



(Header by Sven)

## **Ian's Official Tour Blog - Russ Ballard tour UK January 2026.**

### **Russ Ballard Band 2026 Official UK Tour Blog**

#### **Day One - Friday 16th January**

All the band meet at Russ's house at 10.30am and after a quick cuppa start loading the van for the long journey by road to Hull (from Herts) for the first show at The Wrecking Ball venue.

Paul Meredith our driver says there's plenty of room but I'm not so sure (neither is PJ). However, all the equipment is loaded and it does just fit in, as you can see by the photo. As Marc our keyboard player says ...Tetris!



Speaking of Marc, he's sporting a "Hoozie" for the journey to keep away the cold.

🧥 (apparently it's a cross between a hoodie and onesie

🔥).

Fully loaded, we are away and Denny kindly provides some biscuits for the journey. Yum. John is then the custodian of these for the journey

🍪.

On the way we stop for a comfort break and Russ and I head for Greggs. Russ has a Vegan Sausage Roll which promptly disintegrates while he's eating it.

Paul Bond is Russ's new guitarist and he's busy tapping away on his laptop throughout the journey. Russ describes him as a nuclear physicist

👨‍🔬 ....clever guy and an expert on guitars and most things

😊 ....it's his first gig with us tonight.

We eventually arrive in Hull after an OK journey...and we have time to throw our bags in at the Hotel and then get straight back on the bus to head to the venue for load in. The traffic is horrendous and we seem to be going round in circles to get there thanks

to a diversion in place in the centre 🙄

The Wrecking Ball is a unique venue and is situated upstairs from a record shop! Gary Marks and his team are there to greet us and help carry the equipment upstairs. Thanks Gary.



We settle in, do the sound check and it's time to grab some food. It seems to be a lock in at Pizza Express (door jammed) but we finally break in only to have a

long wait to be served as it's Friday night. It's pizzas all round and they taste great. Russ's

Vegan pizza arrives late but he enjoys it.

Paul Meredith sets the Merch up and the mannequin looks great with a "Russ Ballard Live" T. Shirt on.



We are onstage at 8 and the band play a near two hour set straight through. The sound is great and the audience are fabulous. It takes an age to get Russ back to the dressing room as everyone wants to shake his hand and thank him/selfies etc ....they loved

the performance and already want him back!

Back to the Hotel and time to crash out ....it's been a long day but we are off and running



## Day Two - Saturday 17th January - - "The Barlick Dogs"

We wake up in a very cold, wet and miserable Hull. Down to breakfast 🗨 before Paul Meredith brings the van round the front of the hotel.

We are on our way to Barnoldswick (or as the locals call it, "Barlick") where Russ will be playing three shows in two days. Barnoldswick Music and Art Centre is the brainchild of Pete Barton (more about him later) and is a very intimate and prestigious venue.

Pete was introduced to Russ by Robert Hart (Manfred Manns Earthband, Bad Company) who tells us it's his favourite venue.

It's around two and a half hours to Barnoldswick and we stop off on the way at a very famous Pub Chain (😞) for a comfort break. The band have some tea and coffee.

Russ and I order some Tomato Soup (life in the fast lane 😊) and wait ages for it to arrive. It doesn't. I chase it up....."two minutes Sir, apologies it looks like the order didn't get to the kitchen"



Another 15 minutes goes by and nothing. So we decide to vote with our feet 🙅 and get back on the bus.... 😞

(I mean it's only soup....just have to warm it up right?....oh well, it's still "Just A Dream Away" 😊).



A warm greeting awaits us from Pete at Barlick and we are soon given a tour of the venue and our accommodation. The staff could not be more welcoming. We are invited to help ourselves to freshly cooked pies and rolls (made by Mrs. Barton and delicious).....the boys decide to set the equipment up downstairs but get sidetracked by the music memorabilia that is literally all around you.

I put together a short tour of the venue on YouTube here-  
<https://youtu.be/2UlwfgE-8gg?si=3Je2FuNfg2CF2RCh>

We have time to leave our bags in our rooms and Russ finds out that Robert Hart has left a love letter under the pillow from the night before. It's reproduced here with full permission of Robert and Russ



MY DEAR RUSS

☺ HAVE A WONDERFUL TIME

HOPE, YOU'RE GOING TO LOVE IT.

