

(New header by Sven)

Official Blog Russ Ballard and Robert Hart live at Barnoldswick Music and Art Centre "Songs & Stories".
By Ian Street

Day One - Barnoldswick
Saturday 19th September

The first gig of the trip for Russ is with his old friend Robert Hart in a "Songs and Stories" acoustic evening at Barnoldswick Music and Art Centre. The venue is the brainchild of the amazing Pete Barton and its great to be performing there again. Russ is really looking forward to it.

Our first performance is this evening and therefore we are taking an early morning trip up north to Leeds on the train.

We pick up the train at Stevenage and from there it's just under two hours by road. Robert is in Scotland with the Bad Co Legacy band the night before and we are all scheduled to arrive around lunchtime.

The train journey goes quite quickly….I don't know what we find to talk about but we always seem to. This time the subject is football….our two teams (Spurs and Manchester United) haven't exactly had a great start to the season so tons to commiserate on! (We play each other after the International break in a match that's being dubbed "El Sackio" 😬🙃😝).



When we arrive at Leeds we have great trouble in finding our driver who tells us he keeps driving round the block. “Meet me at the Witherspoons” he says (as if we know where that is)….we can’t see it anywhere. Then we discover….ahh, two entrances. We find the other one only to be confronted by nearly everyone wearing fancy dress 😳. We assume it’s Stag and Hen parties but then again it may just be a thing in Yorkshire….🙃

A two hour car journey to Barnoldswick (Barlick) awaits. Now it shouldn’t have been that long but on the basis we saw Leeds United’s stadium and then saw it again 20 minutes later we can only assume the driver missed the correct turning!

While in the car I tell Russ I’ve been attempting to create a definitive Spotify playlist of hits written by him for other artists (and himself). It’s currently 4hr 14m! He asks to look at it.
We start playing songs on the list and it turns out he’s listening to some of these for the first time!!! (“Is My Love In Vain” by Nick Simper’s Fandango is one for instance). And we continue to entertain the driver for quite a time…..😀😉🤪

If you have Spotify and want to view the playlist, the link is here. It's easy to save in your library.

https://open.spotify.com/playlist/6hDgrygE2n4cwGud6KaGef?si=V77KJ9NLQ0qB4Bt23sBI2w

We arrive in Barlick to amazing weather. Our host Pete Barton is busy being the sound engineer for the Kast Off Kinks (featuring original drummer Mick Avory) who are playing a Matinee show and at the interval he greets us and sorts out our rooms. Russ is staying in the Cottage next door ("Cottage On The Corner"), Robert in the Cottage the other side of the venue. Myself and Chris Childs (he's joining the guys on Bass….Chris is a founder member of "Thunder" and currently plays with "Tyketto" and many other bands) are staying inside the venue itself.



We throw the bags into our rooms and go downstairs at the venue to catch the end of the Kinks set. It's extremely hot down there…🔥

The Kast Off Kinks also feature our old friend Michael Steed on Bass and I hear him singing lead vocals on one number. Great voice and a highly rated bass player….Bob Henrit tells me he's one of the best he's ever played with.

After the show Russ and I get to meet Mick Avory and as a real bonus we are introduced to Ric Lee, the original drummer of "Ten Years After" and a veteran of "Woodstock". Amazing. They are both very down to earth guys and it's a real pleasure to chat with them.

