



SONIC VARIETY AT WORKSHOP

Though light in attendance, the February meeting of the ISS featured an assortment of songs ranging from poignant to light-hearted. As a special treat, ISS newcomer **Estelle Henrich** performed her mournful *Shut Out the Light* with an Appalachian dulcimer. Other performances included **Steve Lieberman's** *Trailer Park*, an image-rich vivid account of living in a trailer after his house burned down; **Gerry Dantone's** *Still Alive in the USA*, a feel-good anthem with serious commercial potential; **Rob Cattrano's** *Long Island Bluesman*, a light-hearted look at the worries of a suburban bluesman; Asevimoru's *Joy in a Distant Land*, about emigrating from Germany; and **Pedro Pereira's** *Modest Slice of Heaven*, a sympathetic look at the plight of migrant workers.

• WRITER'S CHOICE by Gerry Dantone

It's a tie: Bill Goldsmith, Sonny Meadows

The February workshop was a step back to normalcy, or what passes for it these days. We heard songs about the environment, social justice, broken hearts, the blues and personal travails, with the inevitable reminder, here and there, of last year's tragic events. The further away from the events of September we get, the more songwriters are able to take a more nuanced look at it and its aftermath. Instead of searing pain and horror, we now see irony and the challenges ahead. In addition, what concerned us before Sept. 11 continues to concern us now. These are serious times.

Sonny Meadows, who tied **Bill Goldsmith** for Song of the Month, turned his sights on one response to terrorism: the promotion of consumerism as a patriotic activity. In years past, when war and danger loomed, Americans were urged to conserve and save. Not this time! As Sonny sang, "We won't be fooled again/Yes, terror'll win if we don't get out and spend, spend, spend," we felt a certain pride in our rising personal debts. The bridge recalled, "America the Beautiful/God shed His grace on thee," but the words were replaced with, "American Express Card/May My credit never end." Is it now patriotic to buy that new guitar?

Bill Goldsmith sang about consumption as well -- that of forests and natural resources. *The Woodland Marauder* is sung from the point of view of a tree, which asks, "Who's gonna stop the Woodland Marauder/Barreling across the land/Who's gonna stop the ongoing slaughter/Is there anyone who can?" The tune had many possibilities for counter melodies and creative arrangements and hit the right balance of message and entertainment.

Gerry Dantone is a consummate consumer.

INSTRUMENTAL NIGHT AT BARNES & NOBLE

The Songwriters in the Round scheduled for March 14 at the Barnes & Noble in Commack will showcase some of the Island's best guitar instrumentalists, including **Mark Yodice**, **Jeff Curtis** and **Nick Vermitsky**. The show, hosted by our own **Sonny Meadows**, starts at 7:30 p.m. Catch Sonny and his guests monthly.

LITTLE TOBY WINS BLUES AWARD

Readies New CD, Shares Songwriting Tips

By **Pedro Pereira**

Long Island's own blues original, **Little Toby Walker**, last month brought back an award from the International Blues Convention in Memphis. Little Toby won the solo acoustic division of the competition. Fifty-three blues acts from around the globe competed during the convention.

The award comes as Little Toby, an explosive performer with a penchant for getting audiences on their feet during shows, puts the finishing touches on tracks for his second CD. The CD, titled *Cool Hand* and slated for an April release, will feature mostly originals and a song about memory loss called *I Can't Remember*, possibly written by Bernice Heffland, though she can't remember.

Fresh off the Memphis competition, Little Toby took the time to share songwriting tips, though he confessed, "Until now I never really gave my writing process any thought, so this is just as new to you as it was to me." And that's just as well, since the bluesman who studied his craft with such masters as R.L. Burnside, plays and sings with such ease and intensity that he probably doesn't need to think about it much.

The melody for *G.O.D. Dotcom*, one of the songs in *Cool Hand*, came as an afterthought," he said. "I read about virtual churches online in the paper. Immediately the chorus of 'Give me that old time religion' became 'Give me that *online* religion' in my head, and I just started making up the words. I started to think about associations with church pews, saving your soul, stuffy churches, etc. Then I was thinking about why someone would want to attend an online church in the first place, perhaps out of laziness, not wanting to get out of bed in the morning, curiosity or the need for anonymity. Add a touch of something familiar, 'Salvation for your

wearry soul through Optimum Online,' and there you have it. Sometimes the lyrics took on a certain bizarre quality. For instance: 'I just got baptized, I never had to leave my house / I got my faced splashed with Holy Water with a simple click of the mouse.'"

Little Toby takes on another institution in *Cool Hand* – baseball. *Baseball Blues* is shuffle chockfull of double entendres: "Step up to the plate, I got a big bat in my hand/Just take one swing to prove I'm your man." In the chorus, he promises: I'll hit it right/I'll hit right/I'll hit it right, pretty baby/You know I'm bound to score." Despite the standard 12-bar shuffle format, Little Toby changed the chord structure slightly "to keep things interesting."