MR PETE BARTON IS THE BEST

HE WILL LOOK AFTER YOU.

IT'S AN AMAZING VENUE.

LOVE YOU DEAR BOY

ENJOY.

ROBERT XXX

LOVE TO IAN AND THE BOYS

Everyone has a brief rest before a quick soundcheck with Russ. The sound is extremely good!

Robert Hart calls Russ to wish him luck 🍀.....Robert is playing in Preston but has been delayed because of heavy traffic.

Apparently “there was a protest against cake decorations and hundreds and thousands were around” ....Robert in good form as usual



We are on stage at 8pm, with two 45 minutes sets and an interval of 30 mins.

The set list is slightly amended to accommodate these timings.

It is billed as an evening of stories and music so it's decided at the beginning of the second set to start with Russ telling a few stories, with myself asking some questions. This culminates in an impromptu performance of “So You Win Again” which goes down

a storm. Remember it was Hot Chocolate's only number one!



Our good friend Nancy is over again from Delray Beach, Florida. My thanks to Jay for ensuring she got looked after so well.

The crowd are absolutely amazing and Russ goes down a storm. Russ goes directly from the stage to the Merch stand to meet everyone but on the way is

greeted by a lady who was emotionally moved by Russ's performance and is in tears. Russ says "was it that bad?" .... 😊

True Story!

The Merch stand is full of people saying great things about the gig.

After a good natter with everyone and a beer or two, we all head to bed..... Two shows tomorrow....

