

# Island Songwriters Showcase Newsletter

November '99

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## TO BMI OR NOT TO BMI? A GOOD QUESTION!

By Shari Diamond

There are three performing rights societies in the US to choose from: ASCAP (American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers), BMI (Broadcast Monitoring Incorporated), and SESAC which I am not sure if it stands for anything. The first two are the most popular – just look at the music you own. I belong to BMI because it was virtually painless for me to join with them. There are differences in what you get for example, ASCAP usually pays better royalties than. To join, it basically took a phone call to get the documents needed. I had set up my own publishing company and had filed an SS-4 form with the IRS (which can be done over the phone and followed with the signed paperwork) so that I had a tax ID number. I also had a P.O. box in place so that it looks and feels like a business. I did gamble on the name of my publishing company – Kid Tested Tunes since I hadn't cleared it with BMI first. I would not have been able to use that name if someone else had it already with BMI. Get it? I scanned the phone books in the metro area and didn't see the name and since it is fairly unique, I thought it was an okay risk. Once I received the paperwork from BMI, filling out the forms were not too bad but they look scary – they are contract. One contract is with my publishing company so that I am a BMI publisher and yes, I can publish other's works. The fee is \$100 for this. I also filled out the contract to become a BMI writer, which does not cost anything. Only one song is required to be registered. Once I got my CD finished, I sent them the paperwork to register all songs with them. And now I am hoping to get lucky. I suggest two books: **How To Have Your Hit Song Published** by *Jay Warner* which has lots of sample documents and contracts, and the book **All You Need To Know About The Music Business** by *Donald S. Passman*. And as usual, I know I didn't cover a lot of ground so email me at: [shari@kidtestedtunes.com](mailto:shari@kidtestedtunes.com) or call me (the number is on the back). Good luck to all and hope I helped some – *Shari*.

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## ISS WORKSHOP MEETING

*Five Town's College*

*11/1/99*

*By Shari Diamond*

**Rich Stein** started our evening off on this unusually warm November night. We were all pumped up, especially me from downing too much Halloween chocolate the night before. When Rich plays, it's always a treat, never a trick! The master guitarist performed the instrumental "This Moment Will Last A Life Time", written to inspire his music theory class which he teaches. Rich is part of the band Jordan River and he claimed that they will be taking over the world! More power to you! Many comments – jokes – about the lack of lyric sheets (people, this one is now very old so come up with a new joke). Everyone's breath was taken away with this song. The melody was lovely. Sonny S.

suggested listening to a Steve Goodman tune. Carl liked the way he returned to the theme and brought out varied but tied-in ending. Rick liked the phrasing and agreed with Sonny about not changing a note. Great job!

**Steve Lieberman** brought on tape “Comptroller”, a wild theme for Steve to write about. Brian and Jane stated that the vocals in production needed to be brought out more. Brian liked his diction. Gerry commented that writing about accounting with a heavy rock beat was a new one for Steve. Greg suggested modernizing his pattern more from the traditional 70’s Sex Pistols sound and kind of liked the appeal of not hearing the lyrics so clearly. Many different tastes prevail at the ISS.

A newbie, **Lisa Glickman**, admitted she didn’t know to bring lyric sheets so we forgave her for now. Lisa sang her song “One More Try” while playing the classroom piano. A very inspirational song and congratulations on coming back to the music scene. Carl liked the song and chord changes. Gerry suggested a bridge. Rich liked the groove she set and found it very catchy. He also added it would be good orchestrated. Jane loved her attitude. Sonny felt it could be part of a series of songs – maybe part of a show. He also felt it might be better to alternate the groove a little more and add a bridge. Rick commented about looking out for cliches. Someone’s got to say it! We hope to hear more from Lisa.

**Gerry Dantone**, one of our love song police commissioners, brought in a rough mix on tape of “Where They Kill Love”. For a draft, it had a full-body production sound. Steve related very well to some of the stories in this song and he loved it. Production wise – many liked the way he kept the listener hooked in. Brian liked the arrangement but wasn’t sure about repeating the chorus twice at the end. Stuart cited some cliché stuff but liked the song very much. Minor comments noted. Carl loved it and thought Gerry might want to go with more of a gospel feel, and suggested modulating at the end.

