

## October Workshop Report Attendance Low, Creativity High

By Tim Huss

Although the turnout at the October workshop was a little light because it fell on Yom Kippur, those of us present were treated to nine songs from our aspiring songwriters. There were a few new faces in the group, which is good to see, and they provided the group with an introduction to some new writing and performing styles.

**Bob Campbell**, one of the newcomers, performed his song "The Hard Years." A Dylan-like anthology, Bob's song asked that we wake up to the threats of environmental degradation and corporate greed. Bob had a nice easy style, blending the use of the guitar and harmonica to create an interesting performance.

**Scott Diamond** performed his tune, "Unending Love," on the piano. The show-like tune was reminiscent of those hopeful, upbeat songs performed by school choruses (at least that's what it reminded me of; maybe it was just the piano being played in a classroom). The song was well received. We trust both songwriters appreciated the constructive criticism. (I always do, despite the fact that I'm always right and the "critics" are always wrong!)

Then there were some of the ISS standard bearers. **Estelle Heinrich** treated us to a recording of her folk song, "Daughters." It was a catchy tune with an interesting subject matter about life in the old country, though we all agreed we'd like to hear more in the story line about the family that piqued the interest of the listeners.

**Bill Goldsmith**, always an ISS favorite, performed "From One Obsession to the Next," a tune he co-wrote with **Richard Lehmann**. Although I need to admit that I had no idea what the lengthy folk tune was about, I always like listening to Bill's performances. Most agreed that the theme of the tune was a little of a mystery, although they liked the "nonsensical" style of it.

**Frank Gambino** provided us with his usual entertaining style, performing "I Loves My Beer" for the always-thirsty group. As usual, Frank had us smiling and tapping our feet with his satirical tune on the joys of beer drinking.

**Rick Crawford** treated us to another one of his poetic  
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**ISS Workshops: Five Towns College**, Dix Hills, 7:30 p.m. first Monday of every month, run by Sonny Speed. **Dec. 1, Jan. 5.**

**ISS Monthly Gig: Borders**, Old Country Road, Westbury, 8 p.m., third Friday, hosted by Rich Stein. **Nov. 21, Dec. 19.**

## ON THE ROAD AGAIN

Open Mic in St. John's, Newfoundland

By Tony Tedeschi

I'm sipping Irish whiskey – first Jameson's blend, then Bushmills single malt – with soda back, trading stories with Damian, the young man tending bar. We have Dublin in common; both having visited recently. Dublin's a lot to have in common.

This is O'Reilly's Pub on George Street in downtown St. John's, Tuesday night, open mic night. (<http://www.oreillyspub.com>) Damian tells me the host supplies the guitar. Things get going around 9:30. He says it generally starts slow, but by 11 everyone at the bar is getting up there. I've told him I play, write my own songs. His look says: no excuses. I order another Bushmills.

Actually, I feel like I'm in Dublin. Everyone at the pub here speaks with that lilting accent I have felt, ever since I visited Ireland for the first time, adds the music to the language. ("The only good thing the Brits ever did for us," an Irishman once told me, "was the language.") Also, there is that Irish pub friendliness. But it's early, before 9, everyone is *pleasantly* drunk.

There is a guitarist doing Irish pub songs and he keeps reminding us it's open mic night. "Have yourself a few snappers, then come on up here," he intones. The hour draws nigh. I need to maintain a buzz that keeps me right on the edge: minimizing stage fright without denigrating manual dexterity or slurring speech.

Sign-up time. Big Tom Fitzgerald of K-ROC, St. John's classic rock station, takes the stage, announcing this night is part of a 10-night competition for money and prizes. Larry Foley, leader of a local band is co-hosting, and he explains you don't need to be in the competition to participate in the open mic (momentary reprieve dissipates). Erin O'Mara, another local band member, has the sign-up sheet.

"You're on sixth," she tells me after taking my name. "Where you from?"

When I tell her New York. She gets downright exuberant.

"Hold on," I counter. "That doesn't mean I'm any good."

She ignores the comment and continues taking names. I fear the bar will be raised too high.

The five guys who precede me do nothing to lower it. They're all great. While number five begins the first of a trio of ballads, I slide away from the bar and climb the stairs to

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## WRITER'S CHOICE by Gerry Dantone

Though the attendance was light, most likely due to Yom Kippur and the glut of sporting events at this time of year, the ISS diehards assembled in their favorite meeting room at Five Towns College and proceeded to do what they do best: sing and play spanking brand-new tunes, and take merciless criticism bordering on assault (just kidding about the assault part).

Don't fear me, just hear me  
I only want to make things right  
Just maybe, I'm crazy  
But I must try

—Tim Huss

There were many fine tunes and though the votes were spread, **Tim Huss** emerged as the winner with "Try (Doug's song)," and as typical, it was a stirring effort.