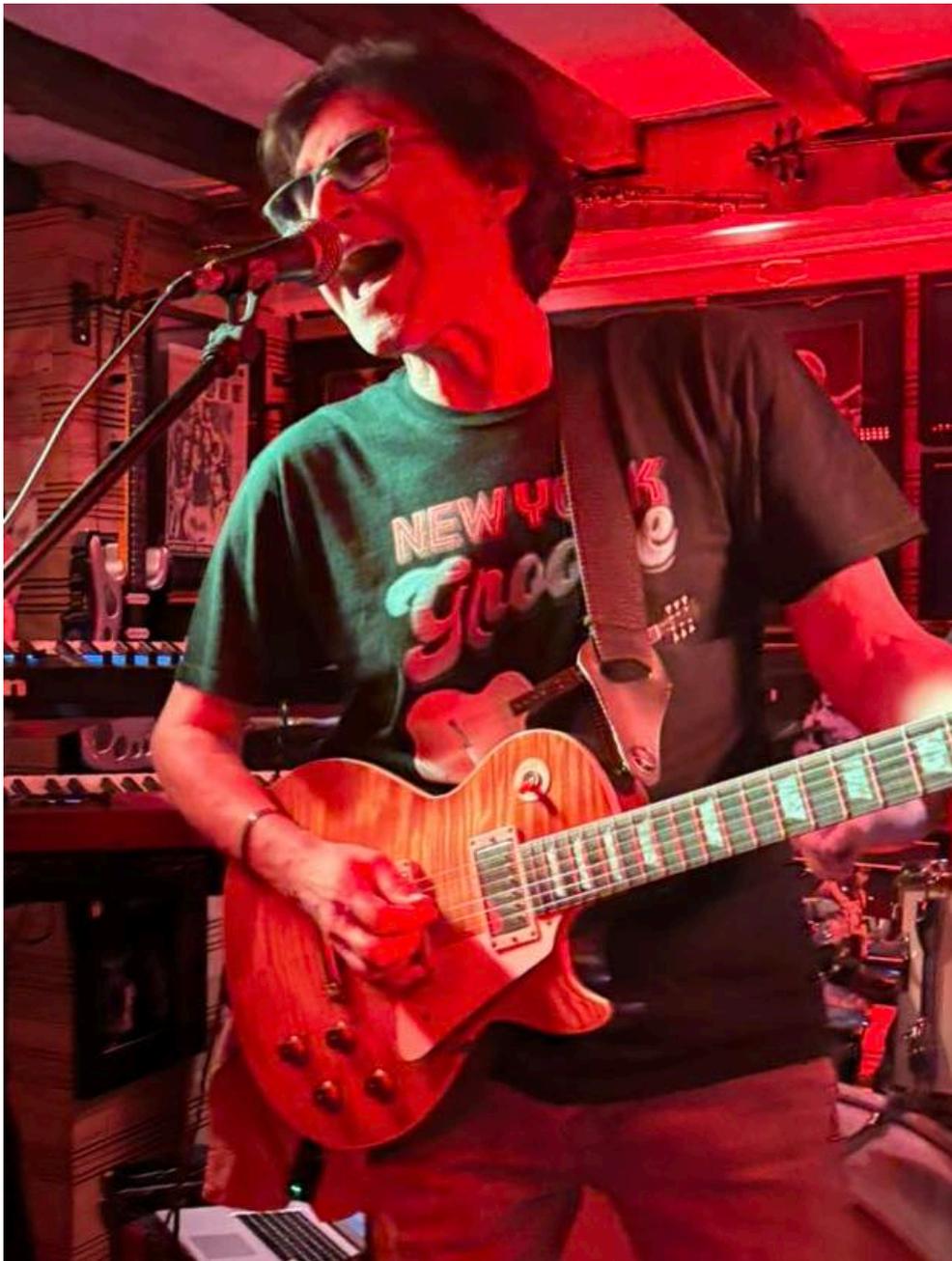
### **Day Three - Sunday 18th January**

It's Sunday morning in Barnoldswick and we all need some breakfast. Russ and I head for the

😊 "The Grill" and extremely nice it is too. It's also great to see Spam making a comeback on the menu.....it also meant

that we did Monty Python sketch reminiscing for the next hour....

The first show today is a matinee and the doors are opening at 1.30. Another enthusiastic crowd enjoy the show and Russ is in great form ...it's easy to see how much he is enjoying it.



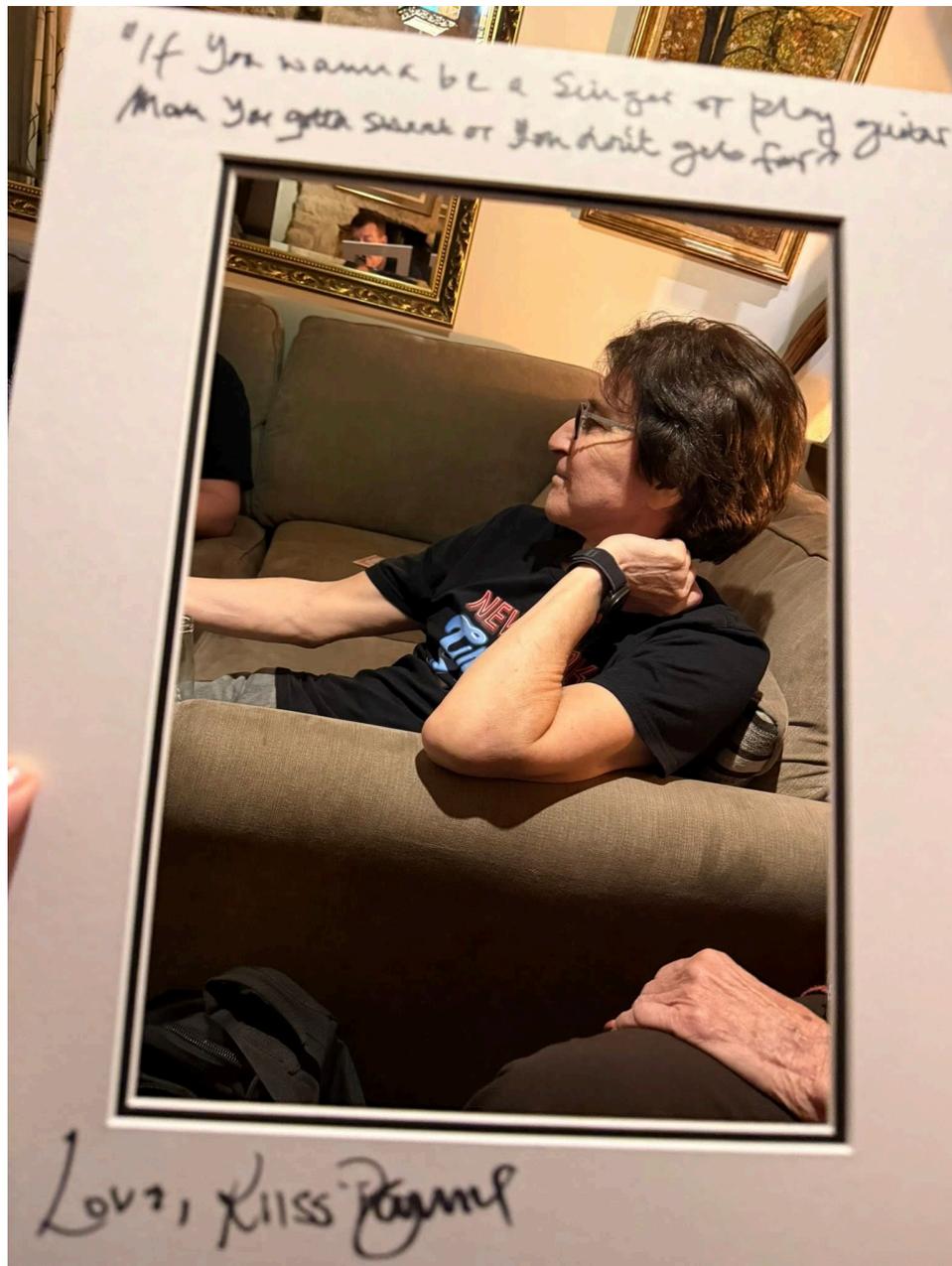
After the show, Merch stand to meet the audience and then time to chill. Briefly. My old friend Peter Franks and his partner Pauline have come to the show and really enjoy it. He enjoys a quick natter with Russ. We haven't had time to grab a full meal since arriving so Paul, Russ, Nancy and at myself head for the local Indian for a late afternoon treat. The Barlick Balti it is then....it's still lashing it down outside



