

CD review THE DEFIBILLATORS AIN'T NO BACKSTREET BOYS

By Pedro Pereira

If a reviewer, in assessing a collection of your recordings, calls you an "old yellow cab," what do you do? If you're **Sonny Meadows**, you write a song called "Old Yellow Cab on the Midnight Shift."

"Yellow Cab" is one of the 13 tracks in the **Defibrillators'** self-titled debut CD. It is a raucous number with a dense mix a la *Exile on Main Street*. It also is an affirmation by this sextet of middle-age musicians that they're not quite over the hill. That they still can rock and are not about to apologize for it.

The CD kicks off with the line, "We ain't the boys from the Backstreet" from "Get Yourself a Middle-Aged Man," which sets the tone for what's to come — a collection of ragtime blues infused with a balanced mix of humor and melancholy. The underlying theme is about aging, and naturally jokes about receding hairlines and impotence often take center stage. But there is also plenty of sober introspection when the band tackles retirement, loneliness and mortality.

'Once a guy with a bullet in his side bled to death, never said a word/as his blood mixed with semen left by the hooker and John I dropped at Third'

— *The Defibrillators*
'Old Yellow Cab on the Midnight Shift'

Produced by ISS Director **Sonny Speed**, who also plays keyboards for the Defibrillators, this collection of songs is not for the faint-hearted. Sonny Meadows, who wrote most of the songs, minces no words when he tackles a topic. In "Yellow Cab" he paints a picture of the seedy side of life with references to blood from a "guy with a bullet in his side" mixing with "semen left by the hooker and John I dropped off at Third." Not exactly the kind of imagery that you'll pick up on your FM dial.

Nor are these lines from the absurdist "I ODED on Viagra:" "I ODED on Viagra/Now she's starting to abuse this thing/She's attached the feather duster/to get the cobwebs from the ceiling." Appropriately, this track follows "I Can't Do It Again," a Speed-penned tune with the lines, "Well, I was with you once but you wanted to twice/Honey, that

Continued on page 2

THE MICROPHONE IS ON Performance Workshop Is Nov. 9

By Tony Tedeschi

ISS Director **Sonny Speed** and members **Nancy Sirianni** and **Sonny Meadows** are confirmed as panelists for the organization's first-ever performance workshop scheduled for Saturday, Nov. 9.

Sonny Speed said that at press time he was still trying to enlist one more panelist. The panelists, all of whom have performance experience, will act as judges during the workshop by offering assessments of each performance. Their goal will be to provide positive feedback so that ISS members planning to start doing gigs will better prepare for the stage. Audience members will also have a chance to provide feedback.



Already confirmed to perform during the workshop are ISS members **Susanne Ernst, Frank Buddine, Steve Lieberman, Bill Ryan, Frank Gambino, Mark Hussy, Rick Crawford, Estelle Henrich** and yours truly. Time permitting, Sonny Speed said, some of the following people also will perform: **Andrew Kirshner, Amy Vieis, Sonny Meadows** and **Tim Huss**.

The performance workshop is scheduled to begin at 7:30 p.m. at **Jane Ross' Song Box** in Huntington Station [Directions to the venue at the bottom of this article].

The workshop idea came up last spring, at which time Sonny gauged the interest of ISS members. After polling members, Sonny determined there was enough interest, and he worked with Jane to schedule the workshop. If the interest remains high, Sonny said ISS will schedule the performance workshops about twice a year. That means members who are interested in the workshop but do not get a chance to play this time, will have another opportunity to get on stage at the next workshop.

The idea behind the workshop is to provide helpful tips for singer/songwriters who are ready to cross that line to the

Continued on page 3

ISS Workshops: Five Towns College, Dix Hills, 7:30 p.m. first Monday of every month, run by Sonny Speed. **Nov. 4, Dec. 2, Jan. 6**

Songwriters in the Round: Barnes & Noble, Commack. The November and December gigs have been cancelled till January because of the holidays.

♪ WRITER'S CHOICE

by Pedro Pereira

Estelle Henrich is runaway winner

The Writer's Choice margin of victory usually is narrow, but that was not the case last month. **Estelle Henrich** won handily with "I can't Seem to Write a Country Song."

Considering fellow songwriters vote for the Writer's Choice winner, last month's pick shouldn't surprise anyone. After all, which one of us hasn't grappled with the frustration of being unable to write a particular song? Or as in this case, a certain style of song.

The lyrics drip with frustration as Estelle goes over a laundry list of topics, such as broken marriages, which would normally lend themselves to a country song but that she has not experienced herself. Despite the exasperation, Estelle infuses the song with some well-placed humor in the best "if you can't do it, then mock it" tradition.

Estelle's victory should taste especially sweet, considering the quality of compositions in last month's workshop. Take Bill Anacker's "Born Toulouse," Tim Huss' "Man, I Sure Do Hate that Rock 'n Roll" or Tony Tedeschi's "Aldina." All were well-crafted compositions with plays on words and vivid imagery.