Quite often the most revealing and enlightening songs are those that do not claim to have all the eternal truths contained within them; it is often better to document one's search for truth and the doubt associated with that honest search. Tim sang, "Don't fear me, just hear me/I only want to make things right/Just maybe, I'm crazy/But I must try."

For the edification of the skeptics in the audience, the runner-up was not involved in the tally of these votes. ISS Grand Poo-Bah and workshop host **Sonny Speed**, a member of the Defibrillators came in second with "Heavy Metal Man," a pun-filled ditty about a "man of steel," if you know what I mean, nudge, nudge, wink, wink.

It is likely that Sonny's egregious failure to provide lyric sheets cost him a possible win. As it is, he will be punished by being forced to continue hosting the workshop for the foreseeable future.

*Gerry Dantone thinks the Defibrillators have invented a whole new genre of rock — Rock 'n Old.*

### ISS AT STONY BROOK

The monthly ISS gig at the University Cafe in SUNY/Stony Brook resumed this fall, and last month it featured rousing performances by **Frank Gambino** and **Rich O'Brien**. This month's gig, scheduled for 8:30 p.m. Nov. 18, will feature **Rich Stein** and **Vinny Crici**. The featured performers are followed by an open mic, at which those who sign up are given time to play two songs each. The University Cafe is located at the Student Union. For directions to the venue, please turn to page 4.

## Creativity High at October Workshop

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songs. "Last of the Wild Horses" painted interesting pictures of free spirits and open spaces "bestirring the essence of my soul," as Rick writes in one of the verses.

In a rare moment, our own ISS Director, **Sonny Speed**, performed "Heavy Metal Man." The bluesy satire about older men being a woman's heavy metal man (silver hair, gold teeth, etc.), written with the infamous Defibrillators in mind, was a toe-tapping hit with the listeners. Two demerits for providing no lyric sheet however! And be careful where you perform the suggested lyric about the metal rod.

When my turn came, I performed "Try," a song written for those with the courage to stand for what they believe despite the ridicule often experienced by those brave enough to wave the banner. The group seemed to like the performance and theme of the song.

### Editor's Pick



Since our editor, **Pedro Pereira**, could not attend the workshop, the honor of selecting the Editor's Pick **fell to** me this month. And I have chosen **Rich O'Brien's** "Healing Light." While most agreed that the folk tune needed some rearranging and work on the economy of the verses, I thought the song had a lot of potential. While I felt that the

chorus needed to be emphasized more in the arrangement, the hook of the chorus was there.

In addition, the interesting finger-picking style and melody variations kept the listener's interest while the verses inspired some vivid pictures of color, hope and optimism. With a little polishing, "Healing Light" has the potential to be a successful folk song.

Songs performed during the October workshop were as follows:

- "Daughters," Estelle Heinrich
- "The Healing Light," Rich O'Brien
- "Unending Love," Scott Diamond
- "The Hard Years," Bob Campbell
- "Heavy Metal Man," Sonny Speed
- "I Loves My Beer," Frank Gambino
- "From One Obsession to the Next," Bill Goldsmith and Richard Lehman
- "Try," Tim Huss
- "Last of the Wild Horses," Rick Crawford

## ON THE ROAD AGAIN: OPEN MIC NIGHT IN ST. JOHN'S, NEWFOUNDLAND

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the men's room. The sign over the urinal says: "Drink one more for someone who can't." My internal hygrometer says: "Enough."

On my way back downstairs, I'm stopped by a waitress who has noted the stylized First Nationals symbol embroidered into the back of the fleece vest I am wearing. She correctly identifies it and is telling me about the history and lore of the particular Indian nation. I am not really paying attention because . . . well, I'm up next.

"Next, we have a guest from New York," Erin O'Mara announces with a level of fanfare I'd been hoping against, while Larry Foley is fitting me with a blue Takamine guitar. "What are you doing in Newfoundland?" Erin asks.

I check the volume level of the microphone as I stare out at an audience that has now packed the bar and has overflowed onto the dance floor immediately in front of the stage. When I answer I am writing some articles about their beautiful province, the crowd erupts into cheers. OK. Good sign.

I have had the presence of mind to note that all my predecessors have gone with Irish pub songs, American and Canadian folk tunes and/or ballads. I opt for the more rocky-rolly entrées in my repertoire. You get to play three songs. I open with "Rear-View Mirror," an up-tempo number about a guy who can't shake a persistent road-rager – although its deeper meaning deals with an inability to get free of one's past. Screw deeper meaning; the crowd loves it. They are whooping it up during the song; cheer loudly at the end. I am really energized now and the next two songs go equally as well: "Isabel's Angel," about a man who tries unsuccessfully to find a way out for a young Costa Rican prostitute; "Sci-Fi Movie Blues," wherein the protagonist sees the world of today as a Grade B Sci-Fi Movie.