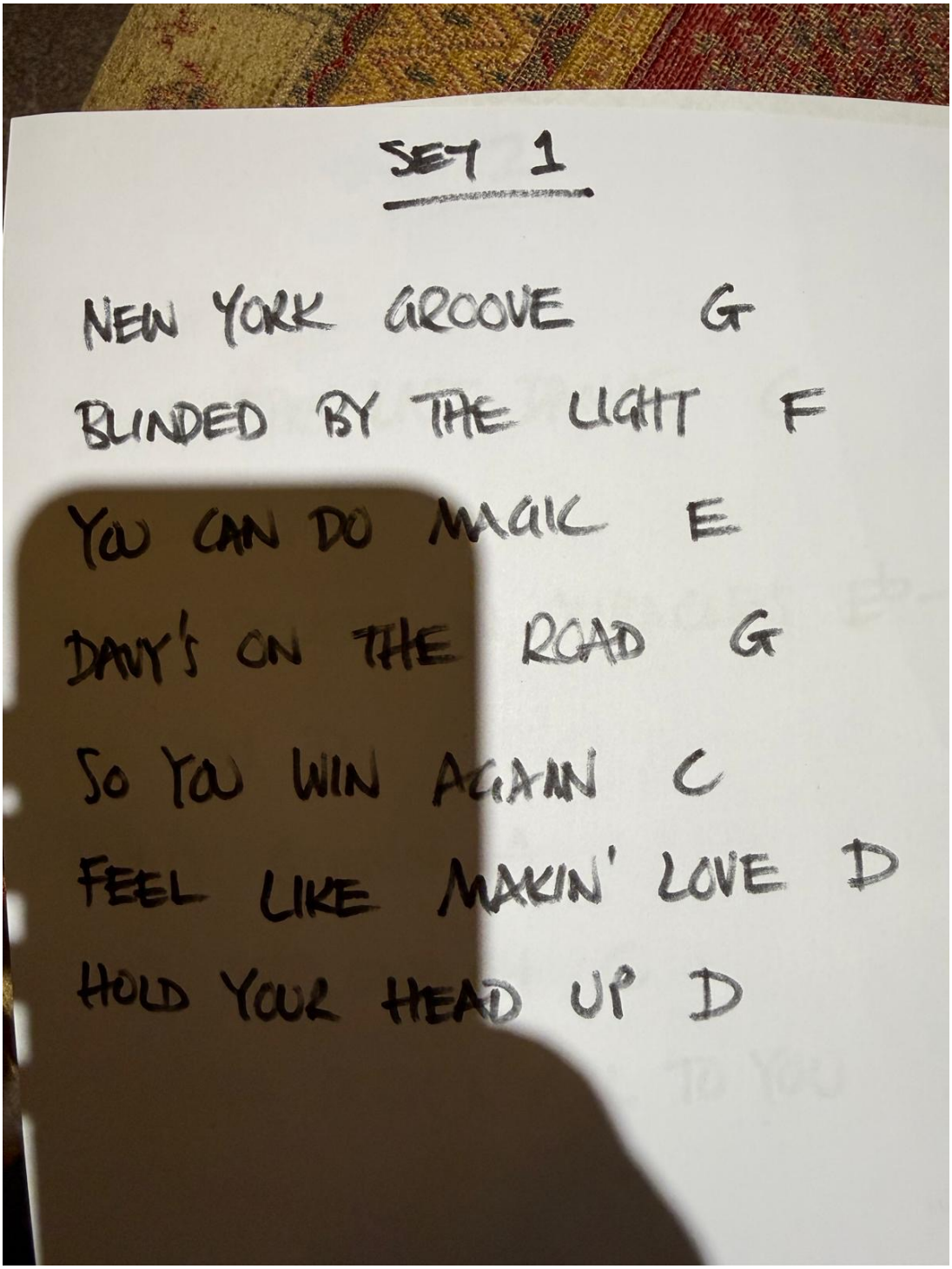


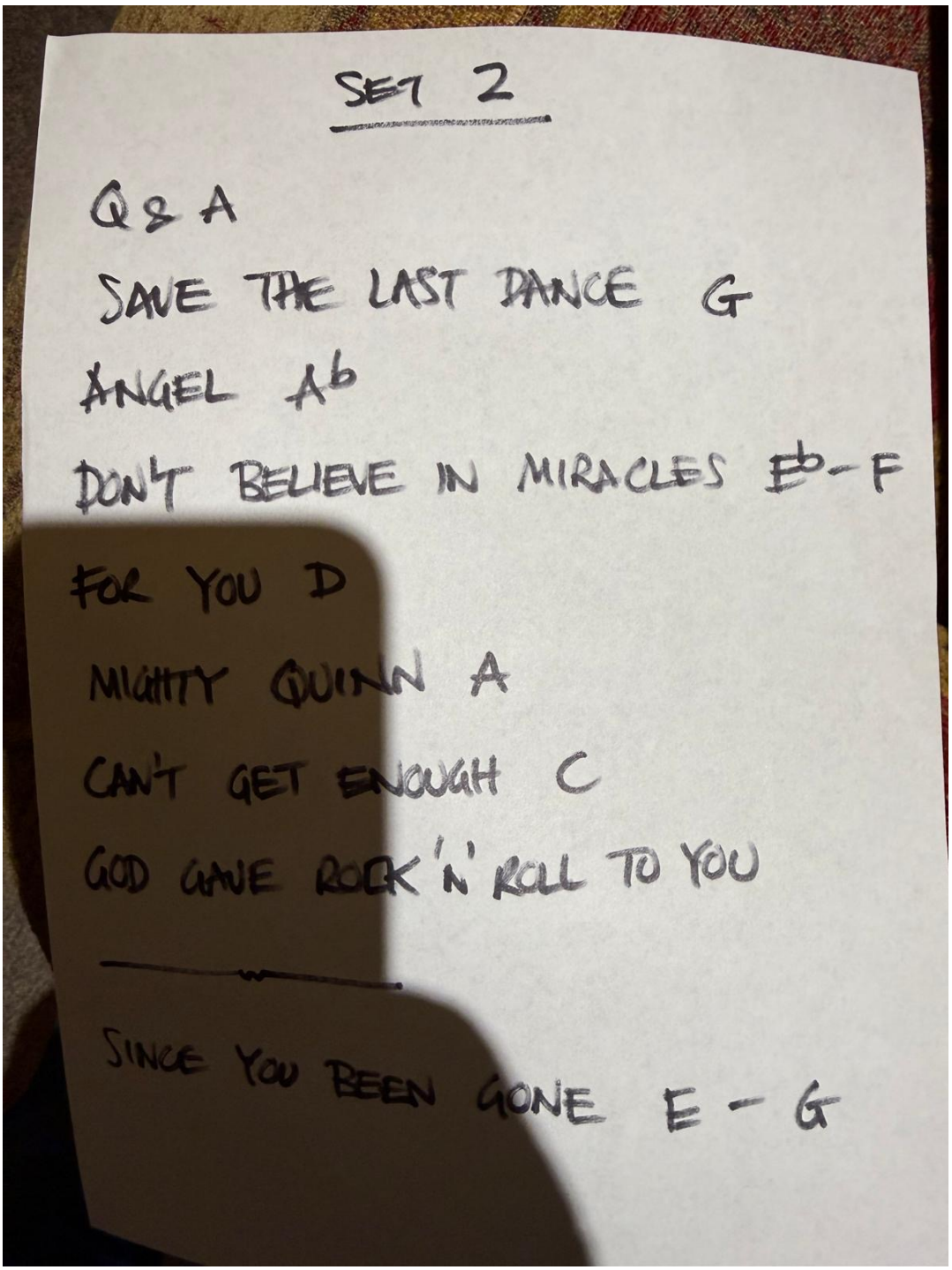
We also manage to grab a chat with “Steedy” who is dripping wet and is very generous with his time before heading off to change. And maybe a bag of crisps.



It’s now 5pm and soundcheck time. Chris Childs is quickly learning “You Can Do Magic” which is on the set list this evening. Russ goes across to help him and it’s done in minutes. Amazing musicians.
The sound is great, thanks to the main man Pete Barton steering us through it. He’s extremely thorough.

Sound check done, we now have some time to chill before stage time which is 8pm. The show will be two 45min sets (see set list).





Robert asks me to introduce the guys on stage and “New York Groove” is quickly followed by “Blinded By The Light”…. the audience are enjoying every minute. Robert is keeping the audience laughing between songs (“Feel Like Making Love” is renamed “Feel Like Making Lunch”)……..”well we have reached that age now” he says 😝.

