

LET'S WRAP, AS IN FINGERNAILS

By Tony Tedeschi

Like anyone who mashes his fingers against those hard steel strings knows, the price you pay for those wonderfully toned sounds are fingernails on your plucking/ picking/ pounding hand that look like you've gone one-on-one with a Wes Craven protagonist. Hello fingerpicks, nail hardeners, even Crazy Glue. I couldn't get used to finger picks – either the sound or how to employ them effectively. Hardeners didn't do much to strengthen my nails. Crazy Glue? I'd read about some guy who'd glued his hand to his forehead.

Guitar World Acoustic interview with James Taylor:

GWA: You play with your nails. How do you keep them from breaking?

Taylor: I've done different things over the years to reinforce my nails. Right now what I use is something called a "nail wrap" technique. . . .

One of my daughters has been having her nails done for years. What the hell. So I drop a couple of bucks, have something glued to my fingertips . . . watch the fake nails soar off into space during one of my more energetic solos, then devise yet another plan.

So there I sit, on a Saturday afternoon at the Nail Cottage in Greenvale, me and a half dozen women, with but the merest trace of cover from my daughter, it being her regular bi-weekly appointment, me trying to explain to this lovely Korean-American woman why I only wanted my right hand . . . "wrapped."

"Ki?" I begin, staring at the name embellished in rhinestone on her black apron.

"Kim," she corrects. "M is gone."

"Er, Kim . . . I play guitar."

She looks at me quizzically.

I strum an air guitar.

"Oh," she replies, now with even less comprehension of what it is I am doing here.

"I need my nails to be strong. Really strong."

"Ah, yes," she smiles. "Nails be strong." She accompanies me on air guitar. Now we're cookin'.

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THE DEFBRILLATORS ON TV

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TOBY CONQUERS ENGLAND

Long Island's Favorite Blues Original Leaves British Audiences Speechless

By Tony Tedeschi

Little Toby Walker, Long Island's favorite bluesman and winner of the prestigious Memphis International Blues Challenge Award for 2002, took his show to England earlier this year after John Adams, a promoter in the United Kingdom, discovered him through a series of connections that began with Walker's web site, <http://littletobywalker.com>

"The way they do everything over there was new to me," Walker said in an interview with www.naturaltraveler.com. "For example, here, artists who do not have a major record label supporting them, must do all their own logistics, promotion, road management, booking, etc. But, by the time I got to the U.K. for my tour, John Adams had done all of that work. After meeting me at the airport, he drove me to his home, where I met his family and stayed in the guest room of his house."

The hospitality extended to the way audiences treated Toby, as well. His first gig was in a catering hall, rented out by an organization that Adams heads, called the Bottleneck Blues Cub. And, clearly, they had come to listen.

"Prior to John getting me over there, no one, except a few people who had bought my CDs, had ever heard of me," Toby said. "Walking into the first gig was kind of interesting. There was some expectation because John Adams has a reputation for bringing over top artists. The audience was exactly like what I'd see in the U.S. in a concert setting, there to hear the artist, except that you could hear a pin drop and, during that first song, I'm wondering how am I doing? But it was followed by thunderous applause."

Toby admitted to some nervousness because he had no idea of why the audience was reacting with such silent attention. "Are they quiet because they are being polite or are they

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ISS Workshops: Five Towns College, Dix Hills, 7:30 p.m. first Monday of every month, run by Sonny Speed. **June 2, July 7.**

Songwriters in the Round: Barnes & Noble, Commack, 7:30 p.m. second Thursday of every month: **May 8, June 12, July 10.**

ISS at The Spot, SUNY Stony Brook, 9 p.m. third Thursday of every month: **May 15, June 19.** This month's gig is an open mic.

LITTLE TOBY WALKER LEAVES BRITISH AUDIENCES SPEECHLESS

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awe-struck? And it turned out to be the latter.”

After the gig, Adams told Toby, of the artists he’s brought to the United Kingdom, he’d never seen anyone capture an audience that quickly. He offered to manage Toby then and there. Adams admitted that he had originally brought Toby over there on spec, because, while he’d heard Toby’s CDs, he didn’t know how he’d play in front of an audience. That first night’s performance validated what he’d thought about Toby.

But next came the more intimate settings of the pubs. Again, the first pub, The Filo, had been taken over by a blues crowd. Toby’s poster was up on the wall. People had been expecting him, there was a sense of anticipation on the part of the audience. But when he got up in front of the audience, same reaction: dead silence. Again, thunderous applause.