**Mike Clark** performed on his trusty guitar, “Mr. MCDIVI”. Money seems to be a popular song writing topic for many writers. The MCDIVI is really an abbreviation for MasterCard, Discover, and Visa and he didn’t leave home without them in this cleverly written piece. Stuart wanted the melody for the chorus to be catchier, and more musical departure in the bridge. Some wee even thinking this could be a good jingle for those places that like to help people get rid of their debt. There is always a market for music.

*Carl Ferrara performed on piano “A Touch Of A Master’s Hand”, which he pointed out that the words were written by Myra B. Welch. He had performed this last month at JP’s on guitar and it had such a different feel but both work. Stuart commented that he did good service on paying tribute to the writer (it wasn’t stolen as I may have indicated in the October newsletter).*

Stuart liked the melody but commented where some of the lines didn’t fit rhythmically. Sarah stated how difficult it is to put music to other’s lyrics and thought he did a good job. Vinnie agreed and recommended changing the bridge. Rick suggested a pause in the third verse to tie in with the lyrics. A very well liked song.

**Hedy Kramer** dedicated her song “Through The Darkness” to her aunt who passed away recently. Sarah commented on how the chords matched the lyrics. Gerry wasn’t sure about the word “creature”

and many echoed that the word threw the listener off a bit. Sonny wanted to know more about the character by either giving the person a name or put in more details to give it a more personal feel. This way the listeners can attach themselves to the story, he added. Carl liked the chord changes but commented on one verse that he thought had an extra line.

**Sarah Haddock**, our previous month's winner, shared with us "Homesick", which she performed on piano. She is quite a prolific writer. Brian liked how she closed the song and liked the imagery. Greg wanted more change in melody in the chorus. Carl wanted more weight with the title phrase in the chorus. Sonny echoed the same and suggested taking out one reference and putting more emphasis on the word "homesick". Vinnie suggested that she should change the way she ends the chorus varying the melody but overall thought the song was awesome. Sonny got the impression the song was about being alone and added that the other person and location in the song was too abrupt. Mike commented on how one line "you hold my breath/I have so much to say" really stuck out. Quality writing here!

**Stuart Markus** performed "Just Don't Tell Her That I Want To Know". Carl was impressed that he used the phrase psycho-loser in this song, and really appreciated the vocabulary and non-cliches. Gerry felt it was a little too long. Sonny also agreed to take out a verse and put in an instrumental bridge. Rick really liked this song and felt he truly accomplished writing a very different melodic style. Rick commented though that in the chorus, he should stay away from "pretty chords". I echoed Gerry and Sonny's comments and felt he should keep it real short and emphasize his closing hook line in his verses. Good job!

**Vincent Crici** played on his beautiful guitar, a very personal song to him titled "Against The Moonlight". He has performed this song numerous times at ISS open mikes but wanted feedback to this catchy country tune. I really liked this song and felt it was very universal. I only commented on wrapping it up tighter at the end. Sarah agreed and found the chorus very hooky. Stuart liked it and commented on one line in the chorus. Sonny stated that he used a lot of expected lines and themes and may want to fine tune the snap shots. A great memorable song!

Newbie **Greg Shore** brought on CD "I Don't Want This To Be Goodbye". This hip-hop or blazing R&B tune as he calls it had some interesting weaving at the end. Gerry commented on the lyrics being very cliché and Stuart echoed the same and wanted more variance on the bass line. Vinnie understood their comments but added that for this kind of music, cliché works. We were told that this was a demo of the singer's voice. Some suggested upping the tempo to take away the dissidence. Other comments were also made regarding the use of cello was too prevailing against the voice throughout the song. Sonny also felt it was a little long.

**Tim Huss** wrote this next song about his granddaughter called "Tiffany's Song". A lot of sentiment and sweetness in his tune. Gerry thought it was a beautiful song. Stuart liked it very much and wanted an extra verse to balance the chorus, and offered minor suggestions in phrasing.

