



(Header by Sven)

Official Blog of Russ Ballard & Robert Hart's "Songs and Stories" Acoustic shows at Dunmow Music Club 22nd/23rd May 2026

"Back in the Dunmow Groove"

Tuesday 19th May

Robert ("Bunny") arranges to go over to Russ's ("Binky" or "Ruski") Studio to put the finishing touches to the musical arrangements for the show



. They share lots of laughs and have fun. As you may have gathered they also have nicknames for each other 🤪

They are both big fans of Indian Cuisine (who isn't? 🥰) so it's no surprise that in the evening they both retire to the local Tandoori for more laughs. I am lucky enough to go along and spend some time with them. It's great to see Robert again and witness at first hand he and Russ in fine form together. (Robert "I see the inventor of Chicken Tikka Masala has died.....just before he passed, he slipped into a Korma")

Tomorrow they are putting the final touches to their set and Mick Wilson is joining them. Mick and his wife together with some friends created the Dunmow Music Club and their previous guests include Chris Difford from

Squeeze, Kiki Dee, Tony Christie, Jim Cregan (Rod Stewart's guitarist), Robert Hart and Mick Rodgers, Cats In Space and Tom Robinson.

Mick himself was the lead vocalist with 10cc for nearly 20 years and has played with Lionel Ritchie, Jeff Lynne's ELO, Chris Rea, Cliff Richard and many others.

Wednesday 20th May

I am fortunate enough to be there during rehearsals (as Robert would say, "I'm blessed").

At around 10.30 Robert is noodling on his guitar prior to Mick's arrival. He then suggests to Russ that they should give Mick a "Guitar Guard of Honour" when he walks in the room and Russ agrees. Mick then walks in and to his surprise he has a Royal welcome from these two musical Icons.



Mick tells us all about the history of Dunmow Music Club and it sounds an amazing concept.....how lucky are the locals to have something like this available in their community.

Rehearsals start in Russ's conservatory, it's a warm day and all the windows are open (unusual for the UK 😊). In fact, the weather is going to get even warmer as the week progresses.....



To hear these three musicians chatting, constructing and learning the songs is a joy to behold. "New York Groove" sounds great with an extra guitar lick from Mick. A slower than usual but brilliant version of "Davy's On The Road Again" is delivered by Robert.....I could go on...what a privilege!



The hours fly by before Robert leaves to drive back to Bournemouth. Mick stays a little longer and Russ gives him a tour of his studio.

In the evening, Russ and I go out to dinner to a local “Gastro Pub” where he used to always take visiting musicians who came to write or record with him and is greeted like he’s never been away.

Thursday 21st May

Russ makes his last minute preparations for tomorrow’s show.

Carole (the lady who does such a great job looking after Russ’s Facebook page) gives us some bad news....she now can’t make the Saturday show thanks to last minute Bank Holiday rail cancellations. 🤔😞

On a positive note, Sue Robinson (of the newsletter) and her husband Bob are travelling down today (they are going to both shows) and Russ is taking us all out to dinner.

We have a lovely evening and are also joined by Russ’s sister-in-law, Jean. Or Auntie Jean as I call her....Lots of laughs and great fun....and again, it’s a very hot evening! 🥵

Friday 22nd May

The first show is tonight and Russ and I make our way over to Great Dunmow late afternoon. Mick is already there with the team working hard, tables are set and the room looks amazing. Robert has also arrived from Bournemouth and is eating a banana. 🍌

Russ, Robert and Mick do a sound check and the acoustics are great. Russ also has a keyboard on the stage for when he performs “I Don’t Believe In Miracles” and “So You Win Again”.



We settle in the green room and at 6pm enjoy some lovely food prepared by the DMC team. Russ has a Vegan Burger 🍔.

Afterwards, Robert takes Russ and I for a walk and we see at first hand this picturesque market town, followed by a trip to the local lake. Robert and Russ are sitting on the bench constantly laughing and joking. The couple on the bench next to us eating their Fish and Chips have no idea what they're witnessing... 🙄💕



It's then back to the venue where both supporting artists mention it's a warm audience, in more ways than one. It's roasting in there.

I get some paper for Robert and he writes out the set list....he asks me to put it between him and Russ on the stage. I place it on the keyboard but the three individual fans to keep the guys cool on stage keep blowing it off!

At around 9.30 it's time to take the stage. The crowd witness some great banter but most importantly, hit after hit with Russ somehow making a

choice from his vast catalogue. Robert concentrates on hits from his career with Bad Company and Manfred Mann's Earthband.

A real highlight was when Robert and Russ performed "Angel" a number one song in the US written by Robert and Russ and featured on the amazing album "Robert Hart" that was recorded on Hollywood Records. If you can grab a copy, you won't regret it. Russ was asked to make the album with Robert back in 1992 and they spent many happy weeks together constructing a masterpiece.

It needs to be re-released....lets make that happen! An anniversary edition with bonus tracks? What do you think? 🙏

The first show is done.....and it's going to be even hotter tomorrow. Did I mention it was hot? 🔥

Saturday 23rd May

It's a chill day for Russ as no soundcheck is required for the second show. He relaxes at home and watches the Premiership play off on the TV in the afternoon.

He arrives at the venue an hour before stage time and is ready for tonight's performance.

A lot of fans have traveled to see him and Robert tonight, including Michele Turner, Wolfgang from Germany, Diane Lear, as well as many family members.

Slight set list change this evening as Robert adds "Mighty Quinn" which is always good for a sing along.

1. DUNMOW GROOVES
 2. DAVEY.
 3. FEEL LIKE MAKIN LOVE
 4. SO YOU WIN AGAIN
 5. BLINDED
 6. MIRACLES
 7. ~~CANT GET ENOUGH~~ **M. LIT!**
 8. ANGEL.
 9. SINCE YOU BEEN GONE
 10. GOD GAVE.
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The audience are definitely up for tonight (despite the heat 😎) and Russ and Robert have them in the palm of their hands. Russ provides the

stories and Robert provides the comedy.....the perfect combination. Not to mention the songs....

During “Miracles” and “So You Win Again”, I help Russ with a guitar exchange or two and keep an eye to ensure he negotiates a very tight stage successfully. Towards the end of the show I notice that two bottles of water are lying on their side and may be a potential hazard so I crawl across the stage and remove them. It’s important we look after these legends!

The boys retire to the dressing room and they have lots of visitors. It’s also great to see Chris Childs (Thunder, Tyketto and many more). He also used to be in Russ’s band some years ago.



Russ relaxes with a well earned glass of wine and before we know it it's time to go home. Ryan (Russ's driver) is his usual efficient and helpful self and gets us back safely. Thanks also for the bottle opener Ryan. 🙌😜

Sunday 24th May

Russ wakes up and pays a breakfast visit to the hotel where we are staying to thank those who have traveled to see him. A gesture that is appreciated by everyone.



That's it now until August and Russ is about to go on a well earned holiday with his family. Until the next time then.....

On behalf of Team RGB, our thanks to Robert Hart, Mick Wilson and all the Dunmow Music Centre team for a very successful and enjoyable couple of days.

Sue: There are more photos and some videos (I can't put the videos in the email) on Russ's Facebook page.