

## METAL, C.F. MARTIN STYLE

By Tony Tedeschi

So I own a Martin D-28. It's not unlike the one a good friend of mine, who lives in New Zealand, had eaten by the baggage processing equipment at United Airlines in San Francisco — bitten right through a hard-shell case.

*Lesson: never take your fine-wood guitar on an airplane ride with you, and especially do not check it, under any circumstances.*

O.K., so that pretty much eliminates taking it on long trips. What to do? Can't help but notice those funkier Martins showing up in guitar retailers, the ones with the metal tops that look like they were forged into place by Vulcan. No Dobros/resonators these. But they do look like they can take a bit more abuse and would be ideal as a road instrument.

'So, recently, I busted open my guitar-shaped piggy bank and sprung for an Alternative-X, one of those metallic-topped jobbies.'

Actually, the principal motivator for C.F. Martin & Co. to develop these odd-looking beasts is the dwindling supply of exotic tone woods. Their introduction, however, was a hard sell for this, one of the oldest continuously operating companies in America, whose customers had become accustomed to fine wood instruments.

'Most of our customers are traditional,' C.F. Martin IV told *The New York Times*. 'You've got to grab them by the ear and lead them into the future.'

I had an opportunity to sit and chat with Martin several months back, and one of the things he told me at the time was how much he lamented his ancestors not insisting that suppliers of their raw materials introduce replanting programs.

'We've been around for 170 years,' he'd said. 'Trees can grow pretty big in that amount of time.' Since he took over the company, Martin IV has introduced purchasing criteria to guard against the depletion of exotic forests. Discussing his odd-ball products like the backpacker and the metallic Alternative series, he said they were hard sells with purists, but younger buyers were grabbing them up by the thousands.

So, recently, I busted open my guitar-shaped piggy bank and sprung for an Alternative-X, one of those metallic-topped jobbies. A road guitar, period. Thing is, I can't stop playing

## THE SCOLDEES' NEW CD

More Songs About Isolation, 'My Mother Screwing My Boyfriend' and Drinking

By Pedro Pereira

ISS member Nancy Sirianni's band, the Scoldees, just released its second CD, "Nightcap World," a collection of songs that Nancy characterizes as "the same old stuff: feelings of isolation, my mother screwing my boyfriend, drinking"

But lest you think the Scoldees are just sitting back and retreading stuff from their first record, "My Pathetic Life," Nancy says it was inevitable for the band to cover new ground in this new release. This time the band veers from its mainstay of acoustic-based pop to a variety of styles infused with traces of country, folk and R&B.

Nancy says the 12 songs in "Nightcap World" gained expression as the band put them through a painstaking year-long production process. The tracks include "Lullaby for Greta," which Nancy played at the songwriting workshop about a year ago and track title "Nightcap World," one of the CD's highlights.

Last month, Nancy took a short break from her busy schedule of performing, acting and marketing the new record to answer a few questions about "Nightcap World," available for sale at major music outlets and online retailers.

**ISS Newsletter:** Tell me about the overall vibe of this record, musically and lyrically.

**Nancy:** 'Nightcap World' is a CD of tunes of varied styles, with the through line being an acoustic sound often raw with simplicity, yet filled with complex emotion. I stole that.

**ISS:** What kinds of topics are you dealing with in the songs?

**Nancy:** Same old stuff, feelings of isolation, my mother screwing my boyfriend, drinking.

**ISS:** Is the sound a lot like the other CD or do you cover new ground?

**Nancy:** I think it was inevitable to cover new ground, since

*Continued on page 2*

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

**Songwriters in the Round: Barnes & Noble,** Commack, 7:30 p.m. second Thursday of every month: **Feb. 13, March 13.**

**ISS at The Spot, SUNY Stony Brook,** 8:30 p.m. third Thursday of every month: **Feb. 20, March 20, April 17.**

## ♫ WRITER'S CHOICE by Gerry Dantone

### Princess Peapod wins with 'Drive-In'

This month's winning song is an ode to a disappearing American institution and a nostalgic tug at the heart. Although this city-born and raised writer has never had the opportunity to patronize one, the song "Drive-In" by **Michele Frimmer** and **David Cook**, who perform as **Princess Peapod** made me wish I had.

The detail of visits to the "Drive-In Movie Show" were fun to hear — footie pajamas with plastic feet, food dancing across the screen, the popcorn, the speaker boxes waiting for cars on the field of poles, and double dating and missing the actual flick being shown! And of course, missing the ending of the movies for the sake of sleep or romance. . .