Newbie **JJ** played from his CD the song, "Converstaion With Mommy", dedicated to his mom who

passed away. I really liked this song and truly appreciated the self-expression talking even though the lyrics were sad and dark. Vinnie felt JJ achieved the rhythm, which was mesmerizing. Brian liked the lyrics but wanted to hear some alteration of the drumbeat to bring out more of the words. Sonny suggested subtraction of the underlying musical theme to add emphasis and suggested having someone sing after he is done rapping. Mike felt it was short and wanted to hear more but felt it hit home.

**Adrian Esguerra** performed “Sugarcane”, a powerful song about drug addiction. Gerry wanted to hear this as a full rock band song. He commented though that the bridge may not have been as well defined and could have lyrics. Brian thought the lyrics were really good. He suggested going into the chorus faster and maybe adding a verse. Stuart really liked this song and liked the format. Sarah agreed with Stuart and liked the sentences running into each other. Sonny liked it but found the timing change distracting.

**Brian Sendrowitz** played “Plane Fly By”. He wrote the words but the music is a traditional song. I would almost swear Jamie somehow stepped in for a moment and took Brian’s place. Vinnie felt that lyrically, this piece was phenomenal. He wondered if the melody worked with the lyrics and most of us felt it did. Only one line was cliché. Rick felt he was trying to mix and match too much and felt he may not have gotten the most out of these lyrics by locking in to this preset melody. Stuart commented that while this song is excellent, it falls into the same vain as some of his others. Sonny commented on the delivery to vary it a bit. A strong song.

**Gil Cohen**, our last contestant, performed “Katie, Katie”, which he played at JP’s last month. A very memorable song as well. Gerry felt some consolidations of verses are needed, and the chords need to be embellished more. He also felt adding the first person to the end of the song didn’t fit. Vinnie agreed and added that the melody was beautiful. Brian liked the simple chorus with complex verses. Sonny felt not to inject a third person but disagreed with Gerry about the choruses. Varied approaches and opinions are what makes one a better songwriter. Another fine way to end the workshop.

Next meetings are January 3<sup>rd</sup> and February 7<sup>th</sup> year 2000! Mark your calendar and bring your song down. ?

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## **SONGWRITER’S CHOICE**

**Adrian Esguerra for "Sugarcane"**  
and  
**Gerry Dantone for "Where They Kill Love"**  
*by Gerry Dantone*

It is fitting that on an evening where there was broad support for many different songs that the Writer's Choice Award would be shared! Newbie **Adrian Esguerra** and this writer, **Gerry Dantone** of **UniversalDice.com**,

garnered an identical number of votes for stylistically very different tunes and emerged with the honors. Adrian's came prepared with "*Sugarcane*" an alternative/modern rock sounding creation played on acoustic guitar that nonetheless implied a driving rock band itching to be heard. This rhythmically solid piece also boasted ingenious lyrical tricks including lines that ended with the beginning of a new line, sharing words in the process. For example he sang "got nothing but the ground to break my/falling forth into my fate." This song will only get better when recorded.

This writer's "*Where They Kill Love*" was inspired by a Newsday column, by Jim Dwyer I believe, which told of the murder of a young Catholic Irish girl in Northern Ireland, killed for her crime of dating a Protestant. In addition the tragic death of Matthew Shepard is recounted in the song as well as the biblical story of Phinehas, who was blessed by the Old Testament Deity for killing a racially mixed couple. What ties them all together? As the song goes, "Just let me lie/In land untouched/By creeds of hate/Where they kill love."

*Gerry Dantone and his band UniversalDice.com will call their new CD "True Stories" and that ain't no lie.*

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## ISS SHOWCASE

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

*11/15/1999*

*By Mike Mattel/Shari Diamond*

Well, unbeknown to us, this would be our last time playing at JP's. We know that all things must come to an end but it still bites when it happens. Although many of us will miss the food, hospitality, and ambience of performing at JP's, the ISS is a home unto itself and will go on anywhere. And it figures we had a really fantastic turnout! Here it be...

**Mike Clark**, who is in the process of recording with Sonny Speed, led the evening off with an instrumental "*Speechless*". He followed that with "*How Do You Do That?*" and ended his set with "*It's a Giving Thing*". Mike sure knows how to get and keep our attention.

Next up was Ed **Wernerbach** who performed a song he wrote for his wife, which "saved his butt", "*My Butterfly*". He didn't explain why his butt needed saving, but it sure was a great song. He then performed a poignant song influenced by his daughter, "*Sandals*". Great set, Ed.