But Estelle's song obviously struck a chord with the group. So the honor goes to her. Well done, Estelle.

COPYRIGHTING YOUR SONGS

By law, as soon as you commit a thought, be it through prose, verse or song lyrics, to paper, you have effectively copyrighted the work. But to protect your copyright, you must register the work with the federal government. With the advent of the World Wide Web, it has never been easier to do this.

Start by going to the U.S. Copyright Office's web site, <http://www.loc.gov/copyright>, for which the government could admittedly come up with an easier URL to remember. Once there, you can click your way through a menu or copyright-related topics, including fees, copyright basics and frequently asked questions. At the site, you also will be able to download the requisite forms for copyrighting your songs. You may log on directly to the forms page by typing the URL <http://www.copyright.gov/forms>.

For songwriters, the relevant forms are Form PA, for published or unpublished works of the performing arts, and Form SR, for published or unpublished sound recordings, both with instructions. You can't read these forms unless you have the Adobe Acrobat reader. If you don't have it, it is available free of charge at the following URL: <http://www.adobe.com/prodindex/acrobat/readstep.html>.

DEFIBRILLATORS DEBUT CD IS OUT

Continued from page 1

would be nice, but, baby, I just can't do it again."

"Handshake and an Old Gold Watch" provides a poignant moment as the protagonist takes a wistful look at his life and realizes work was all he had to live for. His employer of 30 years ushers him out the door at retirement saying his "services are no longer needed." He wants to go out partying with "the boys," but they have families to go home to. His wife left him in the 1970s and he's left with fantasizing about his neighbor Mrs. Nash's panty hose.

In the waltz "Final Arrangements," the protagonist makes a plaintive protest against cremation. "I don't want to be cooked/I don't want to be fried/Incinerated or emulsified."

The Defibrillators' debut winks and grins at you, and it even emits the occasional hearty laugh. But every so often the hilarity stops, giving way to sober assessments about life's worth. Whether purposely or accidentally, the Defibrillators send you the unmistakable message: Live life and have fun. Stop for the occasional reckoning, but don't let that be all you do.

The Defibrillators, in addition to Speed and Meadows, are Robert "Buddy Boy" Catrano (bass), Maxwell Foreman (guitar), Bob "Pops" Westcott (guitar), and Robert Langley (drums). The CD will soon be on sale at band gigs and www.thedefibrillators.com.

ISS HITS THE SPOT

Make sure you support your songwriting peers by going to see fellow ISS members perform at The Spot nightclub at SUNY Stony Brook in November and December. This month's scheduled performers are **Rich Stein, Little Toby Walker, Bob Westcott, Brian Sendrowitz, Sarah Haddock** and **Sonny Meadows**. See page 4 for more details.

IT'S YOUR NEWSLETTER

Do you have a story about songwriting or performing that you would like to share with fellow ISS members? Have you come across some music business-related information that you want to share with your peers? Here's your chance: Write a story for the ISS Newsletter.

Get in touch with Editor Pedro Pereira at peddi@optonline.net to learn what you need to do to submit an item. And make sure you take full advantage of page 4, where you can list your gigs, CD releases and other events. Remember, it's your newsletter.

Online Music News

WOULD YOU LIKE A 'TETHERED DOWNLOAD' WITH YOUR ORDER?

EDITOR'S NOTE: ISS member Walter Sargent will use this space in coming months to keep us abreast of the goings on in the online music world.

By Walter Sargent

Mojo Music invites original musicians to send CDs for their independent music radio show. "The Studio" currently airs on 58 commercial and college radio stations throughout the United States Canada and overseas. It is also webcast around the world and is being tested on XM RADIO. I got this tip (and more) from CDBaby's great artist support page. For more tips and resources, check out the StarPolish site also.

Janis Ian is back, contradicting record industry claims that MP3 downloads hurt CD sales, and she offers her personal experience as evidence.

"On the first day I posted downloadable music, my merchandise sales tripled, and they have stayed that way ever since," says Ian. Her experience supports the premise of "Raising the Barriers to Entry," (MP3Newswire) which leads off with, "Despite their cries of piracy, file trading is not what the record industry fears. What they fear is competition."

Ain't it the truth.

What a tethered download is and who would want one isn't clear, but it's obviously the next big thing. Not.

Things got a little ugly over at eBay recently when the online auctioneer found itself caught in the middle. eBay wants to sell whatever you've got unless it's a CD-R with your own music on it. To avoid the unwitting facilitation of piracy, all things recordable are considered contraband by eBay, so the company won't allow CD-R sales.

The effect? You guessed it: This hurts independent musicians, according to George Ziemann at Azoz.com. Ziemann has launched a grassroots boycott accusing eBay of discrimination. He documents his side of the story thoroughly (with screen shots, no less) and makes some interesting points.