“I couldn’t do anything wrong,” Toby said. “It was surprising, but I started getting used to it.”

John Adams had told him there were a lot of people who

were really looking forward to seeing Toby perform, but nothing could have prepared him for complete silence and a respectful listening audience. Toward the end of gigs, people were clapping and singing along, which Adams said was really unusual, given that this was the U.K, where reserve is legendary.

In fact, in one club, Oranges, Toby relates that the owner had written in at the bottom of his posters, “This will be a listening concert. If anyone wants to talk, you can go buy your beer elsewhere.” At one point, during the performance, the owner walked over to a small group at the bar, who were talking, and told them to shut up, in no uncertain terms, and one of those admonished was a woman who had come to cover the show for a local newspaper. She did as she was told.

Postscript to Toby’s U.K. tour, along with his European management deal with John Adams, are a reprise tour next February and March and a deal to do a live recording, in a state-of-the-art studio in an old stone barn, in front of an audience who will pay to be there. The next tour will also include performances in The Netherlands and Belgium.

LETS’ WRAP: FIGHTING THOSE UNSEEMLY RAGGED GUITAR-PLAYING NAILS

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I show her how I’ll be strumming down on the strings, then picking upstrokes against the fake nails she’ll be attaching, thereby really testing the mettle of the adhesive.

“Don’t worry,” she insists. “Strong.”

She proceeds to trim two pieces of silk and lay them against my thumbnail. Silk? We really are having a language problem. She then squeezes a tiny dollop of glue onto the silk strips, then smoothes the glue over the silk. The glue hardens almost immediately. OK. With a nail clipper, she trims the tip of the nail into a more rounded shape. Amazingly, it is already like chipping pieces off a concrete block. Numerous applications of glues, adhesives, drying powders, filing, filing, filing later, I am staring down the barrel of a thumbnail about twice the thickness of my natural nail. I force my index finger against it, pushing it away from the natural nail upon which it is attached and decide it will take a lot to pry this new fixture loose.

Kim smiles. “Strong,” she says.

Wow. I nod. And pretty, too, I want to say, but demur. I am suddenly aware of the eyes of the other patrons, flicking upon me and off — all females. I thought the occasional male has his nails done. So where is my support here?

The other four nail wraps are created in similar fashion. Kim then asks for my left hand.

“No,” I say, noting that the woman at the station parallel to mine has developed a more concerted sideways interest in what in hell I’m doing there. “Guitar player,” I reply to Kim, as much for my eavesdropper’s benefit, “the other hand has very closely clipped nails. Guitar player.”

She still doesn’t seem to comprehend fully, but lets it go. She finishes me up with hand lotion and a massage that feels, well, great. She also informs me that if I do, in fact, throw a nail, she’ll simply replace it. Cost: \$25.

The nails have been great. None have come off. I started playing tentatively with them, but now blast away at the strings and it’s like having five picks permanently attached to my fingers: no chips, no cracks, no splits. I go every two weeks for maintenance, usually around \$15. Every six to eight weeks the nails are replaced.

I’m now a regular fixture at the Nail Cottage. “You got friends?” Choi, the owner asked me during my last visit. “Tell them come.”

Your call, ladies and gentlemen, but my days of ragged nails appear to be over.

Online Music News

FAT CHUCK'S GIVES CD BABY COMPETITION IN ONLINE CD SALES

By Walter Sargent



For order fulfillment, it's tough to beat CD Baby (www.cdbaby.com). The online CD store is cheap, easy to use, and it offers some great services. After the initial shakeout, CD Baby seems to have come out on top and is definitely on a roll.

Enter Fat Chuck's, looking like a force to be reckoned with. Fat Chuck's annual charge may make it look more expensive than CD Baby, but it really depends on your sales. Fat Chuck's doesn't take a percentage. You don't need to sell a lot of T-Shirts or CDs to pay the rent, plus you get a web site with a user-friendly address: yourname.fatchucks.com, which is a lot nicer than being buried deep in Geocities. Fat Chuck's also maintains a list of all the "copy-protected" (as in "defective") commercial releases, which is very artist-friendly.

The Music Industry's Tales Of Woe

Oh dear. It looks like CD sales are down again. Better send in the lawyers. So the recording industry is suing college students for hundreds of billions of dollars in what is definitely one for the books, especially when the industry "only" brings in \$66 billion annually for the entire planet.

