

## CAFFEINATED IN HUNTINGTON STARBUCKS SERVES UP VARIETY

By Pedro Pereira

I'd heard last winter about the weekly Monday night open mic at Starbucks in Huntington. Some time in the spring I checked it out, then went back a few times just to observe. Last month, just as the summer got under way, I stepped up to the mic.



I wasn't quite sure what to expect, considering the eclecticism of the performers at this venue and the temporary nature of the coffee-drinking patronage. But I was pleased to see some younger patrons sitting right upfront, seemingly attentive to the performance. Halfway through the first number of my two-song set, I noticed the narrow sitting area had filled up and a respectable crowd was standing at the back. It's quite possible the cappuccino machine was going full blast, but I couldn't hear it.

Of course the place didn't fill up just for me; it pretty much fills up every night. And that is the beauty of this venue. Quite by accident, someone in need of a caffeine fix may just become acquainted with one of your songs. Who knows, he or she might even like the tune.

On this particular night, the number of performers was quite large. **Seth Davis** ([www.sethdavis.com](http://www.sethdavis.com)), a Long Island singer/songwriter who hosts the weekly event, even had to cut performances from three to two songs. Seth keeps things loose and welcomes anyone willing to take the mic.

Songwriters with guitars aren't all you get at the Starbucks open mic. The entertainment kicks off around 7:30 p.m. with a set by Seth. By the time it wraps up around 10 p.m., a handful of poets may have taken the stage, a fiddle player and even a chanting Buddhist with a drum. All of it combines to create a delightful sense of community, and an eclectic one at that.

I left feeling good about my performance, tempered of course by a healthy amount of self-criticism about areas needing improvement. Other ISS members, including **Walter Sargent**, **Tony Tedeschi**, **Princess Peapod** and **Frank Gambino** signed up to play the night I was there. This is one venue worth returning to. Check it out some time.

**ISS Workshops: Five Towns College**, Dix Hills, 7:30 p.m. first Monday of every month, run by Sonny Speed. **August 4, Sept. 8.**

**Songwriters in the Round: Barnes & Noble**, Commack, 7:30 p.m. second Thursday of every month: **July 10, August 14.**

## SHOWCASE AT THE SONG BOX

ISS members deliver stellar performances

By Pedro Pereira

After a long stretch of gray, rainy weather, the summer started looking up at the end of June. The sun lost its shyness, the temperature climbed and four talented ISS members put on memorable performances at the Song Box in Huntington Station.

**Tim Huss**, **Suzanne Ernst**, **Bill Goldsmith** and **Frank Gambino**, took the stage on Saturday night, June 28, for a most enjoyable evening of original music. Tim headlined, playing some of his best tunes for about an hour.

ISS Director **Sonny Speed**, who spoke before the music started, said the evening's performers were among the best talent ISS has to offer. Witnessing ISS members hone their skills through the years, Sonny said, makes it worth all the time he spends working with the organization.

**With his trademark golden voice and apparent effortlessness, Tim also delivered wonderful performances of songs such as 'The Stranger' and 'Dear Lord.'**

For his part, Sonny received accolades from Song Box owner **Jane Ross**, who credited him with helping develop some great songwriting talent on Long Island. Jane herself is an ISS member and has recorded a CD of original music at Sonny's Son Spot Studios in Commack. Despite her considerable songwriting and performing chops, Jane did not perform, opting instead to introduce the lineup and sitting in the audience.

Tim delighted the crowd with the big sound of his Guild and flawless, passionate renditions of some of his finest material, including "Men's Lives," a tribute to the men who make their living on the water. He also performed "Texas," a song about the battle at the Alamo for which he won the ISS Writer's Choice contest several months ago. Tim said he is hoping to sell the track for a movie about the Alamo that is now being filmed.

With his trademark golden voice and apparent effortlessness, Tim also delivered wonderful performances of songs such as "The Stranger" and "Dear Lord." The latter is a prayer in which the singer asks God to guide him through uncertain times.

At the show, Tim announced the availability of a 10-song  
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## Gambino wins with big laughs

May I explain: There's funny, and then there's "Guys I Knewed in Grade School."

One of the funniest songs I have ever heard anywhere is Frank Gambino's winning tune for this month's Writer's Choice award! Although we can talk about the insight, craft, musical influences and chord changes in the song, this was all about YUKS! Big ones!

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'Well I learned a lesson that day  
That I would never have learned in class  
Best not to light that match  
If you've got a hairy ass'  
—Frank Gambino

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Each verse consisted of a vignette we've all heard before about kids — the dime stuck up the nose, drinking booze, and toilet escapades. In the hands of a hack, this material might not rise above a sophomoric level. Frank made it art.

