

# Island Songwriters Showcase Newsletter

July '99

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## MUSIC, THE INTERNET AND MP3

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### What is "MP3?"

MP3 is an audio data file format, a "music" file." It's a CD without the plastic. For those who haven't heard one yet, it sounds about as good as a mini-disc: not quite as good as a CD but perfectly adequate for most listeners. MP3 is, in effect, file-sharing for the masses; it lets virtually anyone upload and download music over the Internet.

MP3's strength is that the file format is non-proprietary, resulting in an abundance of high quality/low cost software for consumers and producers. On the high-end is MusicMatch Jukebox that does CD "ripping" and encoding for \$30. ("CD ripping" is the act of turning a standard CD track into another format such as MP3). On the low end is Microsoft's Windows Media Player which has approximately one feature: "play file". But hey, it's free. Somewhere in the middle is WinAmp, a very popular play-only device for \$10. Keep an eye out for Mp3Box, too. Their website isn't up yet, but they've reportedly got a no-frills encoder/decoder with CD ripping for free. Power users should take a look at Xing for a full line of affordable high-end MPEG encoding and streaming audio and video software.

MP3's flaw is that it doesn't support watermarking (the act of embedding ownership information in the file so that it can not be removed or altered). You can put a copyright notice on your MP3 file -- but so can anyone else. Perhaps because of this, most players don't bother displaying it. (WinAmp is the exception.) In my opinion, this is a major defect. Musicians who are willing to give away free samples over the Internet should at least know that they will be credited properly.

If nothing else, MP3 has been a real wakeup call. The enormous opportunity to make (or lose) a fortune on the Internet has attracted some major players. Microsoft, IBM, Sony, AT&T (not to mention the RIAA) are all rushing the net with their proprietary alternatives, hoping to nip MP3 in the bud. From the music industry's perspective, MP3 is a rogue competitor with no scruples and no overhead. Yes folks, word has it that Time-Warner is putting the subliminal message, "MP3 is the Devil", on all new releases.

Related sites: [www.mp3.com](http://www.mp3.com) [www.winamp.com](http://www.winamp.com) [www.xingtech.com](http://www.xingtech.com) [www.musicmatch.com](http://www.musicmatch.com)

## ISS SHOWCASE

*We did not have a showcase in June and we are no longer at New York Avenue in Huntington. Our showcase in July was at JP's Long Island Grill in Farmingdale and was in my opinion, great! Here's the review.*

*July 19, 1999*

*JP's L.I. Grill, Farmingdale*

We started the evening with a long-term ISS member **Bill Meehan**. He has a remarkable voice. We haven't seen Bill in a while and he is really missed. He is such a powerful songwriter and performer – thee combo. He opened with a silly love song so he says titled “*Unheard Love*” and then performed the song “*Now*”, written for those of us who have problems and can't seem to find the way to change. I'm there. Great way to open the night!

Next we heard from newbie **Frank Walker**, who hosts an open mike at JP's on Wednesday so check it out. He started his set with “*Something Real*”, a song with strong harmonics complimenting his voice. His second song “*In Front of You*” he wrote only a month ago for his goddaughter's Christening. He mixes rhythm and melodic chords to form a real emotional piece. A big ISS welcome to Frank.

Changing the flavor and waking the place up a bit was **Steve Lieberman** accompanied by his bass and drum machine. He performed “*Glad I'm A Vegetarian*” and a song for his dog called “*For Buttons*”. Humor and sensitivity and a lot of energy. Leave the caffeine and listen to Steve.

**Carl Ferrara** is definitely an entertainer and talented. I usually hear him play piano at Borders but tonight he played guitar showing us another side and feel. His first song “*Perfect World*” was a ballad that we could all relate to. He followed with “*Don't Try This At Home*”, a song he wrote reflecting the lunacy and obviousness of the media. It's the CYA thing. Right on Carl!

Being ever so polite as he approaches the stage, **Andrew Kirschner** performed “*You (Dream of Love)*” an “*I Got Designs On You*” written in his college days up at Buffalo. It was bluesy and I really liked to hear Andrew playing different styles.

