bright Moon"*, has a lot of emotional baggage for me as my ex-partner and I used to sing it all the time walking along Cecil Street, Ashfield to her place on moonlit nights. She has moved away from that address, and we have broken up, but the memories do remain. This song works well with the ukelele and makes me think it may have been written on the instrument? The chords are a bit different of course, but it seems to set the atmosphere well. You can almost hear the clickety-clack of the 1920's tap dancers behind Russell. "Bright moon, you hear me calling…." Yeap, hearing it almost makes me want to howl! Russell's last song of his set is his classic *"Mr Hardway"*. This is a humorous ballad about a mate of his who lives in the desert and wants to do things the hard way on purpose. Why? Well, "it ain't no crime" chimes in the audience in harmony. I wondered how the guitar solo would go on the uke, but Russell cut it well. I think you'll go over a storm at the uke festival, Russell, if you play as well as you did tonight.





John Chesher: John seems to really like playing his new song, *"Particles"*, as he's played it first for many months of the Society Concerts. The extended start has an almost *"Albatross"* (Original Fleetwood Mac) feel to it with a atmospheric lead melody over the chords he's also playing. The son's premise is that we are all the same made out of basic particles. I can't help it, as a science teacher thinking, "Yeah, atoms, molecules, elements, compounds….. " However, John is working this song so that the nuances shine – as John says of new songs: "Get 'em out and dirty." His second song, *"What Can I Do?"* is less recent being written in 2006, however it is terribly more relevant today. Once again full of great folk style riffs and brilliant lyrics – "The world is spinning faster, now it's passing you." The chorus questions those thoughts of helplessness in an ever-changing challenging world. John returns to how he learnt to play the guitar and of how it formed his musical style in the song, *"Sum Of The Licks I've Learnt."* I t is a true-ism that we become better guitarists/musicians and songwriters by learning from the past. Done in a Bluegrass style and the lyrics suggesting that we are all plagiarists in some way – "Take an old lick and make it brand new." Every musician builds on his past experiences. Another super set of songs from John. John Chesher on Stage – The full video is available for members in the Member's Section.





Gav Fitzgerald: I'd like to thank David Mark, for doing the reviews, and John Chesher for doing the photography. As Gav had been flat out getting work done for when he's away and packing on the weekend he hasn't had time to learn up some new material, so it'll be the classics instead tonight – Sri Lanka is beckoning the next morning. Gav starts off with *"Coalface"* (Gav's song from his Velvet Road days that came out on his *"Road"* album, which is available to download in his website). David wrote: "a work Blues song with its characteristic "Huh!", where the experienced man has "Seen 'em come and seen 'em go." This was followed by Linda's favourite, *"Kate's Friend"* (Another of Gav's songs from his Velvet Road time that also came out on his *"Road"* album) which David noted: "The song has a reggae vibe, with Kate being a friend, but not a love interest. An offbeat piece with "happy endings". Gav's last song of the set was *"Dry Drought Road"* (One of the songs on Gav's just released album, *"To Travel On"*) with its imagery from Gav's drought experiences on his father's property between Moree and Collarenebri. David wrote: "A Emj shuffle through the reoccurring slices of a place that hasn't seen rain for a while – "Another dead fly under the windscreen", "Another dead tree full of crows squawking", or "Another white skeleton out in the paddock." Many thanks, David, for doing the reviews and to John Chesher 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**







Craig Naylor: Craig did two covers then did an original as song number three which was called *"Keep It Rolling, Keep It Real"*. Craig is a bit of a newbie to open mic nights and has a lot of obvious Bob Dylan influences. The genre is most definitely folk and for some reason he sings his own material with passion and verve than his covers! My advice is to not move your mouth away sideways from the mic and to write more great songs like the one you performed. I hope we hear more original material from you in the future, Craig. Craig Naylor on Stage – The full video is available for members in the Member's Section.



David Mark: It's been quite a while since David has played on the Society stages, maybe back in the Fat Angel days? He told me he's been doing a bit of travelling. A bit og tag team travelling here, he's just come back and I'm just about to head off. I must admit that David is one of my favourite performers as he writes such great songs and puts a real passion into them. I have some of David's CDs so the first song, *"Death In The Moonlight"*, I wasn't sure I'd heard before so maybe a newie to me. However, it starts with this great chordal rhythm in an almost Latin feel that has a rocky edge. The song has a superb hook that catches well, especially emphasised by the dynamic pauses. Great song! David's second song was one of his best called *"Bridge Burner"* which he called "a bit of an anti-love song." It starts with a nice John Fogerty like riff, then goes into a swampy jazz rhythm that leans more towards the late Tony Joe White in style. The chorus is brilliant and very sing along – "Bridge burner, I'll watch you burn." Real foot tapping stuff, which was ably demonstrated by Ken, as its such a catchy song. *"Two Minds About You"*, was David's last song and has a more Soul tone to it. David starts it with some light, fluid picking passages – "This might be one of those tequila songs." David is the Tom Jones of the Society, with Cool Jazz interlaced with rock touches – "Lights are on, but no-one's home" – had Ken foot tapping away again. Such a superb melody and the guitar juxtapositions, even ending in a Spanish riff. Again, a super set, David, and we hope to see you back on the SSA stage soon. David Mark on Stage – The full video is available for members in the Member's Section.



