

# Island Songwriters Showcase Newsletter

October '99

[Workshop](#) [Songwriter's Choice](#) [Showcase](#) [Borders](#) [ISS Staff](#) [Director's Blurb](#) [In the Round](#)

## ISSers OUT AND ABOUT

Many ISS members performed at the popular **Annual Fall Festival** at **Heckscher Park in Huntington** this month. I don't know how the town does it, but every year they have a beautiful weather and this year was no exception. It's always the first weekend in October. Each year draws more and more people and events so look out for it next year. Maybe it will be you who performs.

October is also the time many celebrate Halloween. For musicians, there were various ways to get in the mood. **The Poe Project Live** on Friday, October 29<sup>th</sup>, is the brain child of **Dennis Daniels** and featured many local writers, musicians, actors, radio personalities and dancers who interpret Edgar Allen Poe's works. The event was held at the **Vanderbilt** this year and was in the second year of its running. Many ISS members such as **James Yarsky** and **Jim Dexter** gave their talents to this project this year as well as last year's, that was held at **Five Towns College** and very well received. A double-CD is available and all proceeds from the event benefited the **Saltare Foundation for the Arts**.

Also, at the **Conklin Barn** in Huntington, ISSer **Bob Westcott** was part of the Grateful Shed Halloween Costume Ball.

Hope you all had a great October and remembered to turn your clock back!

---

## ISS WORKSHOP MEETING

*ISS workshop*

*Five Town's College*

*10-4-99*

**By Mike Mattel**

Tonight's meeting happened to fall unfortunately, on the same night the Mets played the tiebreaker game with the Reds. Actually, if I didn't promise Shari I'd write tonight, I would have gone to some lonely dive, in a forgotten part of town, to watch it. But, alas, I have promises to keep and many newsletters to write before I sleep... Anyway, as it turns out the Mets won and went on to beat the Diamond Backs. In fact, I've procrastinated so long with the newsletter, as I write this intro, the Mets are two down with Braves in the playoffs. I'll apologize a head of time for all the baseball references.

First up was rookie **Hedy Kramer** to perform "*I'm Here*". Rick felt Hedy held back on the bridge and

shouldn't have. Others felt it was low and inside and it was good she held up. Commentary about some lyrics were also offered. Gerry felt it needed a consistent rhythm throughout the song, which would grab the listener. Mike felt all the repeated lines could be left out. Rick, who leads the league in repeated lines, felt the lines should stay with a slight change to each the second time around.

Second up was veteran **Paul Cama** to perform "*Modern Day Romance*". Paul has the highest TSA in the group. That is, Talking Song Average. John felt Paul should only narrate the song rather than the talking- singing combination he does. Others echoed this comment. Several members thought the chorus needed rework. Shari liked a lot of the imagery, but felt the feel was lost a quarter of the way into the song. Rick liked it, but felt reworking it for singing rather than talking may be more effective. He liked the chorus and felt it should stay.

Third in the line up was **Mitch Regenbogen** to perform "*My Little Boy*" on piano. Many thought the register was too high. Suggestions on how to change it were offered. Bob C. felt the chords were nice, but too romantic for the lyrical content. A well received song all in all.

In the clean-up position was **Bob Isaacs** performing "*Day Dreaming Boy*". Bob said he literally pulled this one out of the closet -- it was written in the 70's. Vince liked it and hopes Bob pulls more songs out of the closet. Shari liked it, though it reminded her of another song. She felt it worked anyway. Sonny S. had some lyrical and musical suggestions.

In the fifth position, back from an illness that nearly ended his career was the veteran left hander **Steve Lieberman** performing "*Girls in White Uniforms*" about his nearly fatal illness. Bob I. liked the song, but wanted some lyrical clarifications. Shari also had difficulty with some of the lyrics. She also had some musical suggestions. Vince liked it, but also had some musical suggestions.

Another rookie, **Sarah Haddock** then performed "*So Much for Sweet Mystery*" on piano. Holy cow, she hit this one out. Brian liked this song and had no criticisms. Gerry had some minor suggestions but considered this one a winner. "Complicated, yet understandable lyrics", he added. Vince C. was blown away by the "maturity of someone so young". In fact, everyone liked this one. This rookie promises to have a high ESA (Excellent Song Average).