Next up was the always interesting **Andrew Kirschner** to perform "*Bicycle Girl*". He ended his set with "*Fallen From the Sky*". Andrew has a distinctive style that catches everybody's attention.

**Vince Crici** then entered the spotlight to perform a song that was based on a series of dreams he had "*Hold the Line*". In retrospect, he added, they were more like nightmares. He finished his set with "*Love Can Learn*", written for his wife. His sweet sentiments and appealing melodies are always a treat.

**Sonny Meadows** then performed the witty and obviously autobiographical, “*I Love You*”. It’s about a man who frequents prostitutes, even though they torture and rob him, just to hear those words, “I Love You”. Just kidding about being autobiographical. He ended with his proposal for a new National anthem “*The Great American Rag*”. Everyone roared over this one too.

**Vitamin Dee (Dee and Mark)** started their set with “*Half Way There*”. They ended their set with “*In a Wink of an Eye*”. They have a distinctive and infectious style that always entertains.

**Silent Bear** returned after a brief absence to perform a song he wrote while in Colorado “*Felt Like Woody*”, about Woody Guthrie not Woody Allen. He ended his set with “*Singing Stone*” also written while in Colorado. This is based on the legend of the Singing Stone, which is believed to have healing powers.

Now Shari takes over as I warm up.

Sonny Speed had lots of LI music trivia and lots of stories to tell. The man has lived many lives. With that, **Rick Crawford** stated that it’s challenging to make an old song sound interesting. So, his song “*Truth Of My Own*”, an oldie he admitted, would be fun to play if he could remember the whole thing. Very daring. I was hoping he would mess up and play a major chord and really let himself go. His next song “*Passion and Pain*”, had a much different feel in the intro and had a very mysterious sound. It was a subtle, quiet, and dangerous and drew us in. Overtones of Clapton mixed with Rick’s heartfelt lyrics made his set stand out.

**Carl Ferrara** followed with “*The Perfect World*”. His melodies are easy going but very catchy. His second song “*Play The Game*” was a cleverly written song with references to game jargon describing real life. Very enjoyable set.

The former writer known as **Mike Mattel**, got to have his day (or night) on stage. Being so close to Veteran’s Day, he performed the appropriate song “*Who Still Pays*”, a song about the current shopping experience this holiday has come to mean for many. He is an amazing storyteller and this song has some powerful lyrics about the wastes of war. He followed with his most requested song (actually his only requested one he added) titled “*Nice Guys*”. Well it didn’t take more than a blink for Sonny S. to tell his version of the title – “*Good Guys Finish Last*”! Ooh- baby! We all chimed in at the chorus. Very fun.

After a slight pause for setting up a keyboard, our last month’s songwriter winner **Sarah Haddock** brought in two new tunes, “*I’m Not Gonna Wonder*” and “*Draw You A Map*”. She is brave and an excellent performer. Each song had its own style, feel and subject matters giving us more incite to Sarah’s ability. Look out for her.

**Stuart Markus** performed a sort of oldies tune called “*Heartache Part II*” inspired by every movie that

summer being a sequel. Stuart's relationship songs are always interesting to be part of. His second song he wrote for his brother's wedding called "*Sunday Love*". He stated he doesn't play these songs out much but I would like to hear these two again. I especially loved the song written for his brother. Great melody and imagery!

**The Tone** took the stage after references to looking like Neil Diamond were made (he's my cousin you know). He performed "*If You Change Your Mind*" and "*Only Dreaming*". He sound nothing like Mr. Diamond but sounded great. He's a very captivating performer and has an awesome voice. The Tone rocked tonight.

Next up was **Bob Cattrano**, our almost last performer, who got up with his box (don't even go there) and sang "*Angry Son*". This is a strong, dark, and sad song that has a haunting quality. He only gave us one so the mysterious soulful tune is all we got. Maybe we will hear more next time.

A very new guy signed up at the very end. **Jorge Ariza**, who waited to play so patiently after Sonny S. finished his story. He's in a band called **Blue Scoobies** and he played "*Ann's Song*". He's got a great voice that compliments his guitar playing so well. And he stated he started out as a drummer! He ended his set and the night with "*I'll Never Let You Go*" and we do hope to hear more from him.

