

ISS WRAPPING UP THE YEAR WITH A MUSICAL BANG

As ISS wraps up its 2002 calendar, members have reason to celebrate. Long Island's own songwriting association just completed a very successful month, during which it hosted its first ever performance workshop. The organization also put on the second of a three-month performance series at The Spot at SUNY Stony Brook, where it attracted the attention of the campus' cable TV channel. ISS Director **Sonny Speed** said he hopes the Stony Brook gigs will turn into a permanent monthly event. Anyone interested in joining the organization is encouraged to contact Sonny at mcspeed@aol.com or ISS Newsletter Editor **Pedro Pereira** at peddi@optonline.net. Happy holidays!

PERFORMERS TEAR UP THE SPOT

By Pedro Pereira

A handful of Long Island's own original singer-songwriters hit the stage last month at The Spot, a nightclub at SUNY Stony Brook to give the students a taste of some of the great music being created a stone's throw away from the campus.

It was the second in a three-month series of performances at the campus hot spot, with ISS's own director **Sonny Speed** doing double duty as MC and performer. Also taking turns on stage were **Brian Sendrowitz**, **Sara Haddock**, **Bob Westcott**, **Little Toby Walker** and **Sonny Meadows**.

The performances kicked off behind schedule as a group of student poets and improv performers wrapped up their own gig. But it was worth the wait. From the moment Brian set foot on stage, we knew we were in for an enjoyable night. Though Brian's guitar wasn't amplified during the first song because of a technical glitch, he tore up the place with his trademark intensity. Brian's five-song set included a timely and heartfelt rendition of Bob Dylan's "Masters of War."

Next on stage was Bob Westcott, who plays guitar for the **Defibrillators** but was flying solo. His five-song set included several covers and the original "Bleecker Street," which he dedicated to Brian. The song about Bob's excursions to Bleecker Street club gigs as a young man in the 60s has a reference to Dylan's "Masters of War."

Following Bob's performance, Sara's electric piano was set up center stage. Introducing her first song, she said it is about being in a relationship and wanting your partner to just go away. She then tore into the cleverly composed blues tune and blew everyone away with her voice. Though she faltered on one of the songs, her performance was one of



Happy Holidays!

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WORKSHOP A ROUSING SUCCESS

By Tony Tedeschi

It seemed fitting that the first ISS performance workshop was at **Jane Ross's** Song Box, a small theater built into a barn on her property in Huntington Station. For months, Jane, one of Long Island's gifted songwriter-performers, had been discussing with ISS Director **Sonny Speed** the possibility of adding a performance critique to supplement the organization's songwriting workshops held monthly at Five Towns College in Dix Hills.

"You've been presenting your songwriting at the workshops, and now you want to see how you handle it at a mic in front of an audience, this would be the place to do it," Sonny had been challenging members at workshops over the course of the summer into early autumn. So 10 members decided to let it all hang out in front of a panel that included **Sonny**, **Jane**, **Sonny Meadows**, **Nancy Sirianni** and **Frank Gambino**; the latter doing double duty, first performing, then spelling Nancy for the second half of the session.

It would be hard to imagine a more hospitable environment. The Song Box, bears the same kind of loving touches of Jane's home, adjacent. There are an elaborate chandelier, intricate lighting, a stage decorated with dividers and sashes, a first-class sound system and comfortable deck chairs for the audience. The audience was decidedly friendly with spouses and other assorted well-wishers heavily represented.

From the kick-butt bass playing of lead-off hitter **Steve Leiberman** to the lyrical poetics of curtain-closer **Rick Crawford**, the night was filled with a wide range of musical compositions, most by performers who admitted to

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ISS Workshops: Five Towns College, Dix Hills, 7:30 p.m. first Monday of every month, run by **Sonny Speed**. **Jan. 6, Feb. 3.**

Songwriters in the Round: Barnes & Noble, Commack. After the holiday hiatus, the schedule resumes on Jan. 9 and the second Thursday of each month thereafter.