---

'Always thought someday I'd go  
And get to see an entire show  
The sign is there but it's falling down  
Real estate will drive you out of town'  
— Michele Frimmer and David Cook

---

The song ended with the lines, "Always thought someday I'd go, and get to see an entire show/The sign is there, but it's falling down, real estate will drive you out of town/Went in past the falling sign, to a field overgrown with time/A screen too far gone to mend, now I can say I've seen the end."

Now that the last of the Long Island Drive-Ins has closed in Westbury, the next generation will scratch their heads and wonder what this song is all about. Next month maybe: A tribute to Vaudeville?

*Gerry Dantone never went to a drive-in movie, but did have footie pajamas at least.*

## IT'S YOUR NEWSLETTER

Get in touch with Editor Pedro Pereira at [peddi@optonline.net](mailto:peddi@optonline.net) to learn what you need to do to submit an item to the newsletter. You may write an article or just submit information and about songwriting and performance topics. Heard a CD released by a local artist? Write a review.

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](http://www.islandsongwriters.org), for the latest happenings.

## METAL, C.F. MARTIN STYLE

*Continued from page 1*

the damned thing. True, it ain't no way in the luxuriously toned class of the D-28 and that beauty's deep, resonating tone. But it has this crunchy sound, especially when cranked through an acoustic amp. The sound is something between an amped acoustic and a pure electric, even the hollow or semi-hollow body varieties.

So, a flirtation, originally driven by necessity, has turned into . . . well, pure love. Can't fathom the thought of consigning this baby to the hold of an airplane. Guess, I'll have to start saving for a real road guitar, something that doesn't steal the heart with its music. And what, my friends, would that be?

Maybe Chris Martin has a cast-iron prototype on a drawing board somewhere.

## SIRIANNI ON SCOLDEES' NEW CD

*Continued from page 1*

we grew out of the experience of 'My Pathetic Life.' These are 12 different tunes that already had a life of their own, but have taken on new expression in the course of the production. They form a different whole, but come from the same hearts and minds. What was the question?

**ISS:** Where can you buy this CD— Tower, Wal-Mart?

**Nancy:** Yup, available everywhere. I actually don't know about Wal-Mart, I'll get back to you.

**ISS:** Are any of the songs you played at the ISS workshop on the CD?

**Nancy:** Yes, I have played "Mama Was Right," "Cocoon" and "Lullaby For Greta" at the workshop.

**ISS:** Warning, silly question: What are your hopes for this CD? Commercial airplay? Will this be your breakthrough?

**Nancy:** We got lots of commercial airplay with "My Pathetic Life," albeit in small cities, but 92 of them, and great reviews in Billboard, FMQB, Relix and Campus Circle, to name a few. We are hoping to start with this CD where we left off, only this time both CDs are available in stores. If we sell CDs, yes, it sure would be a breakthrough.

**ISS:** Are you touring to support the CD? If so, where.

**Nancy:** We will be on the national festival circuit this spring and summer.

**ISS:** Any final thoughts?

**Nancy:** Yeah, it took a year and a half to finish this CD, and am I glad it's done!

Find information on the Scoldees and their upcoming shows at [www.scoldees.com](http://www.scoldees.com).

## Online Music News

# BEING 'UNSIGNED' NO LONGER EQUATES TO 'STRICTLY AMATEUR'

By Walter Sargent



Was there ever a better time to be an unsigned musician? Being “unsigned” used to mean “strictly amateur,” but not anymore.

Industry sales figures have been on a slide for years. The industry regularly sheds commercially viable artists who don't deliver blockbusters. The Internet has propelled a number of independent successes, and analysts are suggesting that the industry's fate may be sealed as early as next year.

That's not a lot of time to turn the battleship around. If it hasn't begun already, investors will start divesting their equity, creditors will unload their liability and potential business partners will think twice before hitching their futures to a sinking vessel.

No one questions that the record industry's business model has been leveled by dirt-cheap digital audio and networking technology. Without its considerable legal resources, the industry prospects would be indistinguishable from the one-hit-wonders of yesteryear. The real question is whether the lawsuits will buy them enough time for “Plan B” and whether Plan B is any better than Plan A.

We don't know many particulars about Plan B. Indeed, the industry appears to be making it up as it goes along. What we do know is that Plan B requires world domination of copyrights, putting the music industry on a collision course with the technology sector and public policy advocates. Intellectual property experts and even conservative analysts are alarmed at the unprecedented control the industry is saying it needs to survive.

On the other hand, we also know that Plan B has powerful allies. For Hollywood, Disney, and other major content producers this is war and, whatever Plan B ultimately looks like, it is safe to say that it will not be very artist or consumer friendly.