After a 15 min break, the guys are back on. It was decided that part two begins with a brief 10 min interview segment which is hosted by yours truly. Russ and

Robert have so many stories we could be here all night but we have to keep it to ten minutes…..it's soon back to the music with "Angel", a song written by Robert & Russ together which was Number One in the States for 12 weeks!
(*Sue: Angel written by Russ and Robert.... https://youtu.be/NFgObzg3Mpo?si=fC40w0UElXD6WMiG)*

We manage to keep to time (maybe a few minutes over). A very enthusiastic Barlick audience give them both a standing ovation. It's time for a quick relaxing drink and chat with some of the audience. The Queen of Florida Nancy is over with her daughter Princess Heather and it's great to see them again along with Brian and Jacqui, Michael and Ranko of "Fugitive" (who I finally get to meet) and many other familiar faces.

It's time for a long day to come to an end and our guests have to leave the building quickly to ensure they don't get locked in! Russ retires to the Cottage on the Corner, Robert similarly and Chris and I stay put for a good nights sleep in the venue.

Goodnight all, it's been a long day……

Day Two - The Barlick Matinee
Sunday 20th September

We wake up to another beautiful day in Barlick. Robert has suggested a nice long walk along the canal before breakfast.

He calls to let me know that we are meeting outside Binky's (Russ 😝) cottage at 9. This is proper rock and roll! 🎸

I wander downstairs and greet Chris Childs who is up and about. He puts me to shame by clearing up all the rubbish in the Green Room and even washes the plates up. Top man Chris.
We go outside and knock on the door of the man who gave rock and roll to you. He's ready after a good nights rest. Robert leads us on the road to the canal and we start the journey.
I have a lovely chat with Robert along the way….he's got a long journey back home (7 hours) after the matinee show we are doing today. Another sell out of course.

I take a few pictures of the views along the canal (see photos) including a wonderfully named boat called “Baj Mahal”. 😍





Oh and one called “Phoenix” for those who remember Bob Henrit, Jim Rodford and John Verity after Argent…..
Once we get to the bridge it’s time to turn back as we are getting hungry.
We turn up for breakfast at the same place Russ and I went to last time we were here. Great food. This is quickly consumed although we order too much toast (probably my fault). I get told off by the waitress for not wanting the local black pudding. She says she won’t be talking to me….😢
Robert very kindly treats us all to breakfast……thanks dear boy!

Time is now marching on and the guys are onstage at 1.30 and will play two 45 min sets as before, with a 15 minute interval. Russ and Robert seem pleased with the way the ten minute question segment went at the beginning of the second set yesterday….so we do it again but change the questions as we recognise a few familiar faces in the audience from yesterday.



The matinee goes as well if not better than last night. As always in Barlick the vibe is fantastic and the people so lovely and appreciative of good music.

Russ mingles with everyone afterwards while Robert and Chris head off…..lots of hugs…..until the next time boys….



I look at the time and notice that my team Manchester United is kicking off against Fulham at 4.30pm. Our intention (Russ like me, loves watching football) is to find a sports bar who are showing the game and our friend Jacqui is immediately on the case. Russ and I are going for a curry afterwards (shock!) and we ask Brian, Jacqui, Nancy and Heather if they want to join us.
I must apologise now to everyone who came to the bar with us to watch the game and had to suffer like I did. The least we could do is take them for an Indian now after that!

So the Barlick Tandoori it is and fun is had by all with Russ and Nancy entertaining us with songs from musicals and Brian telling numerous funny stories. A lovely relaxing evening.

Afterwards we all say our goodbyes….Although we will all see each other at the 100 Club on Tuesday…..😃

Russ retires to the VIP cottage for a well earned rest. I return to the venue for my last night in Barnoldswick. It's back down south for us tomorrow. And an interesting journey lies ahead…..

Day Three
Monday 21st September

An early start and it's back down south for Russ and I early this morning.

We just have time for a light breakfast in the square nearby. Weather is amazing, it's even hotter today!

I manage to see Patrick before I go….he looks after us so well. Thanks again Patrick. I also get a care call from Pete Barton "Ey up cocker, everything go well?". He's amazing.

Russ waves goodbye to his VIP cottage and we are picked up by the same driver who dropped us off two days ago and he's about to be entertained again.

