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Next Workshop

The next ISS workshop is Jan. 5 at Five Towns College

PeaceSmith's

Pedro Pereira will perform at 8 p.m., Feb. 6 at PeaceSmith's Coffeehouse, 25 Broadway, Amityville

The Year That Was ISS in 2008: A Look Back

BY WALTER SARGENT

The Island Songwriters Showcase would like to acknowledge the many accomplishments and one profound loss for 2008.

First the sad news: ISS Member Amy Golden Uelis passed away in December. Amy excelled at traditional jazz and classic pop-influenced songwriting, often accompanying herself on the keyboard. As a fellow songwriter, Amy was as generous and supportive as one could ask for.

Our condolences to Amy's family.

On the positive side, ISS Members released at least 3 CDs (that we are aware of): "Backin' Out Ass First," by the Semi-Casual Silver String Mezzanine Band, featuring Frank Gambino and a veritable flotilla of git-pickers; "Tornado Alley," by Tornado Alley, featuring Tim Huss, Sonny Speed and Vinny Crici; and "Stuck in the '60s, Vol. 2" by Tony Tedeschi.

Gig-of-the-Year Award has to go to Steve Lieberman for performing with the rock band Weezer at Madison Square Garden! Other highlights include Lucky 13 headlining at the IMAC Theater, Lois Morton's solo caberet performance, at Don't Tell Mama, in New York City and the Folk Music Society of Huntington "ISS Night" at the Hard Luck Café.

Review-of-the-Year Award is shared by Denise Romas for her review in Creations Magazine, and ISS Editor Pedro Pereira the list of his song "Lay Down Your Sword" on Neil Young's Living With War web page.

Songwriter-of-the-Year Award goes to Sonny Meadows for winning Song-of-the-Month three times. Runner up is Tim Dillon for wining twice.

Last but not least, the ISS Award-of-the-Year Award is split between Howard Pavane for winning "Suggested Artist" in VH-1's Song of the Year Competition and Denise Romas for "runner-up" spot in VH-1 Song of the Year.

Happy New Year

The ISS wishes all its members, and everyone else, a wonderful New Year filled with peace, prosperity and lots of good music.

Remember, there is always some live music event somewhere around Long Island, so be sure to get out there and support local performers.

Writer's Choice

Hank Stone Wins with 'Robert Johnson Knew'

By Gerry Dantone

Sometimes it's just your month! That was certainly the case for Hank Stone who won in a landslide for his tune "Robert Johnson Knew." It was so much Hank's month that he even got a vote for a song that was presented by someone else, "Winter Blues" by Phil Kennelty.

Who was running this vote? Katherine Harris?

In any case, his song was so good that most correctly voted for Mr. Stone for this personalized remake of Robert Johnson's "Love in Vain."

Now, it's almost not fair when you take a standard and update it for your own use, and indeed, a number of ISSers in attendance were not familiar with either Robert Johnson or "Love in Vain" and so could not make a judgment on the tune's originality and/or innovations.

But Hank's additions were seamless and worthy of the original, and the music was up to the task as well. The end result was a Writer's Choice and an excellent variation on a standard. For a set of original lyrics to a number of Robert Johnson songs (which are not in the public domain), go to <http://www.deltahaze.com/johnson/lyrics.html>.

Gerry Dantone is thinking

Editor's Corner

Remembering Personal Musical Milestones

By PEDRO PEREIRA

As 2008 drew to a close, I took a chance to reflect on personal musical milestones. It was the first full year during which I had a CD for sale, "Last Man on the Planet," the release of which opened some gigging doors and got me a small slice of the spotlight.

I would have to say the biggest musical highlight of the year, however, was performing at a Folk Music Society of Huntington Hard Luck Café in March, and especially getting a chance to perform with Suzanne Ernst and Walter Sargent on a song, "Hard Luck Blues," that we wrote together. The quality of performances that night was nothing short of amazing, with folks like Sonny Meadows, Tim Huss and Denise Romas giving the audience a taste of what ISS is all about.

I also had the opportunity to perform at a charity gig at the New York City Fire Museum in September, which also has to go down as one of the highlights of the year. That same month, I also played at a forum of the Center for Inquiry Community of Long Island, which was a real honor.

Of course, I would be remiss if I didn't mention all the gigs at Cool Beanz throughout the year, where I shared the stage with countless other songwriters and performers, including Frank Gambino, Walter, Suzanne, Tony Tedeschi, and Kenn Machin, who runs the Wednesday night open mic there.

On most of my gigs this year, I was backed up by my friend, the tremendously talented violinist Andrew White. A big thank you to Andrew for all his support, and to folks like Doug Kwartler, Mike Leuci and Debbie Novack who backed me up on a song or two at the Fire Museum and Jessie's Roadhouse in Merrick.

A big thank you to Sonny Speed for all his advice and support, to Vinny Crici for hosting the monthly open mic at Borders, Walter for all his hard work on the web site, and everyone else at ISS. And of course, thanks to everyone who comes to the gigs to support the art.

Happy New Year!

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Hank's month that
he even got a vote
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ISS Performers Dazzle Crowd at PeaceSmith's Coffeeshouse

By SONNY MEADOWS

I had the honor last month of hosting an event of distinction at the monthly PeaceSmith's Coffeeshouse. Originally scheduled to be a Garden Party that was rained out in September, the event was a wonderful showcase of the talent that flows throughout the Island Songwriters Showcase.