Therefore, my answer is No. There has never been a better time to be an unsigned musician. To the extent that the public is aware of them, independents have a truckload of goodwill and, as their talent and good works come forward

to meet the growing demand, that goodwill will only increase. As the industry continues to alienate artists and customers, music conglomerates will lose the momentum and focus they need to rebuild their business online.

For independents, there are three ways to maximize their

competitive advantage. Remember, competition is healthy for the industry. After all, we — ahem — only want what's best for it.

**1.** Independents must hang on to the distribution channel. If Plan B succeeds in granting effective control of the Internet to private hands, independent artists will be consigned to economic irrelevance indefinitely. In technical terms, this means that there must be a parallel channel that is open to all musicians and listeners. You can bet that such a channel will be swamped with industry services, but as long as listeners have the freedom to explore, independents will have a wedge to work with.

**2.** Independents must abandon copyright protection, at least to some extent. I can't categorically rule out all possibilities since artists are, by definition, very creative, but copyrights will be very difficult, if not impossible, to enforce. Even if they were enforceable, the odds that independents will be the beneficiaries is in the you've-got-to-be-kidding category. This is economic Darwinism: only the ones who can adapt to the rapidly changing environment will survive.

**3.** Independents must be more interesting, more diverse, more musically and/or socially relevant than what the Industry has shown itself to be. This comes naturally to most musicians, but we have also been so inundated and seduced by the superstar myth, that it needs to be unpacked and examined. It is time to re-evaluate the conventional wisdom regarding the “commercial potential” of music. If the one-size-fits-all approach isn't dead yet, then it's a brightly-dressed zombie with really bad hair.

As Victor Hugo said, “An invasion of armies can be resisted, but not an idea whose time has come.”

*For further reference on this topic:*

- The Year The Music Dies: <http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/11.02/dirge.html>
- Digital Rights Under Fire: <http://news.com.com/2008-1082-981663.html>
- Tech Firms Fight Copy-protection Laws: [http://news.com.com/2100-1023-981882.html?tag=fd\\_lede2\\_hed](http://news.com.com/2100-1023-981882.html?tag=fd_lede2_hed)
- A Radical Rethink: [http://www.economist.com/opinion/displayStory.cfm?story\\_id=1547223](http://www.economist.com/opinion/displayStory.cfm?story_id=1547223)

- Hitting P2P Users Where It Hurts: <http://www.wired.com/news/digiwood/0,1412,57112,00.html>

Walter Sargent is an ISS member and webmaster of the independent music web site [www.cyber-songs.com](http://www.cyber-songs.com).

ISS Newsletter

Feb. 2003

---

## 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](http://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: **Feb. 3, March, 3 and April 7.**

### Tim Huss on the Radio

Be sure to tune in to WGBB-AM 1240 radio station at 8 p.m. Monday Feb. 10 to hear ISS member **Tim Huss** play live. Diane Corrado, host of the radio station's show "21st Century Music" invited Tim to her show after she heard some demo recordings he did with ISS Director **Sonny Speed**.

"I'll be doing three or four songs. It should be fun," Tim said last month. "I'll be sure to plug ISS."

### ISS Hits The Spot

The ISS monthly gigs at The Spot in SUNY Stony Brook resume this month and will continue for the foreseeable future. Here are the dates for upcoming shows: **Feb. 20, March 20 and April 17.**

The Spot is located at the Fannie Brice Theater Building at the Stony Brook Campus. 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.

Be sure to check our site for updates:  
[www.islandsongwriters.org](http://www.islandsongwriters.org)

### 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: Feb. 6, March 6, April 3.

**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: **Feb 13, March 14 and April 11.**

---

### 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!)

---

### ISS Staff

**Director:** Sonny Speed

**Press Secretaries:** Bob Catrano, Tony Tedeschi

**Webmaster:** Bill "Scoop" Ryan

### Newsletter

**Editor:** Pedro Pereira

**Contributors:** Tony Tedeschi, Bill "Scoop" Ryan, Tim Huss, Shari Diamond, Frank Gambino, Walter Sargent, Gerry Dantone, Sonny Meadows.

*If you would like to have a newsletter e-mailed to you, please send your request to Pedro Pereira at [peddi@optonline.net](mailto:peddi@optonline.net).*

---

Contact ISS

P.O. Box 430  
East Northport, N.Y. 11731-0430  
Phone: 631-462-3300 (Sonny Speed)  
E-mail: [mcspeed@aol.com](mailto:mcspeed@aol.com)