When we get back the rest of the boys in the band are watching "The Simpsons" in the Green Room. They are Soooo Rock and Roll! Russ signs a frame/border for

display at the venue and adds the words "If you want to be a singer and play guitar, man you gotta sweat

or you won't get far". They would fit well in a song...oh hold on a minute...🎸



The third and final Barnoldswick performance is delivered perfectly and that's it....until next time



Our thanks to Jay and James inside the venue for doing their jobs so well and looking after us.

Some members of the audience have been at all three performances ...one guy said to us on Saturday “after that performance, I’m coming on Sunday even if I have to go down the chimney”



Russ meets Mark Wright who has a test pressing of “Ware House” to get signed and had been to all three. Great to see you Mark.



The band choose to pack up and load the van on Sunday evening so it leaves us clear for the journey on Monday. It isn't all as glamorous as it looks.

### **Day Four - Monday 19th January**

Another wet and miserable day sadly but the band are all in good spirits ahead of a near 5 hour journey back down south.

We say our goodbyes to Patrick (you were a star) and it's time to leave this lovely part of the world.

The journey seems shorter than we expected and is helped by an unexpected conversation with the Bot on ChatGBT who talks about each member of the band in detail.....did you know PJ had been on "Top of The Pops" over 25 times?

Did you know that Marc had been on

"Later With Jools Holland?" Nor did I!

Have a chat sometime, you might be surprised with what you find?

