

February 2010

www.islandsongwriters.org



Island
Songwriters
Showcase

Next Workshop
Monday, March 1st at
Five Towns College.

Borders Open Mic

The next show is
Friday, February 5th,
hosted by
Vinny Crici.

Writer's Choice

Find out what song won
on Page 2.

March 20th, 2010 ISS Night at the Hard Luck Café

The ISS is invited back
to the Hard Luck Café,
presented monthly by
the Folk Music Society
of Huntington (FMSH).
Details on page 2.

Pisces Café Closes

Full story on page 2.

Happy Valentines Day!

*"When the power of
love overcomes the
love of power the world
will know peace."*

-Jimi Hendrix

Everyone's a Critic!

Making the most of the workshop process

BY SID CHERRY

What could be scarier than writing a new song, performing it in front of a group of fellow songwriters, and letting them pick it apart? How about taking that same new song, without any of the kinks worked out, and performing it in front of an audience somewhere only to hear a smattering of polite applause or worse (I'm reminded of the Blues Brother's movie where the band performs behind chicken wire to keep from being hit by flying beer bottles). In that light, bringing your song into a workshop sounds pretty good, almost necessary. Let's face it, if the process didn't work, there wouldn't be thousands of free and paid writing workshops across the country.

The interesting thing about most workshops is that they allow members to function as both performers and critics. In that regard, you are given two ways to develop your songwriting chops. As a performer, you are given a constructive, friendly (hopefully) atmosphere where you can try anything without fear of failure. You are given the chance to bounce ideas off of others who have a real knowledge of what you are trying to do. As a listener, you have the opportunity to hear a variety of different songs with a variety of things that work and don't work. The more you develop a critical mind about these songs, the better you will be able to examine your own work. While books could be written on the subject, here are a few ways to get the most out of any workshop.

To the listener: Be nice, but helpful (in other words, constructive).

There are two extremes of unhelpful comments: "I liked it" and "I hated it". If that's all you offer a writer, you are not giving that writer anything they can learn from. If you liked a song, elaborate on the things you liked about it. Tell the writer what worked and why. While "I hated it" is never appropriate at a friendly workshop, don't be afraid to talk constructively about why you did not like a particular song. The more you examine elements you liked or disliked, the more you can learn about how those elements may or may not work in your own songs. This is the part of the workshop where you get to grow without having to put yourself in the spotlight.

To the writer/performer: Resistance is futile!

Songs move in real time. We hear what we hear without much time to stop and think. When someone offers a constructive critique of an element of your song, they are giving you their response to what they heard as the song flew by. To offer an explanation or argue against their point doesn't really help the next listener who may hear the same thing. And, if twenty people offer the same comment, it might be time to consider a rewrite. Contrary to what some may believe, in general, the more people talk about your song the better. It's amazing what you'll hear if you keep an open mind.

I love you, workshop!

Ultimately, it is in our best interest as writers to embrace the workshop process. That verse or chorus you polish in a workshop could keep your song from being tossed in the garbage pile by some potential publisher, record executive or artist. At the very least, it may keep people from scratching their heads at the next open mic night.

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We're on the Web!

See us at

www.islandsongwriters.org

Resources

The Craft of Lyric Writing

by Sheila Davis

This hardcover book is an invaluable reference for all lyric writers. Gives many wonderful guidelines with great examples from professional and amateur lyrics.

Available from Amazon.com, used, for less than \$10.

Writer's Choice: "In The Shadows" by Jim Baron

Who Played What

Here is a list of the performers and songs from the January workshop:

Andrew Kirschner - *Sit With Me*
Jim Baron - *In the Shadows*
Jules Jacobs - *Day Break*
Thomas Tedesco - *Kisses Cold as Ice*
Sid Cherry - *Football on the Radio*
Estelle Hendrich - *They All Live In Harmony*
Susan Davis - *Bad Advice*
Sonny Meadows - *My Own Pants*
Michael Svezia - *Macho Dog*
Pedro Pereira - *The Truth About Sand*
Susan Cohen - *You and Me*
Vincent Gangi - *Celeste*

ISS Night at the Hard Luck Café

(by WALTER SARGENT from ISS website)

The ISS is honored to be invited back to the Folk Music Society of Huntington's Hard Luck Café. For the third year, ISS members have nominated six performers for their talent and accomplishment. Each one is a gem – a songwriter with a voice that is truly their own.

Some will perform solo and some with a small ensemble. In addition, we are collaborating on a few very special group numbers to be announced at the event. (editor: *There will be a performance of the Denise Romas song "Healing Angel", sung by Denise and the "ISS Singers".*) The evening is sure to be unique, varied and a lot of fun.

The Performers are (in alphabetical order): Sid Cherry, Susan Cohen, Suzanne Ernst, Estelle Henrich, Ken Krumenacker and Hank Stone.

Walt Sargent will introduce the performers, and will perform one song in memory of Bob Campbell during the open mic.

Pisces Café Closes

Pisces Cafe closed its doors at 14A Railroad Ave, Babylon, on January 9th, after one final Friday night fling. Pisces was known as one of the few remaining "Bohemian" coffee houses in Suffolk County, if not on all of Long Island. For years they generously hosted meetings by local activist groups and held open mic nights where many ISS members and other area artists performed. No matter what food or drink you ordered, your bill always came out to be somewhere between \$7-\$10. Pisces will be missed. According to their Facebook posting announcing the closing, however, *"the Pisces Café community still holds together"*.

Monthly Workshop

Test 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 holidays, at Five Towns College, off Burrs Lane in Dix Hills. Run by ISS Director Walter Sargent, the workshop starts at 8:00 p.m., with performer sign-up beginning 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, visit our web site, www.islandsongwriters.org. To submit items for publication in the newsletter, contact Sid Cherry at sidcherry@optonline.net.