Note : I think I've run the baseball references into the ground, so mercifully I'll stop. Anyway, by the time I'm writing this part, the Mets are out of it. Thanks for your patience. **Brian Sendrowitz** (a big time songwriter winner) then performed "*Outside Myself*". Vince C. considered this a great song, but had some melodic ideas. Most considered this a great song.

**Valerie Gordon** then came up to perform "*Last Night*", a cappella. Paul thought the chorus was too long, but liked it otherwise. Bob I. liked it just as it was -- music was not required. Carl also liked it, but felt the chorus was repeated too much. Vince liked it, but felt it needed some development. Others felt the vocals needed a wider range. A fine effort all in all.

**Gil Cohen** came up to perform "*Something Else*". He was fined \$25 for not having lyric sheets. Carl considered this a good song and liked the contrast between verse and bridge. Brian liked several things about this song and had no criticisms. Sonny S. had some melodic suggestions.

The well-read **Rick Crawford** then performed "*Still Waters Run Deep*". Vince liked the song but was confused by some lyrics. Rick clarified the lyrics by explaining references to Dante's "Inferno" and Shakespeare's "The Tempest". Some felt the title was cliché. Shari felt that more of the narrator's experiences with the woman should be woven into the song. Sonny S. felt the woman should have a name. Rick liked the idea and proposed "Shari". All agreed.

**Vince Crici** then brought "*Every Trick in the Book*" on tape. "It's just a silly country tune", Vince stated. Bob I. liked it and added if it were his song he'd jump in a car and head for Nashville. Brian liked it, but had some lyrical suggestions. Gerry considered it a very clever song. Rick felt it needed to be more "gritty" to be Nashville material. Most considered this a winner that just requires a little work.

**Stuart Markus** then performed "*Nobody Wants to be Alone*". Bob C. liked it, but pointed out a contradiction. Others agreed. Then a debate began on what actually constitutes being "alone". We tried to consult Gilbert O'Sullivan, but he never returned our calls. Some lyrical comments were offered along with tempo changes. Sonny M. suggested moving the instrumental part before the bridge. He felt the gap disrupted the flow of the song. Mike C. commented on some tense problems and suggested a new ending.

**Sonny Meadows** then got up to perform "*Trademark*", about the detachment of assembly workers from the final product they build. Stuart liked it, but pointed out some lyrical contradictions. Gerry began a debate on the meaning of the song. Others thought the song was good, but needed to focus on the main point. Some musical suggestions were added.

Newcomer **Adrian Esguerra** ended the evening with "*Fine Script Painter*". Stuart liked the melody and performance, but wished he had lyric sheets in order to make useful commentary on the lyrics. Others commented on the fine melody. We all hope to hear from Adrian again, with lyric sheets.

Next meetings are November 1<sup>st</sup> and December 6<sup>th</sup>. Mark your calendar and bring your song down. ?

---

## **SONGWRITER'S CHOICE**

**SARAH HADDOCK**  
**"So Much for Sweet Mystery"**  
By Gerry Dantone

Writing love songs isn't easy. Actually, let me clarify this; writing good love songs isn't easy.

After all, it's the number one topic in songwriting, meaning the subject has been covered in every conceivable way from every possible angle. Seemingly it has all been said before, is being said now, and will be said again! That is why a fresh or unique look at the ubiquitous and complex story of love is deeply appreciated. Sarah Haddock's first effort at the ISS Workshop, presented an astoundingly mature and brutally honest look at a relationship that breaks all the rules by being more true to life than expected. Reality, what a concept!

This is a difficult thing for some to accept and it's reflected in the simplistic idealizations of many love songs. You know what I mean, lyrics such as, "everything will be all right" particularly if "you see the light" and doubly particularly "if you'd only love me." However, idyllic love just does not happen as often in real life as it does in song, therefore the story of real humans reaching out for each other is underreported. Sarah corrects this when she sings "You should know I won't promise you impossibilities/Because they sound right at the time/And although you're accustomed to your insecurities/Can you handle mine?" Give me true love over idyllic love any time. Thanks to Sarah Haddock.

