

Randy Travis’ 2025 Tour Doubles As a Living Memorial

Many patrons were left misty-eyed after the Jan. 28 concert with guest vocalist James Dupré at The Sharon.

By TAYLOR STRICKLAND
Daily Sun Senior Writer

Fans traveled from far and wide to see Randy Travis in person at The Sharon L. Morse Performing Arts Center, where he stopped Jan. 28 as part of the ongoing “More Life Tour.”

Patrons rose to their feet and cheered as Travis and his wife, Mary Davis, walked out on stage and greeted the crowd. The couple were joined by members of the original Randy Travis Band and guest vocalist James Dupré.

“I’m not sure what the law allows around here, but everybody looks like they’re having a good time doing exactly what you’re supposed to be doing in life, and we appreciate that,” Davis said. “We appreciate the fact that y’all are having us here tonight. You could be anywhere in the world. Thank you so much for choosing to be with us.”

Travis is a seven-time Grammy award-winning singer-songwriter known for massive country hits such as “Forever and Ever, Amen,” “Diggin’ Up Bones” and “Deeper Than the Holler.” The star had a near fatal stroke in 2013, leaving him with speech and mobility issues. Since then, Davis often speaks for him in public.

During the concert, Travis and Davis sat to the corner of the stage while Dupré sang all 16 of Travis’ No. 1 hits. The two singers met while filming the 2015 movie “The Price,” where Dupré played the son of a dying country singer portrayed by Travis.

Dupré was handpicked by Travis and Davis as the vocalist for the “More Life Tour,” then known as “The Music of Randy Travis Tour.”

Fans were astounded by the similarity between Dupré and Travis’ vocals.

“It was amazing,” said Liane Hinch, of the Village of DeLuna. “James Dupré was phenomenal.”

The concert is a multimedia experience that celebrates the country music legend’s career through live performance and video highlights. Behind



Country singer Randy Travis, left, and his wife, Mary Davis, greet the crowd at the start of a concert on Jan. 28 at The Sharon L. Morse Performing Arts Center.

Dupré, a projector screen featured carefully curated snapshots of meaningful moments throughout Travis’ life. The videos and images included music videos, interviews, testimonials and award ceremonies.

Footage of past performances were often perfectly synced with Dupré’s vocals, intentionally creating the illusion that the videos play audio.

Mike Berk, of the Village of Pine Ridge, said after a while, he forgot it wasn’t actually Travis singing.

“Because in the video he’s singing, and it’s the exact same words that Dupré is singing,” Berk said. “In the same instant, you see his mouth moving and your mind thinks it’s him.”

The concert also included artificial intelligence. Travis announced last year that his newest song, “Where That Came From,” used an AI program to recreate his voice. It was done by taking old audio files of Travis’ voice and combining them with Dupré’s recording of the song.

AI remains a controversial subject among music fans and industry professionals alike. In 2024, more than 200 artists — including Billie Eilish, Nicki Minaj, Jon Bon Jovi and Stevie Wonder

— signed an open letter issued by the Artist Rights Alliance, demanding protections against the “predatory use of AI” to “infringe upon and devalue the rights of human artists.”

Travis and Davis testified before a House Judiciary subcommittee hearing in June 2024 on the American Music Fairness Act and the use of AI in music, where they discussed the dangers and benefit of AI usage. The pair cited Travis’ new song as an example of how AI can be used as a tool for good, allowing Travis to regain his voice and still play a part in shaping the music industry.

Diane Futrelle, of the Village of Hadley, said the way AI was used in the concert dispelled a lot of fears she had about it because it was tastefully done and the program did a good job at replicating Travis’ voice. Also, like most fans, she was just happy to get more Randy Travis.

“We cried through half of the show,” she said. “They were happy tears. The memories and all were so well done.”

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Graham Russell, left, and Russell Hitchcock, of Air Supply, perform on Thursday at The Sharon L. Morse Performing Arts Center.

Air Supply Celebrates 50 Years With Stop At The Sharon

The soft rock duo made its return to The Villages on Thursday during its anniversary celebration.