The instrumental *Baker's Dozen* came to him as he woke up one morning in Nashville. "I woke up with the melody in my head, clear as the sun that day. I just picked up the guitar and pretty much played the whole thing right there. I took out my portable tape recorder and taped it immediately or I would've completely forgotten it by breakfast."

Another *Cool Hand* track, *It's Tough*, was a song that I recorded years ago on cassette. I never was happy with it so I took a guitar groove from a previous jamming/practice session and simply worked the lyrics into that. The final product was an ongoing metamorphosis, constantly being changed and added to until I said, 'Geez, I think that's about it.'"

Find out more about *Cool Hand* and Little Toby's upcoming gigs at www.littletobywalker.com.

GUITAR TEACHER WANTED

Joe Pichkur's Guitar Center in Floral Park is looking for a guitar teacher. This is a good opportunity for you to share your skills with budding guitarists. And if you have taught before, even better! Contact Joe after 6 p.m. at 516-354-6211 if you are interested. The store is located at 306 Jericho Turnpike in Floral Park.

A HARD DAY'S NIGHT INN

You'll be sleeping like a log at **A Hard Day's Night Inn**, a new bed & breakfast recording studio that former ISSers **Joey and Vanessa Fulco** opened in Upstate New York. "We are trying to stay away from drums and loud amplification," the proprietors said in an e-mail to ISS Director Sonny Speed. "We are really catering to the writer and the songs." Anyone interested should contact the Fulcos, who offer attractive packages that include lodging, food, demo/masters, CDs, and great pro-audio gear from which to choose. Contact the Fulcos at *20 North St., Walton, NY 13856, 607-865-7667*.

JOINING ISS is easy. Come to our meetings on the first Monday of the month at Five Towns College in Dix Hills and sign up. If you have a song you want to perform, bring an acoustic guitar, a tape or a CD. A piano is also available. Bring 25 copies of your lyrics.

GETTING YOUR SONGS HEARD

By **Tim Huss**

If you are looking for information on getting your songs heard, you may want to try **SongCasting**, a service that publishes a list of artists and recording companies looking for material. SongCasting offers advice on how to present your submission. Of course they want your money, and the cost is \$45 for three months, \$85 for six months, or \$160 per year. I received two three-month subscriptions, and the lists were interesting. I haven't used it enough to say how good or bad this service is. Some of you may remember a guest speaker we had a year or two ago, **Mel Glazier**. He recommended SongCasting to me as a credible service. SongCasting's address is *15445 Ventura Blvd., Suite 260, Sherman Oaks, CA 91403, 818-377-4084*. The service prohibits reproduction of its list, but I wondered how it would work if we joined as a group. Then we could share the information and it wouldn't cost us much. This may be something to discuss at an ISS meeting.

A NIGHT WELL SPENT

Bill "Scoop" Ryan reports the crowd left asking for more after the Open Mike at Borders in Commack last month. "There were a number of ISS Open Mike regulars – **Mike Mattel, Andrew Kirschner, Howard Hillenrath** and **Bill Goldsmith**, as well as an ISS member that we hadn't seen in a while, **Nolan Myerson**.

Open Mikes

- **BORDERS Syosset**, 425 Jericho Turnpike, Syosset, 7 p.m. sign-up, on the first Thursday of the month, ISS exclusive showcase hosted by **Bill Ryan**.
- *Next gig: March 7*

Songwriters In The Round

- **Second Thursday of the month @ Barnes & Noble**, Commack, hosted by **Sonny Meadows**
- *Next gig: March 14*
- **Third Friday of the month @ Borders, Westbury**, hosted by **Rich Stein**.
- *Next gig: March 15*

ISS Postcard Mailer

If you didn't receive the postcard mailer that was sent out recently, or want to receive future updates on ISS events via mail or email, please provide **Sonny Speed** with a completed membership form available at meetings or gigs.

From the Director

ISS workshops have become increasingly popular and we want to ensure all members get enough time for comments. If you want your song heard but don't want critique, please save the debut for the showcase. If you want feedback, **please remember to bring 25 copies of the lyrics sheet** (or be prepared to pay a hefty fine – just kidding!)

Weekly Venue

- **Sundays at Seven Series** – The Northport Historical Society Museum, Main St., Northport on the north side of the street opposite the police station at 7 p.m. Contact host by **Kate Kelly** at 757-1111 for listing of scheduled performers. The Sunday At Seven Arts in Concert Series is supported by funds from the NYC Council of the Arts, distributed in Suffolk County through the Huntington Arts Council. The council requests a \$2 donation for the evening.

If you would like to have a newsletter emailed to you, please send your request to Pedro Pereira at peddi@optonline.net.

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