Wait! What's this? One more act. Our Americana-style performer, **Dominique** performed "*Show Me*" and "*I Needed You*". I could listen to his music anytime. This was really how we ended the night and it was one of the best nights filled with outstanding original music.

Special thanks to our very dedicated host and ISS Director **Sonny Speed** for always keeping us going, to all the staff at JP's and to our sound man, **George Trapani**. It was great while it lasted.

## **BORDERS RECAP**

**11/4/1999**

*Borders, Syosset*

*By Carl J Ferrara*

If you've never been to the Borders Showcase before, here are three good reasons to start: 1) there's usually fewer performers, so sometimes you get to do three songs; 2) for those piano based writers out there, there is a REALLY good digital piano there; and 3) the staff at borders is so talented, as we discovered this night. **Bill Ryan** got the evening started with two sing-along favorites, "*Get Off of My Couch*" and "*I'm Not Stephen King*." He then threw in a little plug for cyber-songs.com in "*Dot Com Blues*" which made a great impression. **Carl J. Ferrara** followed with the tribute to writer's block "*All I Have to Say*" and "*Lonely Piano*," and from his musical Legend of Saint Nicholas "*It's Better to Give*." ISS's "Most Melodic Member" **Vinnie Crici** showed off his McCartney-like talent with his dream inspired "*Hold The Line*" followed by "*Love Can Learn*" which features the impressive line, "Love can learn a thing or two from her." **Over Soul Seven**, featuring the guitar stylings of **Charles**

**Moehring** and the outstandingly full voice of **Mike Costa** performed "*Life Without Your Love*" and "*Jane Roberts*," (another author reference) and "*For What We Gain*." Next, the guy at the Borders Cafe Counter, **Ian Skolnick**, borrowed a guitar and performed "*Las Vegas*", "*Medicine*", and "*Love's Lost and Blind*." He's got a very modern 90's rock sound, which impressed us very much. Somebody get him a membership! The lovely Soprano voice of **Shelly Shields** gave us "*No More Tears, My Lady*," "*Nelson Street*", and the beautiful "*I Know You'll Go*." **Sarahh Haddock** continued her ISS debut with "*Homesick*", and former song of the month "*So Much for Sweet Mystery*." Lovely! **Mike Mattel** got up and sang the very folky "*When You Call*", and another memorable song "*On a Dare From Destiny*" where the subject "tried to learn what no one is able to teach". **Shari Diamond** gave us two new songs, "*I Got a New Bike*," and an unnamed instrumental piece for which we made up a few names: "The 11<sup>th</sup> Pancake," or "Get Off of My Couch, Charlie Brown". Either way they were outstanding. Our Most Minor Member, **Rick Crawford**, hit us with "*Beneath the Sun*", and "*Cold*" (not Coal). But he got some competition from another Borders employee, **Dominick Rothbard** who played "*Rock And Roll Porn Star*", and the instrumental "*Darcy*". You never know what's going to happen at the Border's showcase. We discovered two new members, and had a wonderful time. See ya on Dec. 2nd!

Next Borders events is January 5, 2000!. Support the ISS and original L.I. music..

## SONGWRITERS IN THE ROUND

### COMMACK

11/11/99

*Barnes & Noble - Commack*

We had terrific performances from **Scott MacDonald**, **Vincent Crici**, **Cathy Kreger**, and the host himself **Sonny Meadows**. Varied styles and musical backgrounds made the bookstore come alive. Next B & N events are December 2<sup>nd</sup> and January 13<sup>th</sup> and will have great line-ups. See Sonny for more info or call him at 673-3605. Support L.I. music.

## SONGWRITERS IN THE ROUND

### WESTBURY

11/19/99

*Borders – Westbury, NY*

We heard performances from **Cathy Kreger**, **Gerald Bair**, **Brian Piltin** and **Jim Dexter** who also acted as host this month in place of Rich Stein. This event was filled to the brim with awesome original music and varied styles. We are skipping a month to accommodate shoppers during the frantic final days before Christmas so we will be performing again on January 21<sup>st</sup>. Have a great holiday time and happy New Year!

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).

## 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