By TAYLOR STRICKLAND
Daily Sun Senior Writer

It may have been 50 years since Air Supply first debuted, but fans still love the soft rock duo just as they are.

Cheers went up as Englishman Graham Russell and Australian Russell Hitchcock graced The Sharon L. Morse Performing Art Center’s stage Thursday. Dressed in silk, sequins and leather pants, the two romantic rockers delivered a concert full of ‘70s rock and romance music, memories and even a poetry recital or two.

“Time Magazine said we were the most romantic band in the world, so it’s up to us to prove it,” Russell said.

Founded in 1975, Air Supply is best know for the litany of love songs and romantic ballads that dominate the group’s discography, including tops hits like “Lost in Love,” “All Out of Love,” “Every Woman in the World,” “The One That You Love,” “Here I Am,” “Sweet Dreams,” “Even the Nights Are Better” and “Making Love Out of Nothing at All.”

In addition to playing all the hits, Air Supply took the audience back to the beginning of its career, when there was only one guitar and two voices.

Russell and Hitchcock first met in 1975 on the set of a production of “Jesus Christ

Superstar.” They were in the show for nearly two years, during which they bonded over their love of music, their shared name and the many other qualities they have in common.

“It was really quite uncanny, and we decided to form a rock ‘n’ roll band,” Russell said. “He said, ‘I’d love to work in a band, but I don’t want to write songs. I just want to sing.’ And I said, ‘Well, I don’t want to sing,’ so it was a perfect relationship, and we’ve been the best of friends ever since that day.”

Air Supply formed before Russell and Hitchcock’s time with “Jesus Christ Superstar” officially ended. Their first single, “Love and Other Bruises,” peaked at No. 6 in Australia, rocketing the group to the top before the pair had even given its first live performance.

During that time, Rod Stewart’s management reached out and asked Air Supply to join him on tour in Australia. At the end of the second show, Stewart himself asked if they would join him on the 1977 North American tour. Russell and Hitchcock agreed, embarking on a tour throughout the United States and Canada.

“After being on the road with a star like that for three months, opening for him, playing for thousands of people every night, you begin to think you’re really good,” Hitchcock said. “We thought we were really good, and when we went back to Australia, we found that we weren’t good at all. We were dead in the water — couldn’t get arrested. I tried.”

Following their fall from grace, the duo went on to release their most successful songs to date: “Making Love Out of Nothing at All,” “All Out of Love” and the only U.S. No. 1 single, “The One That You Love.”

Thursday’s concert wasn’t just poetry, songs and stories. Russell also showed off

his guitar skills through a masterful solo during “Two Less Lonely People in the World,” which impressed many.

“When Graham played the acoustic and he did the little things with his fingers — man, I was looking around and nobody else was playing,” Jeffrey Clarke said. “It was just him. I was like, ‘Wow, I’ve never seen that before.’ That was totally off the charts.”

By day, Clarke is the president of The Bronx Club, but by night, the Village of Charlotte resident is a huge rock ‘n’ roll fan. He could be heard shouting “you rock” to Russell and Hitchcock throughout the night.

Clarke was joined by his wife, Marcie, who was impressed by Hitchcock’s vocal range and his visiting friends, Leon Swain and Theresa Beck.

“What I really liked was how they gave credit to everyone in the band,” Beck said. “That really shows what type of people they are, and I really felt they really enjoyed playing together and that made it more enjoyable.”

Meryl and Larry Miles, both of the Village of Hillborough, also enjoyed the performance. This is at least their fifth time seeing the group in concert. As longtime Air Supply fans, they were loath to miss the group’s 50th anniversary tour.

“We thought they were going to be in Ocala, and we looked it up,” Meryl said. “I said, ‘Oh, we’re going to miss them.’ Then we found out they’re going to be here, so we were so excited.”

Throughout the concert, Meryl and Larry were smiling at each other and tapping their toes as the band played their favorite songs. Meryl loves “Here I Am,” and Larry is partial to “Lost in Love.”

“They get better every year,” Meryl said. “The band was fabulous. The drummer was fabulous, and Russell’s voice is amazing.”

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