---

## ISS SHOWCASE

Oct 18, 1999

JP's L.I. Grill, Farmingdale

Shari Diamond

It was a complete evening at JP's tonight. There was baseball, football, food, drinks and great music! Life doesn't get much better.

We started our musical portion of the evening with a newbie, **Ed Wernersbach**, who has been doing open mikes with Stuart Markus. He doesn't yet write his own tunes but he plays and sings others quite well. He performed "*Midnight In Montgomery*" by Allen Jackson, and "*The Dance*" by Garth Brooks, the latter of which he dedicated to his daughter starting to attend college. Rick said it was more like an early Jimmy Page song. Oh yeah! Very sweet.

Next, we heard from a duo artists, **Eliot Place**, who are new to the ISS scene as well. They reminded me of early Simon and Garfunkle and performed "*At This Junction*" and "*The Spider*", a good tune for the Halloween holiday, and "*When You're Down*". Interesting harmonies and sort of a 60's retro feel to the music.

Next up was a man with definitely his own style. **Andrew Kirschner**, not a newbie, performed "*What A Nice Girl*", (uh-huh – we know what you really mean to say), and "*Solitaire*" which he dedicated to his grandfather who is very ill. He also stated that he just got a new job so best wishes and our regards to your family.

Raising the volume and energy in the dining room was **Steve Lieberman** performing a tune that Garth Brooks would play (just trying to see if anyone actually reads this stuff). I just realized Steve was left-handed. He then performed "*It's Cool To Be A Hebrew*", which most certainly rocks.

**Carl Ferrara** went on next and performed "*Touch of a Master's Hand*", in which he admitted he based it on the poem by Myra Walt from the book, "Chicken Soup for the Soul". Stealing lyrics is usually not a recommended means of writing in the ISS but we'll let him pass. It was a beautiful song. He followed with "*Right Here*", a very spiritual upbeat song.

Now at the plate, I mean stage, is the wonderful **Martha Trachtenberg**. Okay – I know I am a bit biased. She came on with great news about her upcoming CD to be due out this Christmas! She opened with "*Just One More Near Miss*" and we had to imagine her accompanied by various instruments as she sang a capella. We were spell bound. Then she played a brand new song, "*All Night*" and this one is HOT! It's got a circular swaying motion that sensually sweeps the lyrics around the room affecting all in its path. PLEASE do not bring this to a meeting because you know it's a winner! Oh, just bring it on down. It doesn't matter who wins.

Our topical-events songwriter, **Sonny Meadows**, started his set with "*Malathion*", and hopefully that awful spraying is behind us now with those big bad mosquitoes. He ended with a 25 year old/young tune provoked by the nuclear test ban treaty that got vetoed titled "*Will The Missiles be Dismantled*". He goes from humor to seriousness but always has a concerned viewpoint.

We have a lot of talent in this group and one of our newer additions is no exception. **Brian Sendrowitz** is young, sensitive and an awesome songwriter. He performed "*Blow It All Away*" and the title track of his CD "*Morning has Broken*". He's got his own style and plays from the heart.

A newbie to the group and first time at JP's, **Gil Cohen** wrote his first song "*How High*" while in Israel. It was melodic and trance-like at times. He followed with "*Katie*", a playful tune with a deep story. Very memorable and we hope to hear more from him.

**Bob Isaacs** wanted to keep things old and he played one of his oldies "*Day Dreaming Boy*". He debuted this at the prior meeting and someone suggested having Sonny Meadows cover this song. Then he played a song from his Colorado days, "*Rocky Mountain Cowboy*". A great set.

Open mike man and long term ISSer, **Stuart Markus** performed "*Nobody Wants To be Alone*" which he too debuted at the prior workshop. A very intense song. He followed with "*Old Enough To Know Better*" which I know nothing about. Stuart is a very accomplished performer so check out his open mike on Wednesday's at the Broadway Beanery in Lynbrook.