♪ WRITER'S CHOICE

by Pedro Pereira

Walter Sargent takes the title

Walter Sargent's performance of his song "Me, Myself and I" at the songwriting workshop last month was one of those sublime moments that come only once in a while when listening to a performer. Though he forgot some of the lyrics and had to stop, Walter still managed to draw listeners in with his beautiful melody. It's no wonder the song won Writer's Choice for November.

With very few words over a delicate finger-picked melody, this song says so much. "I am not alone/even when I'm by myself/just me, myself and I/and I will not despair/when it seems that no one cares/that feeling is a lie." The lyrical simplicity hides the complexity of the sentiment. There's elegance in simplicity and weight in sparseness.

And in my hour of loneliness

I will not be afraid

There's always someone there

— *Walter Sargent*

Though some workshop attendees expressed some confusion at the song's message, others alluded to its spiritual quality, and someone even called it ethereal. Evidently the latter were among a much larger number, considering the song gathered more than enough votes to make it the runaway winner.

Walter's song, in its simplicity and beauty, reminds me of one of my all-time favorites, "Save Me a Place," penned by Lindsey Buckingham for Fleetwood Mac's 1979 "Tusk" album. In both cases the songs reach so far into the depths of the emotion that only a skillful stringing together of simple words can do enough justice to any attempt at expressing the emotion. It may seem a contradictory approach and doesn't always fly. But when it does, it soars.

SHARI DIAMOND AT NASSAU COLISEUM

ISS member **Shari Diamond**, who writes and performs children's songs, is scheduled to perform on Dec. 7 at the Nassau Coliseum as part of the United United Cerebral Palsy's Festival of Trees celebration. Shari is scheduled to take the stage at 5:30 p.m.

Admission is \$8 for adults, \$6 for seniors and \$5 for children over 3 year old. Children aged 3 and under get in free. "There are lots of activities for kids, other entertainment besides myself, holiday shopping and beautifully decorated trees if anyone is interested," Shari said. Visit Shari's site at www.kidstestedtunes.com.

ISS PERFORMERS TEAR UP THE SPOT

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the highlights of the night. Sara is recording a CD, which should be completed in a few months. Watch for updates on these pages.

Though he had a tough act to follow, Little Toby Walker did not disappoint. He kicked off his set with "It's Tough," the first track on his most recent CD, "Cool Hand." Toby then played a couple of new songs containing the trademark clever lyrics and flabbergasting guitar playing. Toby is a true blues original whose amazing performances earned him first prize in an acoustic blues competition in Memphis earlier this year. Recently he caught the eye of a promoter across the pond, and as a result, has booked a couple weeks' worth of gigs in England early next year.

Sonny Meadows closed the show with some help from Sonny Speed, who played melodica on a couple of tunes. Meadows put on one of his typical charming performances with his ragtime themes on aging and relationships. Meadows is not only a singular songwriter who performs solo all over Long Island, but he also is the lead singer of the Defibrillators.

Sonny Speed, who plays keyboard for the Defibrillators, said he is working to turn The Spot gigs into a permanent monthly event. If that happens, he will continue to draw from the wide pool of performing talent at ISS and other Long Island singer/songwriters.

The November gig was videotaped for the campus cable TV station by student Guy Crawford, who also interviewed Sonny Speed, Little Toby Walker, ISS member Tony Tedeschi and yours truly for a broadcast of the show.

This month's gig at The Spot is scheduled for Dec. 19 and to feature **Tim Huss, Nancy Sirianni, Princess Peapod, Bill Goldsmith, Jeff Curtis and Sonny Meadows**.

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.

Also be sure to check out our organization's web site, www.islandsongwriters.org, for the latest happenings.

Performance Workshop a Hit

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, INTRODUCING ISS' NEWEST PERFORMERS

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opening-song jitters, but all of whom warmed to the occasion and comported themselves well. The panelists, all of whom are veteran performers, offered constructive criticism on everything from general presentation to mic technique, eye contact to dress, opening repartee to between-song commentary.