It's about a 90 min journey (assuming we don't see Elland Road twice this time 😉). Time to chat again and the conversation gets around to Russ's 1992 album "The Seer".
Last night Russ had said something like "These are the good times" ….to which I replied "These Are The Times", referring to the last track on the album. My favourite track actually. Russ tells me that the idea for the title came from his old friend, Chris Winter who sadly passed away recently.

In the back of the car Russ asks if he can hear it, so I play it all the way through, repeating the guitar solos. He can't recall the track ……however, when we get to the end he says "that's quite good actually". 😝
Have a listen if you get the chance….link here…..
https://youtu.be/yHzUTTLu8Kk?is=6969H7lgZiysIDy3

Russ asks to listen to "Blue For You" which was a single and he's rightly proud of it. We finish with "Only Love Can Save Me", the album opener. You can imagine that the driver is quite a fan by now…..🙏

You can find both songs here….
https://youtu.be/GyiVpR77rqA?is=m0dKu6LovLGMYylk
https://youtu.be/OVaa5Ris5as?is=GwhaCw0BmVLLSouR

I can't remember what other songs we played but I do remember the Bot on my ChatGBP account having a chat with Russ and saying "Great to say hello, I've heard a lot about you". 😳

We are soon at Leeds station and arrive early so it's a cup of coffee in Prets while we wait. We board the train 🚂 and find our reserve seats. We unpack iPads, water bottles, phone chargers and everything we need for the journey.

12.12 - The driver informs us that there will be a slight delay due to a points failure but we hope to be on the way very soon……
12.23 - "We are sorry to announce that due to a points failure this train is now cancelled. We recommend you take the next train to York and seek an alternative route from there."

Great.

We gather up all our stuff and head to the adjacent platform for the next York train. Within mins we are on it but it's a cattle truck. I use my phone to do some research on how long the journey is likely to be. About 25 mins ish, which turns out to be about right. I work out that we will have enough time to catch the next train to Stevenage with about 10 mins to spare.

At York we head for the end of the platform hoping that will give us an advantage. We are not alone with lots of other stranded passengers joining us. The train eventually arrives and I suggest Russ goes ahead and grabs a seat for us and I'll follow behind with the cases. It works …..Russ sits down and I just about find one too. A German lady who is struggling with her back is sitting opposite me but the stewardess warns her that her seat is booked from Grantham. I anticipate myself standing from Grantham on that basis but luckily the stewardess finds her another seat. Russ then moves opposite me.



We have a good chat with the couple next to us who are on the way to Spain…..and are already on the G and T’s. My Mick Avory drum head purchased

at Barnoldswick decides to jump off the luggage rack but thankfully doesn't hit anyone. 😷

I ask Russ if he can smell something. Then I suss what it is…..two beautiful, well behaved dogs are having a kip (see pic). They are lovely but need to change their after shave …💨 *(Sue: I used to have a dog of this breed. They do indeed smell of wet wool when they are damp!)*



Soon we reach Stevenage……Ian, Russ's driver is there to pick us up and it's time to get home and chill.

So that is the story of Monday. Tuesday beckons and another big day…..The 100 Club in London…..

Russ Ballard live at 100 Club in London, September 2026
Tuesday 22nd September

I wake up a little groggy but really looking forward to the day ahead. We're all meeting at Russ's at 12.30 for a 1pm departure. I wander into town to my favourite breakfast spot to set me up for the day.

John Miller the drummer has fully recovered from his recent illness and is thankfully back with us. He arrives at the hotel to check in early to avoid checking in at a very unsocial hour (it will be late…..) and offers me a lift to Russ's house.
When we get there, Marc Rapson and PJ are already there. Paul Bond is going straight to the venue.

Paul Meredith arrives with the van and it's time to load up. There is a lot of equipment…..
Our journey into central London would be simple on the face of it but traffic issues can (and do) change that.

We get on our way and the usual banter on the bus kicks in. Russ calls his close friend Bob Henrit and he's in great form, "break a leg RGB".

As we go through central London Russ recalls many exploits from these parts down the years, mainly from his time with Adam Faith and the Roulettes.