The irony is that he can sell a Sonny Meadows CD on eBay (that is, if he ever wanted to), but he can't sell his own music if it's published on CD-R. The problem, however, is not eBay. eBay is simply not required to incur liability for the sake of someone else's business. This is a boycott with no legs.

Meanwhile, over in La-la Land, Listen.com announced licensing deals with Warner Music Group and Universal Music Group. The deal apparently enables listeners to pay a monthly fee for the privilege of downloading music they can hear on the radio for free.

Whatever anyone else may say about music industry execs, they sure do have a sense of humor. For \$17.95 a month, you can download all the "tethered downloads" you want. What a tethered download is and who would want one isn't clear, but it's obviously the next big thing.

Not.

Links for further reference:

Mojo Music Story:

<http://cdbaby.org/stories/02/10/21/8388804.html>

CDBaby Artist Support: <http://cdbaby.org>

Star Polish: <http://www.starpolish.com/advice/>

Janis Ian Article:

<http://www.usatoday.com/usatoday/20021023/4557245s.htm>

Raising the Barriers To Entry:

<http://www.mp3newswire.net/stories/2002/raising.html>

eBay Discriminates Against Independent Artists:

<http://www.azoz.com/music/eBay.html>

PERFORMANCE WORKSHOP IS NOV. 9

Continued from page 1

performing side. Even folks who don't want to spend all their free time trying to book gigs may find this useful.

"What we want to do is be supportive," Sonny said. With that in mind, Sonny plans to videotape each performance so the performers can evaluate themselves later.

Jane Ross asks that everyone attending or performing at the workshop bring some canned goods for her ongoing food drive.

Here are directions to the Song Box:

From the LIE, take exit 49 to go north on Route 110. The Song Box is located at 14 Barkers Lane, which intersects with Jericho Turnpike in Huntington Station. It's on the south side of Jericho, east of Route. 110. There's an Enterprise Rental Car place and a Chinese restaurant across from each other at the intersection with Jericho. After you turn off Jericho, the house is almost immediately on your left, set back from the road a bit.

WHAT'S DOING

This Month

ISS members are always out and about. Check your local listings for appearances live, on the radio or even on TV. Also check www.islandsongwriters.com for gigs and links to member sites with information about CD releases, shows and MP3s. Here's what's happening in the coming weeks (*Remember to check with the venue first because dates and times may change*):

ISS Workshop

Five Towns College, Dix Hills, run by ISS Director **Sonny Speed**, first Monday of the month. Starts at 7:30. Bring a guitar to perform your song live, or play a CD or tape. A piano is available for keyboardists. Bring 25 copies of your lyrics so other workshops attendees can follow along and critique your work. Upcoming workshops: Nov. 4, Dec. 2, Jan. 6, Feb. 3.

Open Mics

Borders, Jericho Turnpike, Syosset, hosted by ISS Webmaster **Bill "Scoop" Ryan**, first Thursday of the month. Sign-up starts at 7 p.m. Try to get there early to guarantee your spot. Upcoming gigs: Sept. 5, Oct. 3, Nov. 7.

Starbucks, Main Street, Huntington, 7:30 p.m. Mondays.

Ruby's, Oakdale Ave, Port Jefferson, 8 p.m. Wednesdays.

69 Wall Street, Huntington, 8:30 p.m., Tuesdays.

Starbucks, Long Beach, 7:30 p.m. Wednesdays.

Songwriters in the Round

Barnes & Noble, Commack, hosted by **Sonny Meadows**, second Thursday of the month. The November and December gigs have been canceled.

Gigs

ISS Hits The Spot

ISS has secured three evenings at The Spot, the nightclub at SUNY StonyBrook to showcase the talents of some of its best performers. The shows, organized with the assistance of Rich Hughes of the Long Island Music Coalition, are scheduled for the third Thursday of the month in October, November and December. Sonny Meadows and Sonny Speed will co-host the events and play some tunes. The Spot is located at the Fannie Brice Theater Building at the Stony Brook Campus. Here's the schedule:

Nov. 21: Rich Stein, Little Toby Walker, Bob Westcott, Brian Sendrowitz, Sarah Haddock, and Gerald Bair.

Dec. 19: Tim Huss, Nancy Sirianni, Princess Peapod, Bill Goldsmith, Jeff Curtis and Sonny Meadows.

Directions to The Spot: Take the LIE (or Route 347) to Exit 62, Nichols Road north for seven miles to the South Entrance to the Stony Brook Campus. Go left into the South Entrance. At the first full intersection, Forest Drive, take a right and continue to the third stop sign. Turn left. The Spot is in the Fannie Brice Theater Building on the left. Enter through the door by the loading dock. The Spot is on the second floor.

Songwriting Conference

The Eight Annual Northeast Regional Folk Alliance (NERFA) Conference is scheduled for Nov.15 to 17. It is geared toward folk music and singer-songwriters. Check the alliance's web site, <http://www.nefolk.org>, for details and registration forms.

Director's Message

ISS workshops are 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!)

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