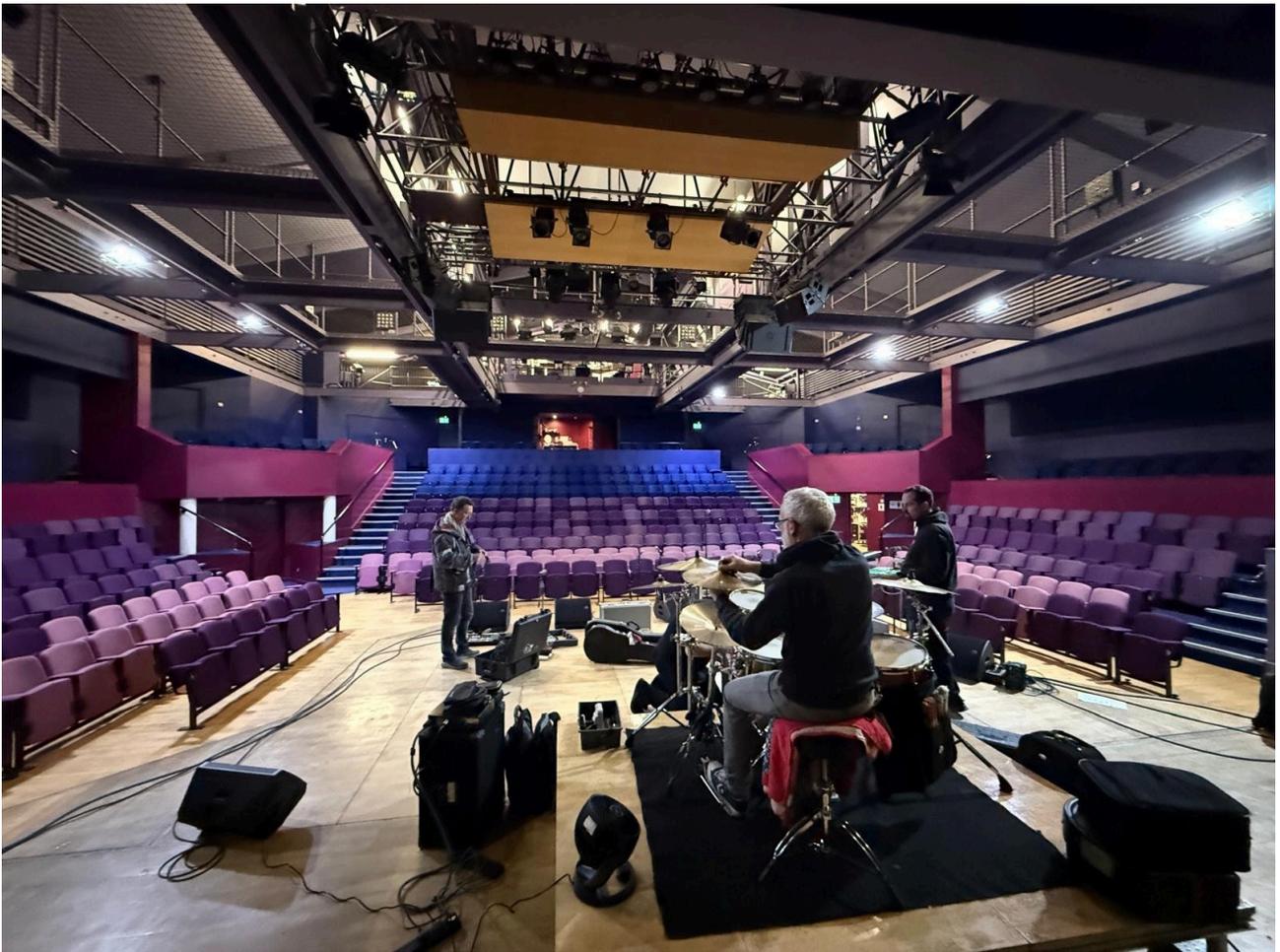
So the long weekend comes to an end....we now look forward to The Stables, Milton Keynes and Huntingdon Hall, Worcester, next weekend. Bring it on!

### **Day Five - Friday 23rd January-**

We are off again....after a few days rest the band meet up again at Russ's and the van is loaded ready for the (relatively) short trip to Milton Keynes for The Stables venue. A great place that was the brainchild of Johnnie Dankworth and Cleo Lane and is now

firmly established as the premier venue in the area.

When we arrive to load in, Dojo Tohyama is there to meet Russ at the stage door. He also came to the Hamburg gig on the German tour last year. Nice to see you again Dojo.



The sound and lighting guys are there to greet us and set up is already underway. Russ heads to the Green Room where the famous fridge disguised as a Marshall Amp is situated. I want one!



Being a local gig, Russ and the band members have a lot of family and friends attending tonight. The staff are very welcoming and it feels cosy. Show time is a little later tonight, 9pm.