Ken D'Aran: Ken must have become enthused after foot tapping the last couple of David's songs as he took to his first song, *"While I Still Have Wings"*, with gusto. Starting off with a rather tasty riff, that rebounds a number of times in the song, we venture into how Ken wonders about getting older but still wants to do new things that leads to the chorus. However, "what could possibly go wrong?" leads us to question what can still be done. A friend of mine did his first bungee jump at 71 and warning me to never do it when older as it "stuffed me back." So, Ken want to do things "while I still have wings" he is also wary as things do have age limitations for a reason. Ken's next song is a relative newbie being only two months old (Do I hear a "Wahhhh" in the song?) Called *"Critical Thinking"* it is also known as *"Tiny Little Thoughts"* it starts with some great tight picking and then a flavoursome jazz rhythm. The vocals are more falsetto adding a different spice to the recipe. I like the dynamics in the song's journey from picking to strumming, to picking and a 5/4 style middle eight then back to picking. Almost like a jazz version of The Pixies. The season appropriate *"Great Southern Spring"* was the last song of this set. The song contains all the imagery of Spring in Australia, a gardener's delight but with an ecological message. Featuring nice fluid picking the Jazz atmosphere twists and turns like bees searching through all the blossoming life. "Springtime is here, In the Southern Hemisphere," juxtaposes against "When will we ever learn?" Once again Ken has delivered a performance that shows his mastery of songwriting. Ken D'Aran on Stage – The full video is available for members in the Member's Section.





Rory Faithfield: We haven't seen Rory for a while as he went back to Ireland. I was surprised to see him back so quick as we'd thought he'd been gone for an extended time. I cheekily said "What? Did they chuck you out, mate?" to which he replied, "Something like that." Not sure why, but Ireland's loss is Australia's gain. Alas Rory's first two songs were covers – he only got back so maybe didn't realise it was the Society Songwriter's night. So, we can only review his last song, *"No Where, Some Where, Anywhere."* It was such an interesting story told to us by Rory, about his life as a juvenile miscreant on the streets of Sydney as a punk rebel which influenced this song. As he said "I wrote this a thousand years ago and it was released as a single by a record company. Eastside radio played it, but it didn't take off." Rory also recounted how he'd been playing in an Irish music pub back in 1996 and these German policemen kept turning up. "Usually as a teenage delinquent I'd get arrested for doing nothing." However, these guys were actually fans of Rory's music and even brought merch! So, this song was "exploring the situation" where he was "searching for a place, a place to belong." Done to a driving syncopated rhythm the lyrics tell the story. "They ride on the road to nowhere, Looking for some kind of somewhere, By now that could be anywhere." This song definitely demonstrates the immense talents Rory has, and we hope he come back to play more often.



Russell Neal Part 2: As there was no one else around at the time Russell offered the left-over songwriters to have another go. Russell decided to go first as he was still practicing for the upcoming uke festival. He started with *"You Know Where I Want To Be"* with its Elizabethan, or Tudor, minstrel feel. I can imagine this one being accompanied by a harpsichord on a recording. Using the uke further enhances that essence. Full of a yearning, wistful longing with great lines like "It's tough at the top…but I wouldn't know as I haven't been there." "Just give me tonight" morphs into a picked solo. The most poignant line I think is "I'm sitting here by myself," as it emphasises the loneliness of the soliloquy. I currently empathise with that emotion as it's my current situation. However, Russell takes us on a more upbeat theme with *"The Lady Loves Women,"* which sounds brilliant on the uke. A story about meeting up with an ex-girlfriend who's gone to the other side and being introduced to "her partner, Jane." An intersection between memories of a voracious sex partner and the new situation adds a good dose of Russell humour – "I really don't blame her as I love women too". This song really gets the crowd sing along with gusto and is one of Russell's most popular.



Gav Fitzgerald Part 2: Thank you to Ken for doing the reviews and to David for taking the pics. Gav started off with the old Velvet Road favourite, *"The River"*, which is available on his *"Another"* album (at **Gavsta60.com**). Ken started his summation by saying: "A typical Gav riff for a "River of tears". Walking off sadness by that "damn river"." Well, it was written in a time of grief. This was followed by *"6.30"* (Now available on Gav's just released album, *"To Travel On"*). Ken mused on it: "A blues rock song about the unexpected in the morning – life/death. It features a talking bridge. About Jenny, the dead sex worker. The song has a good riff." Thanks Ken and David with your help. Gav Fitzgerald Part 2 on Stage – The full video is available for members in the Member's Section



Sajan Ghimire: Sajan was running late from work, so Russell put him on after two repeated performances. His first song was a cover which is not reviewed. However, Sajan's next two songs were originals. *"To Weep & Rest"* was the first of the original songs and started with nice fluid picking with a capo. The descending chordal riff was particularly interesting. This is quite a catchy tune especially in the chorus. Sajan's second original song was *"Man On The Street"* which featured some great fifth fret picking. There is a real *"Streets Of London"* feel to this one with its soft, directed vocal. I hope we hear Sajan again at one of our Society Concerts playing his original songs. Sajan Ghimire on Stage – The video of the originals is available for members in the Member's Section





Ken D'Aran Part 2: There was time enough for one more song and Ken got up quickly to do *"Bored Out Of My Mind"*, which is one of Ken's best songs! The Arabic influences are so strong that Ken must have been stuck in a tent in the middle of the desert. The hook is extremely singable and definitely not boring with its brilliant melody. There are great dynamic shades between the strumming and the picking. The light section of "Just give me some space" does exactly that before the Maurice Jarre like chorus opens up again into distant horizons. Lucky you did get bored on the day you wrote this, Ken, as its stunning in its scope. Ken D'Aran Part 2 on Stage – The full video is available for members in the Member's Section.