**Rick Crawford** up next. I was busting on him most of the night and in turn, we were busting on everyone else so now it's my turn. He started with "*101 Days*", a song about traveling with Dalmatians, and then played "*Moved Out*", a song about joining the foreign legion, which is pretty self

explanatory. Not his usual deep lyrical capability but I guess you need to take a break. Remember: IT'S GOOD TO BE THE QUEEN!

Now, for real, **Rick Crawford** performed “*100 Days*”, a song about his 3 ½ month trip around Europe and the awe of the surroundings of beauty and horror (i.e., Nazi camps). Very powerful stuff. He followed with “*Moved On*”, also inspired by travelling. Rick is very well read and very insightful.

**Mike Clark**, who is in the process of recording with Sonny Speed, performed “*Why Are You So Sad*” and “*Yellow Moon Tonight*”. Mike has a very inviting quality about his music that makes the listener want to hear more. Good luck on your project and let us know when it coming out.

**The Tone** performed “*Colors*”, a song stating that we all have similar colors inside, and “*Only Dreaming*”, because sometimes dreams do come true. He has a smooth voice and his writing compliments him very well.

*I had no writing left and **Martha Trachtenberg** graciously finished the last 2 performances. Note the better style of writing here folks.*

Two-chairs Cattrano and his magic tape player took the stage. The player handled the background tracks for “*Into Your Heart*” freeing **Bob Cattrano** to concentrate on his singing. The room was (finally) quiet, in homage to the hypnotic songs and singers. His second piece, “*Nothing*”, is some of Bob’s darkest writing. He introduced it as his pre-Halloween song; makes sense to me. A fine moody set. Well done, Bob.

**Jim Barry** is new to the ISS showcase and he hung on to close the night. His first song “*Distant Drums*”, dealt with his return to music after long absence. He heard “distant drums on distant shores” calling him back, and more power to him. “*Leaving Never-Never Land*” ended the night. Written for a friend’s wife (hmmm...), it suggests none too gently that it’s time to grow up. What a concept. It was a brisk debunking of lots of fairy tales, but the sting was lessened by the chorus’ last line: “growing up don’t mean leaving yourself behind.” Amen and good night.

## **BORDERS RECAP**

*October 7, 1999*

*Borders Books, Syosset, NY*

**Bill Ryan** continues to do a fabulous job as host of one of our popular ISS events. This night, we heard performances from **Bill Ryan, Carl Ferrara, Phil DeStefano** and many others. It’s fun and we are well received there.

## **SONGWRITERS IN THE ROUND**

### **COMMACK**

*October 14, 1999*

*Barnes & Noble - Commack*

A night of great original Long Island music was played this night by host **Sonny Meadows**, and friends **Bob Westcott**, **Jane Ross** and **Louis Parish**. The all-purpose roundtable was well received by the audience who was not shy in participating. Don't you be shy – come on down for a treat for the ears.

## **SONGWRITERS IN THE ROUND WESTBURY**

*October 15 1999*

*Borders – Westbury, NY*

By Rich Stein

This evening, we heard performances from **Nick Vermitsky**, **Jerry McKeveny**, and **Scott B. MacDonald**, and of course from myself for a night of mostly instrumental madness. Nick mixed in music by Leo Kottke as well as originals; Scott delighted the crowd with the variety of string instruments at his command: lap Dobro, electric guitar (the first one he ever built), and banjo all made an appearance; Jerry offered up a healthy dose of his vocal and instrumental songs, and I played some of my favorite numbers that don't see the light of day too often. The crowd was very receptive. Borders is a great place to be on a Friday night! It's relaxed, comfortable and always a good way to meet new people.

See Rich Stein at meetings or gigs for more info or call 742-2817 or e-mail him at [clearsteer@aol.com](mailto:clearsteer@aol.com).

*Next Westbury Borders event is November 19<sup>th</sup>. Come join us.*

### **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

Ø *Press Secretary*: Bob Catrano

Ø *Newsletter Writing Staff*: Gerry Dantone, Bill Ryan, Walter Sargent, Michael Clark, Sonny Meadows, Mike Mattel, Martha Trachtenberg, Vince Crici, Rich Stein, Andrew Kirschner and James Yarsky

Ø *Website Coordinator*: Bill Ryan

Ø *Newsletter Editor/Publisher*: Shari Diamond