Steve Leiberman drew praise from the judges and applause from the audience for his bass playing and overall presentation. Steve's rousing opening act was followed by the softer guitar work of **Pedro Pereira**, whose sensitive stylings included some incisive social commentary on self-help books, gun control and imperialism. Workshop members who had heard a lot of **Frank Buddine's** work on tape or CD, always performed by others, now had the opportunity to hear him live for the first time. He did not disappoint with a humorous piece about the woman next door trying to win over her newly widowed neighbor with vodka and gin. **Frank Gambino's** "Touring with the Lord" was another in an insightful repertoire of religious commentary.



Happy
Holidays!

Estelle Henrich broke the string of guitar players, accompanying herself on dulcimer and autoharp, closing her set with "I Can't Seem to Write a Country Song," the winner of best song at October's songwriting workshop. **Bill Goldsmith's** deadpan delivery and unique guitar strumming added intriguing accents to his takes on modern-day life. **Tim Huss** got the night's biggest cheers with his wonderfully delivered songs about the lives of East End fishermen and a tender piece he dedicated to his wife, who was in the audience. **Suzanne Ernst** transferred her struggles with getting up in front of an audience to a song she entitled "Courage," pronounced with a French accent, and followed that with a piece called "Two Birds," wildlife being another favored subject of hers.

What **Mark Hussey** lacked in musical polish he more than made up for in stand-up comedy, leaving the audience — and panel — in stitches, between takes of two melodic compositions. **Rick Crawford's** Shakespearian delivery on two poetic compositions, "Maiden of the Crescent Moon," and "The Year that Poetry Died," was a fitting closer to the evening. Playing counterpoint to all the performances and critiques were eats and drinks at Jane's home, including

champagne toasts to the newly released CD by the Defibrillators, two of whom were present in the persons of Sonnies Speed and Meadows.

The general consensus was the evening was extremely helpful both in terms of offering valuable feedback and in providing a friendly environment for breaking the ice and getting up in front of an audience.

Tony Tedeschi is not only an ISS member and newsletter contributor, he also edits www.naturaltraveler.com. Check out his site some time.

A special thanks to Jane Ross for making her Song Box available to ISS for our first performance workshop. Jane was a gracious host who made everyone feel comfortable. Judging from the success of the first performance workshop, it is very likely that ISS will sponsor more such events in the future, perhaps biannually. Watch these pages for more information on that.

Walter Sargent's Online Music News column will return to these pages next month. In the meantime, you can catch Walter at www.cyber-songs.com.

MAKING THE MOST OF THE DAILY GRIND

The Daily Grind in Walton, upstate New York, is looking for acoustic entertainment. Artists will stay at a beautiful 1895 Victorian B&B owned and operated by the folks behind The Daily Grind. Artists will receive breakfast, dinner and \$100 for traveling expenses. Walton is about three hours from Manhattan by car and the folks in this small community are ready to listen to some new and exciting acoustic music.

The Daily Grind has a great PA system and stage lighting already installed, artists need not lug around anything but their guitars. The folks who run the Daily Grind are looking for original and cover material to be performed in this light-hearted fun atmosphere. Styles may include James Taylor, Harry Chapin, Cat Stevens, Neil Young, Jim Croce, Beatles and other classics from the 1960s and 1970s. Comedians are also welcome.

To be considered, send a bio and CD to
The Daily Grind
ATT: Joey Fulco/Music Department
144 Delaware Street
Walton, NY 13856
(607)-865-7667

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: 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: Dec. 5, Jan. 2, Feb. 6.

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. Starts at 7:30 p.m. Upcoming gigs: No December gig. Schedule resumes on Jan. 9.

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:

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.

Local Music Online

Find lots of music from local artists at www.cdpimp.com. left. Buy CDs or download individual songs from such artists as the **Defibrillators**, **Blonde Lemon Pledge**, **Little Toby Walker**, **Michele Monte**, **Dogs Gone Fishing**, **Angelwing** and **Tod Shea**.

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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Be sure to check our site for updates:
www.islandsongwriters.org