We don't have time in the set to include the "mini" chat for Russ's stories but due to the way that "So You Win Again" went down with the audiences, it is

decided to include it formally within the set. Now this is a slight challenge as the band haven't rehearsed it! But that doesn't stop these consummate professionals ...Paul Bond puts his headphones on and heads to the dressing room and learns it on the spot .....next thing I know the guys are running through it in the Green Room.....amazing musicians. And of course it's delivered pitch perfect during the show. 🍊🍊🍊🍊



We do have some drama however. During the last number “God Gave Rock And Roll To You”, Russ is playing guitar and....nothing ....is it a lead? The wireless transmitters? Paul makes a quick lead change on the spot (remember the band are continuing playing the song like nothing has happened!)...it's not the lead or the transmitters...it's the Amp! It's blown and I can confirm that because I can smell it from the side of the stage 😬....now as I said, the song continues to be performed and Paul takes over Russ's guitar parts (that's when he's not changing the cables 😬😬)...and the song and show are completed. One member of the audience said that the improvisation was so good, they should leave it that way in future! 😬😬

After the show everyone who meets Russ tells him that his voice sounds incredibly strong.....Danielz from T.Rextasy is in the audience and grabs Russ for a photo while Russ is on his way to the Merch stand. Talking of which, the queue at The Stables is huge and eventually he arrives to sign items and do photos. Waiting patiently to see him is Russ's son Christian, his girlfriend Jenny and her family....they loved it and tell me they're going to Portugal to see Russ in May.

Brian and Jacqui, our RB ultras are here again too. Nice to see them and have a chat.

We keep the Stables staff waiting while we say our goodbyes and then it's time to get in the van for the journey back to Herts.

One more gig of the mini tour to go!

### **Day Six - Saturday 24th January**

Having got back to Herts late last night after the Stables gig (2am 🙄), John, PJ and myself are staying in a hotel overnight and arrange to meet for breakfast.

Everyone else will be meeting at Russ's around 12.30 for the final journey to the lovely City of Worcester.

My back having got steadily worse at The Stables is now killing me and I hardly slept. Literally can't move. (Turns out I had a slipped disc..).

It is of course raining but the band are in good spirits on the journey. The venue is an old Chapel built in 1773, very unique indeed. PJ has played there before and speaks highly of it.



Russ has lots of special guests this evening. It's a Team RGB gathering because Carole (who does an amazing job running Russ's Facebook Page) and Sue (who does a similarly amazing job producing his newsletter) are both coming. We arrive for sound check and

Sue and Carole are already nearby and join us. Carole's daughter Jo and Sue's husband Bob are also with them.

Paul Bond has very kindly brought a new Amp from home for Russ after his Marshall blew last night...Top Man Paul. And it sounds amazing.

The hall sounds really good and once sound check is done, it's time to find something to eat. We find a place a short walk away (in the rain) that sells Vegan Burgers and Russ tucks in. Carole, Jo, Sue and Bob also join us.

It's an early start tonight (7.30) and no support. I walk round the audience to the other side of the stage to walk on and do the intro because it has smaller steps that will accommodate my back...I just pray I don't get a spasm as I walk on! Rock and Roll is  
alive and well...

A blistering 45 mins set takes us to the interval. I managed to grab a spare seat near Carole and also meet Diane Lear for the first time who has travelled all the way from Wales. She has unfortunately had an accident with her Gin but is really looking forward

to the show. Carole and Diane enjoy “Hold Your Head Up” (see the picture of them with arm in air) and Russ makes Carole’s day when he gives her the 20p coin he uses during the moment where he runs the coin up and down the guitar strings.



The second 45 mins goes quickly as Russ rips through hit after hit and soon, it's over....both the gig and the short tour itself. It's been a huge success on so many fronts.

After the show, Russ gets to chat with Jenny Winter and her family (unfortunately her husband Chris was too unwell to come). Thanks for coming Jenny. He then heads off to the Merch stand for the last time on the tour.



The journey back is in foul weather and a really difficult drive. Well done to our driver Paul. Gear is dropped off at Russ's and Marc drives home. Paul has gone home directly already. PJ and John are staying at the hotel again and help me get my case done up and out of the room in the morning. Thanks chaps.

Many thanks for reading the blogs.....they will back in late April when The Russ Ballard Band headlines a festival in Sweden. For the first time they will play The Voices and Fire Still Burns albums in full on the night. Have you got your ticket yet?