In a separate case, one federal judge handed the industry a stunning defeat ruling that file-swapping tools are legal. Naturally the industry vowed to appeal the case. Now we know where all the A&R money goes.

Peter Goddard, of the Toronto Star, made a good case for an overhaul of the industry, but what I found particularly interesting was the following statistic: "Independent" recording companies account for some 28.9 percent of worldwide sales. The quotes are his and I'm not sure what they mean. They may include companies that have distribution deals with the majors, which might be somewhat misleading.

Goddard offers five ways to change the music industry, while asking the question: Will there be enough of a record business around to make recordings for people still willing to pay for them?

However, the tale of woe doth not endeth there. Sir Gates and Sir Jobs are apparently contemplating an invasion even as the industry sinks. Steve Jobs (Apple Computer) is considering buying Universal and plans to turn it around by

selling MP3s. Not to be outdone, Bill Gates announced his interest in Universal also. Whether he just wants to bid the price up on Jobs, or whether he just wants to be perceived as a visionary too is a tough call.

Gates' strategy for vanquishing foes of yore has come to be known as "embrace, extend and extinguish." The way it might apply to this case is by Gates giving away music to make sure no one has any reason to give money to the competition. Pass the popcorn; this it gonna be good.

From the "Technology Will Save Us" Department

Many have tried and many have failed to improve on the random shuffle/pre-programmed playlists that come with music playback machines. The Brain, from the Intelligent Media Group, claims to be a "ground-breaking intelligence bit of software." The Brain knows what you want and how you want it. It knows when you want it and it's going to give it to you." Sure, can I get one for my wife unit?

For further reference on this topic:

Fat Chuck's: <http://www.fatchucks.com>

Judge rules file-swapping tools are legal:

<http://news.com.com/2100-1027-998363.html>

Toronto Star: http://www.thestar.com/NASApp/cs/ContentServer?pagename=thestar/Layout/Article_Type1&c=Article&cid=1035781027002

Apple Eyes Universal:

<http://news.com.com/2100-1025-996619.html>

Microsoft may buy Universal:

<http://www.nypost.com/business/33958.htm>

Chuckie Cheese may buy Universal

<http://www.gotcha.com>

The Brain

<http://www.synapseai.com/>

DEFIBRILLATORS ON TV

The Defibrillators, whose members include ISS Director **Sonny Speed** and **Sonny Meadows**, will be on TV this month. Catch them at the following times and stations:

Nassau County/Western Suffolk: 2:30 p.m. Monday May 12 on channel 20.

Queens: 1 p.m. Friday May 16 on channel 35.

Marion, IN: 11 a.m. Saturday May 17 and 7 p.m. Sunday May 18 on channel 9.

Queens: 7 p.m. Sunday, May 18 on channel 35.

Western Suffolk: 8p.m. Sunday May 18 channel 20.

Mid Suffolk: 8 p.m. Sunday May 18 on channel 20.

Eastern Suffolk: 7 p.m. Sunday May 18 on channel 20.

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

Here's your chance to test out your songs in front of an audience of fellow musicians, who provide constructive feedback on how to make improvements. The workshop is at **Five Towns College, Burrs Lane** 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: *June 2, July 7, August 4.*

ISS Hits The Spot

ISS runs a gig on the third Thursday of the month at the at The Spot in SUNY Stony Brook with some of the finest singer/songwriting talent on Long Island. This month's gig is an open mic, so there are no scheduled singers. Upcoming gigs: *May 15, June 19.*

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.

Songwriters in the Round

Barnes & Noble, Commack, hosted by **Sonny Meadows**, second Thursday of the month. Starts at 7:30 p.m. Upcoming gigs: *May 8, June 12, July 10.*

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: *June 5, July 3.*

Starbucks, Main Street, Huntington, 7:30 p.m. Mondays.
Ruby's, Oakdale Ave, Port Jefferson, 8 p.m. Wednesdays.
Starbucks, Long Beach, 7:30 p.m. Wednesdays.

Need Help with Demos?

BMI is sponsoring a panel at 320 West 57 St., New York, from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. May 14 on how to get your demos heard by the recording industry. Panelists include Brooke Primont, BMI director of writer-publisher relations; Rita Houston, music director at WFUV; Mary Gormley, A&R, Atlantic Records; and Jennifer Gilson, booker for The Living Room; Singer/songwriter Paul Brubaker is moderating. Panelists will discuss their approaches to reviewing demos. The panelists have agreed to hear a few demos at the event, so bring one. E-mail eventsnyc@bmi.com to let them know you're going.

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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