He sang, "A guy I knewed in grade school said, 'Boys, before class starts/Come with me to the bathroom 'cause I'm gonna light my farts'/Well I learned a lesson that day that I would never have learned in class/Best not to light that match if you got yourself a hairy ass/And we said/What the hell was you thinking?/'Cause boy you ain't got no clue/You best stick your head right up your burnt ass and give yourself a good talking to."

Runners-up to Frank this month were Sonny Meadow's "Hospitality," a tune about a inhospitable hospital; and Tim Huss' "Dear Lord," an entreaty to a deity to make easier the things he originally made tricky.

*Gerry Dantone is glad he did not go to grade school with Frank.*

## SHOWCASE AT THE SONG BOX

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CD that he finished recording recently at Son Spot. Next time you see Tim, be sure to pick up a copy. You'll be glad you did.

Kicking off the festivities was Suzanne, whose voice could make the angels envious. Suzanne was like a warm summer breeze, delivering four originals with easy conviction and integrity. The numbers she played included a poignant song about her aging mother and an anti-war cry.

Frank put on a show that only Frank could. He is the

thinking person's songwriter, taking his audience on journeys of contemplation, guilty-pleasure humor and heartfelt tenderness. After a sweet number inspired by his nephew, Frank lightened things up with last month's ISS Writer's Choice pick, "Guys I Knewed in Grade School," a gut-busting account of vignettes from his grade school days.

Bill took the stage after Frank, playing a handful of numbers including the clever "Crawl Over Here and Slap Me" and the environmentally conscious "Woodland Marauder." Bill is one of the most consistent performers I know, delivering his songs with quiet intensity in no-frills performances that challenge you to listen to the message in the songs, which are replete with original thoughts and clever turns of phrase.

The Song Box will feature more Long Island musicians throughout the summer. Check it out on the fourth Saturday of the month.

## GERRY DANTONE IN THE MOVIES?

By Pedro Pereira

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A movie producer is considering UniversalDice.com tunes for an upcoming movie, "Heart of the Beholder." UniversalDice.com is ISS member **Gerry Dantone's** band.

"I was told about the movie by someone who recommended I send some music to them," Gerry said recently. "They are looking specifically for free thought, humanist and atheist-themed tunes, which happens to be right up my alley."

Gerry submitted two tracks, "You Don't Know Me" and "Last Prayer" for consideration. He received an e-mail from producer Darlene Lieblich, who said: "Congratulations! You blew my socks off! Your songs will be posted on our web site for evaluation and comments by the general public. After listening to some pretty discouraging music, this music was a real treat."

You can help Gerry get his songs into the movie's soundtrack by logging into the site [www.beholder.com](http://www.beholder.com), listening to the music and sending some comments to the producer about the songs. UniversalDice.com's tunes are among three dozen tracks under consideration for the soundtrack.

The producers are looking for undiscovered songwriters. "The submissions will be reviewed by our production team," according to information at the "Heart of the Beholder" site. "Only those selections that the producers feel match the musical needs of the film will be posted on the site for evaluation by the general public."

In her e-mail to Gerry, Lieblich said: "This is the first step in

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## Online Music News

# MUSIC SPECIALTY RETAILERS FACE AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE

By Walter Sargent



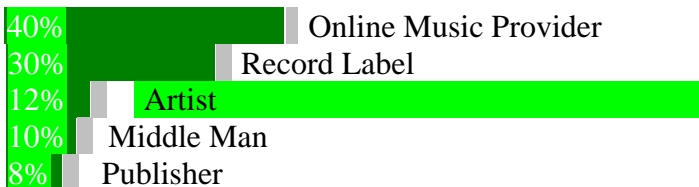
They say there are no atheists in a foxhole. If so, Tower Records must be saying its prayers because MTS Inc. has put the company on the block.

Sam Goody is *hemorrhaging money*, says Lehman Brothers Inc. retail analyst Alan M. Rifkin. So-called “specialty music stores” are the latest casualties of, among other things, volume discounters like Amazon, Wal-Mart and Target. Case in point: All Beatles CDs are \$18 at Tower, but no more than \$13.49 on Amazon. Often they cost even less. So Tower is staging in-store Madonna concerts to try to get people into the stores. Seems pretty desperate to me. What’s next? Celebrity tattoo road shows?

### The Musician’s Cut

With the advent of Apple’s iTunes, a seemingly viable online music distribution model, the retailers’ prospects look even more precarious.

But what about the independent musicians? Apple has promised to give the same deal to all musicians regardless of affiliation, in itself a breathtaking development. But what exactly is the breakdown? Once again, the Cyber-Songs research team comes through with the numbers:



The answer to the first question is, “Yes! Self-published artists get the record company cut.” Awesome! The record companies will have to start competing for it, which will naturally make them more competitive. What they will look like after they’ve tried competing in the music business is... well, that is a sobering thing to contemplate.