Repeatedly throughout the night members of the audience would ask me "Who are these people?" "Where did they come from?" "How come I never heard of him or her?" They are familiar names to those who attend ISS meetings: Walter Sargent, Suzanne Ernst, Jeff Curtis, David Bailey, Sonny Meadows' Blacklisted and the Banned, and Sonny Speed. Each performer delivered a half-hour set of material that either entranced or energized the enthusiastic audience.

The evening began with a bang as Walter Sargent performed his searing song "Georgie Boy." Coming on the heels of a monumental election, it was certainly the right piece to kick off a program for a group of dedicated peace activists. It was a great pleasure to hear Walter deliver a full set of material with his melodious tenor voice and exceptional guitar work.

Suzanne Ernst followed with a set of classic peace-oriented popular and folk tunes like Jesse Colin Young's "Get Together," John Lennon's "Imagine," and Cat Stevens' "Peace Train." Being a songwriting group, we at ISS tend to shy away from any discussion of performing "cover tunes." But on this evening, Suzanne provided an astonishing example of how to do it right. Through thoughtful creativity, Suzanne made each and every song her own by making subtle changes in melody, rhythm, phrasing and developing brilliant guitar arrangements.

My topical quartet, Blacklisted and The Banned, was joined by ISS Director Sonny Speed on mandolin for the first time publically that night. Sonny provided an enhanced dynamic to the Banned's repertoire giving it a folksier feel, which was much appreciated by the audience. I introduced a well-received new song that evening, "Man at the Top," which sought to place the responsibility for the murder of Ecuadorian immigrant Marcelo Lucero where it belonged – at the top.

The great guitar instrumentalist, Jeff Curtis, followed. Jeff has a unique finger-style approach and typically utilizes the unusual D-A-D-A-D-E tuning. This tuning combined with Jeff's artistry leads to the creation of deeply meditative and dreamy musical landscapes. I joined Jeff for his final number, "To See You Again," a very melodic piece that cried out for lyrics. Jeff and I have performed the piece several times on our Northern California radio station and club tours. We will be working with Sonny Speed to get it recorded in the next month or so.

The final ISS performer, David Bailey, has garnered a lot of attention during the past several months, particularly as a result of the release of his five-song demo CD, "David Bailey." With the backing of Sonny Speed on mandolin and Mary Diehlmann on vocals, David delivered a powerful performance of his original material as well as Bob Dylan's "Mr. Tambourine Man." By intertwining country, folk and rock genres, David aptly delivers songs and stories that draw the listener in and will not let go.

It was a memorable night and I thank all who participated. The PeaceSmith's Coffeeshouse takes place the first Friday of the month at 8 p.m. (unfortunately conflicting with ISS open mic at Borders) at the last church on the left at the Amityville end of Route 110. The Coffeeshouse performances are broadcast on Woodbury Cablevision Channel 20 at 11 p.m. on Wednesdays. Lois Morton will be performing in May 2009. Anyone interested in performing should contact me at sonnymeadows@optonline.net.

Who Played What

Here's a list of songwriters and songs from last month's ISS workshop:

Ken Krumenacker

You Are the only inspiration I need

Phil Kennelty

Winter Blues

Sal Weeks

Sweet Hollow Road

John Savino

My Lady Jane

Vince Gangi

From the Start

Lois Morton

The Road Traveled

Marguerite Cassell

From Our Windowsill

Hank Stone

Robert Johnson Knew

Frank Gambino

So Unique

Estelle Hendricks

The Walnut Table

Gerry Dantone

My Hands Are Tied

Mike Svezia

Be Sensible

iss

Director

Sonny Speed

Webmaster

Walter Sargent

Writing Coach

Mel Glazer

Newsletter

Editor

Pedro Pereira

Contributors

Walter Sargent

Tony Tedeschi

Suzanne Ernst

Dave Cook

Gerry Dantone

Sonny Meadows

Mike Svezia

Steve Robinson

Frank Gambino

We're on the Web!

See us at

www.islandsongwriters.org

ISS Open Mics

The next open mic at **Borders Cafe**, Route 25, Syosset, is Jan. 2. Hosted by Vincent Crici, this gig is monthly, on the first Friday of the month. Sign up at 7:30 p.m.

Monthly Workshop

Test out your songs in front of a crowd by playing them for fellow musicians who will provide constructive feedback with the goal of helping you improve as a songwriter. The ISS workshop takes place the first Monday of every month, except if it falls on a holiday, at Five Towns College, off Burrs Lane in Dix Hills. Run by ISS Director Sonny Speed, the workshop starts at 7:30 p.m.

Bring a guitar if you wish to perform your song live, or you may bring a recording on CD or tape. A piano is available for those who write their songs at the keys. Be sure to bring 25 copies of your lyric sheets so the other workshop attendees can follow along while listening to your song. It is much easier to provide constructive criticism when people can read the lyrics.

The ISS workshop is at the center of the organization's mission to help songwriters perfect their craft. Many performers on Long Island got their start at ISS.

General Information

For general information about ISS or how to join the organization, contact ISS Director Sonny Speed at mcspeed@optonline.net or 631- 462-3300. To submit items for publication in the newsletter, contact Pedro Pereira at pedropereira@verizon.net. Visit our web site at www.islandsongwriters.org.