As I step down and walk from the stage, to wonderful, clearly heartfelt applause, the waitress who had admired my vest says: "Your music is awesome!"

That's pretty much a sentence I've been waiting to hear all my life.

When I see her again at the upstairs bar, I tell her I have a present for her.

"I like presents," she replies.

I begin to remove the vest.

"Oh no," she counters, her hands stiff-armed before her. "I couldn't."

"Are you going to reject my present?" I ask.

She studies my eyes, reads the sincere warmth there.

I hand her the vest.

"Are you sure you've taken everything out of the pockets?" she asks.

I nod.

"Thank you," she says.

"Thank *you*," I answer.

She puts it on over her hot pink O'Reilly's shirt and zippers it up.

*Your music is awesome.*

Next evening. Bushmills-and-soda redux. The barmaid is recommending seafood restaurants to a couple from out of town. But she tells them she doesn't like seafood.

"If it comes from the sea, I don't eat it. Or ponds, or lakes, or rivers or streams."

"Not even shrimp?" the gentleman asks. "Surely, you like shrimp."

"Not even shrimp," she replies.

"You live here and you don't like seafood?" the woman asks.

"Well, that's more for the rest of you," the waitress replies, sliding a dark ale over to the gentleman, then places a cocktail down before the lady.

The waitress is a lovely, fair-skinned maid with long, light-brown hair. She is carrying a bit too much weight, but all of it in the right places.

"None of my brothers or my sisters like it either," she adds, as if to hammer home the point. "Just my parents."

Ah, the generational disconnects, how they have accelerated in the techno world. I want to recommend the couple try NaGeira's, a few blocks away, where I had a killer paella a few nights before, but to participate in this mundane exchange would dilute, may even dissolve, the magic of O'Reilly's. But it's clear, anyway, by how I've already faded into the woodwork, that magic is a function of time as well as place.

A friend, back on Long Island, **Martha Trachtenberg**, a wonderful songwriter, sings of the experience: "The morning after, the glory always fades. Now I'm just another face at the diner, and I was a star last night."

Clearly there are no **second acts**.

## A Bloody Business: Playing for a Cause

By Gerry Dantone

The Ethical Humanist Society of Long Island, and the Center for Inquiry - Long Island (formerly LI Secular Humanists) and other organizations in the area will be promoting a Blood Drive on Monday, Nov. 24 from about 3 or 4 p.m. to about 10 p.m. at the Ethical Humanist Society building at 38 Old Country Road in Garden City. Long Island Blood Services will handle the actual collection.

We think it would be a good idea to use local musicians to promote the event by playing (unplugged acoustic only style) at the event, perhaps from 6 p.m. to closing, on both an open mic basis (two songs maximum) *and* featured artists, each doing 20 to 25 minutes at scheduled times. Featured artists booked so far are **Sonny Meadows**, **Kathy Fleishman**, **Buddha Box** and **Forever Falling**. The building has an adequate PA for a couple of mics/lines. If we need more equipment, we will look into it.

The blood shortage in the area is acute so this is a good, nonpartisan unifying type of event. Typically, a Humanist Society is fertile ground for politically and socially conscious music, however for this affair we need to make sure everyone feels welcome and appreciated (in an inclusive secular manner) for donating blood. However, no one will be shot if they stray over the line; we just want everyone to feel welcome.

By inviting musicians we figure to get that many more potential victims, er, I mean DONORS, and also draw more other people generally to the drive. If it doesn't work, we won't try this again. We will live and learn!

## 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: **Dec. 1, Jan. 5.**

#### Sonny Squared at Song Box

Sonny Meadows and Sonny Speed are scheduled to play at Jane Ross' Song Box at 8 p.m. Nov. 22. Their performance will be followed by Jen Chapin in what will be the Song Box's last concert of this season.

#### Borders Showcase

**Borders, Old Country Road, Westbury**, hosted by **Rich Stein**, third Friday of the month. Starts at 8p.m.:

Friday, Nov. 21: Martha Trachtenberg with Tom Griffith, Dave Isaacs

Friday, Dec. 19: Rich Stein and Jim Dexter solo and together, holiday show

#### 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. **Nov. 6, Dec. 4, Jan. 1.**

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

**Pisces Cafe, Railroad Ave, Babylon**, 8 p.m. Wednesdays.

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

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

#### Directions to University Cafe

Enter the campus at the main entrance on Nichols Road. Follow the signs to the stadium parking lot, facing the football stadium. Parking there is free at night. As you enter the stadium lot, facing the football stadium, the Student Union building is on your left. Walk around the side of the Student Union Building. Enter the University Café directly from the outside of the building can't find the cafe, go inside the Student Union building and there is an information desk.

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#### Newsletter

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