The second question: Who are the “middle men?” Aren’t they all middle men? That cut appears to be an optional percentage reserved for players such as audio delivery services like RealAudio and enterprise sites like Amazon. Who gets that cut if there are no middle men?

My guess is the big boys, which leads us to the last question: Why does the Online Music Provider get *40 friggin’ percent*?

They own the channel and, right now, they have no competitor.

The publishers’ cut doesn’t raise any questions since it is the lowest and no one hates them.

### The Musicians Advocate

Apple’s deal for musicians appears to be a phenomenal improvement over the Record Industry’s, but it is by no means the only solution. Copyright experts have been popping up all over with books and essays on the origins of copyrights and the potential transformations that stand before us.

Fred von Lohmann, senior staff attorney at the Electronic Frontier Foundation ([www.eff.org](http://www.eff.org)), responded to the ongoing crackdown of file traders saying, “The problem is not P2P file sharing... The problem is that artists are not getting paid.”

He suggested a compulsory licensing model that has plenty of precedent. A compulsory license basically guarantees public access to the work and, historically at least, is part of Fair Use. Fair Use is one of the things the public gets in exchange for granting a temporary monopoly to the author of a work.

In essence, von Lohmann’s solution imposes a modest fee on Internet users and uses Nielson-like metrics to divvy up the spoils. Computers can do this much more accurately than performance rights societies. Consumers get to listen to their music, and even trade files, and artists get paid.

What about the middle men?

What *about* them? If it’s going to cost 40 percent, maybe the public should own the channel. They’d save 40 percent on music and 100 percent on legal fees.

*Sources for this article included the following:*

- “Taps for Music Retailers,” *BusinessWeek* (June 23, 2003)
- “TheMP3 Economy,” *Business 2.0* (June 1, 2003)
- “Compulsory Licensing,” *DailyPrincetonian* (April 14, 2003)

*Find this and other articles at Walter’s site, [www.cyber-songs.com](http://www.cyber-songs.com).*

## DEFIBRILLATORS TO PLAY RIVERHEAD

The Defibrillators, whose members include ISS Director **Sonny Speed** and **Sonny Meadows**, are scheduled to play at 6:30 p.m. July 19 on the acoustic stage of the “Fifth Annual Riverhead Blues Festival.” For more on the festival, turn to page 4.

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## GERRY DANTONE IN THE MOVIES?

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a very long process, so don't get excited until we see the public's reaction as well as other music that will be coming in over the next four months. Hopefully we will be able to find a spot in our film for your talent."

"Heart of the Beholder" is the story of a couple in St. Louis who owned a video rental store that grew into a chain. With the release of Martin Scorsese's "The Last Temptation of Christ" on video, a religious group called Citizens for Decency started pressuring the couple, Mark and Donna Howard, to stop carrying the video. The Howards had the only video rental business in St. Louis that refused to give in to the pressure.

Harassment, death threats, and vandalism to their business and cars ensued. "When the Howards refused to buckle, the CFD blackmailed the Prosecuting Attorney with information about the prosecutor's secret sex life," according to the "Heart of the Beholder" web site.

"The prosecutor had no choice but to ruin the Howards anyway he could. He filed obscenity charges against the Howards and, misusing the RICO racketeering laws, he confiscated every movie from every store. The prosecutor fed the media vague details about investigations concerning the Howards' ties to organized crime. The Howards won their court case, but the negative publicity and legal fees bankrupted the business and family."

## RIVERHEAD BLUES FESTIVAL

The "Fifth Annual Riverhead Blues Festival" is scheduled for July 18, 19 and 20 at the Peconic Riverfront in Riverhead. At press time, more than 25 acts were scheduled to play, and they included such mainstays of the Long Island music scene as **The Defibrillators**, **Little Toby Walker** and **Kathy Kreger**.

There will be three stages. The music kicks off at 5 p.m. Friday, July 18 with **Muletrain Vaughn**. Saturday's program starts at noon with the band **JumpStart**, and Sunday's, at 1 p.m. with **The Blue Roots**.

For more information on the blues fest, log on to [www.riverheadblues.com](http://www.riverheadblues.com).

*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).*

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## 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

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: **August 4, Sept. 8 (Sept. 1 is a holiday)**.

### Songwriters in the Round

**Barnes & Noble, Commack**, hosted by **Sonny Meadows**, second Thursday of the month. Starts at 7:30 p.m. Upcoming gigs: **July 10, August 14**.

### 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: **August 7, Sept. 4**.

**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.

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