Next we heard from our host at Borders Books in Syosset, the scoop man himself, that fly web guy **Bill Ryan**. He was having dinner with the family and going out with his extended ISS family at the same time. Pretty clever. He opened with “*So It Goes*” and I thought Neil Young stepped in and took over Bill's voice – but he still looks like Stephen King! He played that song because it was his daughter Tierney's favorite. Speaking of Tierney, Bill performed a cover song we all know well, “*Happy Birthday*” because it was well her birthday. She's 14! Wow! We all joked that Bill did his second song but we let him get a third in, the showstopper “*Get Off of My Couch*” and we all chimed in at our appropriate spots. He twanged and sang!

Keeping the humor going, **Sonny Meadows** took the stage doing the blues. He performed “*Selling Vacuums Door To Door*” and selling vacuums never sounded so good. I love the way he can rhyme

with vacuum technology. He followed with a more serious tune “*10 Commandments and the NRA*”. Sonny claimed that his political American Inquisition songs caused Michael Forbes to switch parties. Now he is writing about the recent gun control problems in our schools and our astute politicians solution to the problem. Yep – throw the book at them. Rick Lazio should hear this song.

Up next was **Jeff Curtis** who changed the mood of the room with his wonderful instrumentals “*Mustang*”, a rambling song eliciting great imagery, and then he played a song that is not yet titled. Even without a proper name, the song had a mellow full-bodied feel. Jeff stated these songs would be on his upcoming CD to be ready sometime in the future. More of Jeff’s instrumentals can only be good.

**Vincent Crici**, who Sonny Speed introduced as the ISS triple M&M&M (Most Melodic Member – so sweet) performed “*Against the Moonlight*”, a song written for his daughter, and “*A Love So Strong*” written for his son. A very balanced songwriter. His songs are so beautiful, sincere and heartfelt you wish you had written them yourself.

The great music continued as **Stuart Markus** played the provocative and deep song “*Candle In My Hands*”, one of my favorites of his. Then he played a song inspired by Christine Lavin and Sonny Meadows titled “*Songwriter Psychology*”. A very catchy number with clever lyrics matched with a bluesy very memorable melody. Great performance.

**Michael Clark** who is currently recording at Sonny Speed’s studio, performed “*I Confess*” and “*I Like That*”. If his stuff doesn’t grab at you, I don’t know what will. I can’t wait to hear a produced version of Mike’s music! His voice and his music are always pleasing to listen to. Good luck with the CD project (I know).

**Cathy Kreger**, who is a very talented songwriter, performed “*Grand Central Waltz*” and “*She’s No Maria*”. She has great presence when performing and has an awesome voice. She completely captivated the audience! I wanted to hear more. Excellent songs.

One of the ISS’s most prolific songwriters, **Rick Crawford** played “*Beneath the Sun*” and “*Cold*”, appropriate for our heat wave. He plays somber chords with extremely deep images and lyrics about places most of us dare to go. He is a master storyteller and poet. You really have to listen hard.

**Eric Herz** who never lacks energy in his playing, performed “*Bright Side of Ever*” and “*Always Searching*”. Both songs have very rhythmic driving melodies laced with philosophical messages.

Next we heard from **Andy Romanoff** who played borrowing Stuart’s guitar two untitled instrumental pieces, one of which he just started writing. I always find it amazing that someone can just give birth to a song a have it walking right away. Andy gets a big A for effort and for a great set.

Following was **Josh Joffen**, all the way from Brooklyn performing “*There Is A Seed*” and “*The Fool*”

inspired from a Tarot deck. You never know where the source of a song can come from and Josh's angles works really well with his music. I haven't heard too much from Josh but I can tell you he is very talented.

Our last performer for our first time at JP's was someone new to the scene. On his 12 string guitar, **Dominique** played "Lose These Chains" and "I Needed You", and both were very smooth and catchy. It was a wonderful way to end an evening full of great Long Island original music.

Special thanks to all the staff at JP's and to our sound man **George Trapani**.