It seems to take an age to get there on another very hot day. We arrive at 15.10, we can't unload until 16.00 so we all (apart from Paul M) go to a nearby pub for a mixture of coffee, tea and water! You see how professional these boys are….

Paul has very skilfully reversed the van down the street right to the stage door area. The trouble is we can get a parking ticket up to 18.30 so Paul has to be vigilant.

4pm and it's time to load in. It's three flights of stairs down the fire escape to the venue and the stage.
I suggest to Russ we go for a walk while the set up takes place…we have seen the dressing room and it's errr, very retro. And warm!



I notice that the London flagship store of Gibson guitars is 2 mins away….it's called "Gibson Garage" and we take a look around. It's an amazing sight with countless Gibson Les Paul's on a huge conveyor belt around the place. It kills a little bit of time and when we return to the 100 Club, Russ spots Marc Rapson enjoying a keyboard jam so he joins him!

The stage is now more or less fully set up and Russ is able to strap his Gibson on and start making it talk.

The Duke is over from Switzerland and it's great to see him looking well after his recent health issues. Thanks for coming mate as always. Nancy and Heather have arrived too before they head back to Florida tomorrow.
As usual the soundcheck is fascinating to watch and it all sounds superb.

Paul M asks me to stand by the van for 20 mins or so in case a traffic warden appears…..that gives him enough time to set the Merch for sale this evening.

There is an interview scheduled for today and right on cue Marco Gandolfi appears from Music News and is ready to go.
I check with Russ and yes, it's good timing. The problem is where do we do it? Marco wants to video record it….the dressing room is too small and the band are in there anyway…..the support band are doing their soundcheck at the venue so it's going to be noisy! So we come up with the answer…..we'll do it in the van!!
😝😝
I open the door and check that Marco is happy with the lighting…..and off we go. I leave the door open for ventilation and just pray a traffic warden doesn't ship up!



The fun doesn't end there….I innocently take a photo and quick video of the interview taking place for the Blog…..and guess what, Marco's camera picks me up looking like I'm photobombing!!!! The interview and gig review is here if you haven't seen it……photobomb takes place within 26 seconds of the interview starting…..😬😱

https://www.music-news.com/review/UK/16788/Live/Russ-Ballard-100-Club-London?noCache=true

It's a long wait to show time….. but Les Linyard our favourite photographer is here and has some fun with the guys in the dressing room….great to see you again Les.

Les's amazing photos are here….don't forget to give him a credit if you use any… https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=pfbid07qxCF7YQKTcxmE6QPqp5z7aqoCoDuhjvQYygHs1ovsAjaATL87mj4U39f8QsZYgCl&id=741099320

I take a walk out to see how the audience is shaping up and see Brian and Jacqui, Debbie Tomsett and our old friend Shuji Toyama all patiently waiting for the show to start.



8.45, showtime and Russ gets an amazing welcome to the stage. He explodes into the show and the audience are in for a treat…everyone feels there is a great vibe about tonight.
The band are in great form and Russ himself puts in a faultless performance.
It's a great set list tonight and the audience clearly love the show….a very hot Russ and band head to the dressing room. It takes Russ a while to get there due to everyone wanting to shake his hand but I politely point out he will be at the merch desk once he's had a chance to cool off and rehydrate.
In the dressing room all of the band are buzzing and tell me it's probably the best gig they have played together. Wow.

Huge queue at the Merch table for signing and selfies …..apologies if I had to move you along…..we had to make sure everyone had a chance to say Hi.

The venue are telling us it's time to close its doors. The band are packed up and Paul Meredith is ready to drive us home. The journey is a lot quicker on the way back but we still didn't get back to the hotel until 2am.
I have to leave at 9.30 for the airport….a long but amazing day has come to an end.

(PS My thanks again to Les Linyard for the mock up of the Pop! Rocks toy figure… they would fly out on the Merch table!)

Hope everyone enjoys these blogs…..I'll be back in early November as Russ will be the special guest of The Zombies as part of their "Begin Here" weekend. Until then……