**Come down on August 16<sup>th</sup> to JP's L.I. Grill and enjoy yourself.**

## **BORDERS RECAP**

7-1-99

*Borders Books, Syosset, NY*

It was a hot night and everyone was in the bookstore cooling off and listening to some great Long Island music. Our host **Bill Ryan** got things going with **Carl Ferrara** (who saved the night), me – **Shari Diamond**, **Mike Clark**, the **hard rock group "Faraday"** home from college, and newbies **Janis Sabatino** and **Sherry** both singing a capella. An interesting night of diverse music.

*Next Borders event is August 5<sup>th</sup>. Support the ISS and original L.I. music.*

## **SONGWRITERS IN THE ROUND**

### **COMMACK**

7-15-99 *Barnes & Noble - Commack*

Well, I finally got my big debut! The host of this event **Sonny Meadows**, decided to dedicate this evening's music selection to children's music or songs written about children. Along with Sonny and myself (**Shari Diamond** in case you didn't figure it out), was **Will O'Shaugnessy** who has lived in Australia and Africa and has learned to play many ethnic instruments including one of my favorites, the didgeridoo. So, it was Sonny on guitar singing the blues, Will doing all sorts of wild rhythm songs, and me on keyboard doing "Shari" songs. Eclectic? You bet! We had a number of patrons there and a lot of audience participation including my 2 kiddies. Pretty good for a bookstore. Thanks to Kevin for bringing his children (P.S. I love the instruments they made).

*Next B & N event is August 12<sup>th</sup> and will have a great line-up. See Sonny for more info or call him at 673-3605. Support L.I. music.*

## **SONGWRITERS IN THE ROUND**

### **WESTBURY**

7-16-99 *Borders – Westbury, NY*

If you were able to attend this event, you know you heard some great original music. Tonight we had performances from **Sonny Meadows** (does he get around or what?), **Michele Monté**, **Dave Isaacs**, and of course the host himself, **Rich Stein**. Everyone really enjoys the relaxed atmosphere and there is strong audience feedback.

See Rich Stein at meetings or gigs for more info.

*Next Westbury Borders event is August 20th. Come join us.*

**ISS TRIVIA QUIZ**

Match the song to the CD and ISS artist!

Good luck! (don't cheat)

Go to [www.cyber-songs.com](http://www.cyber-songs.com) for the answers

a) <i>Can't Catch Me</i>	1. Rollin' Along, Bob Westcott
b) <i>Dead Silence</i>	2. The Big Dead Waltz, James Yarsky
c) <i>To Be Or Not To Be</i>	3. The Shoes Of The Troubadour, Michael Soloway
d) <i>Telephone Call</i>	4. My Name Is Thomas, UniversalDice.com
e) <i>Waiting For Amy</i>	5. Devil Dancin' Down Main Street, Sonny Meadows
f) <i>Silk Purses &amp; Lemonade</i>	6. White Gloves & Party Manners, Sue Renner
g) <i>Nothing</i>	7. Now, Jim Baron
h) <i>Waitin' For My Amy</i>	8. Dreams, Jeff Curtis
i) <i>See The Light</i>	9. Behind The Red Glass, Blind Insight
j) <i>8 Days In October</i>	10. 10 Big Pancakes, Shari Diamond
k) <i>Fate</i>	11. Heart Of The Matter, Cathy Kreger
l) <i>Simple Gifts</i>	12. Coloring The Sky, DeStefano & Mcleod
m) <i>Small Town Diner</i>	13. Hands On, Rich Stein
n) <i>I Want</i>	14. Not The Only One Who Feels That Way, Stuart Markus

**Director's Blurb**

ISS workshops have become increasingly popular and we want to ensure that all members get enough time for comments. If you want your song heard but you're not looking for critique, please save the debut for the showcase. If you want feedback, **please remember to bring 25 copies of the lyric sheet.**

**ISS Staff**

Ø **Director:** Sonny Speed

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Ø **Website Coordinator:** Bill "Scoop" Ryan

Ø **Newsletter Editor/Publisher:** Shari Diamond (my CD is at the printer!!)