

GOT

THE BLUES?

All invited to first ISS open jam at Stony Brook

Next Workshop

September 13

The next songwriting workshop is at 7:30 p.m. Sept. 13 at Five Towns College in Dix Hills. Because of the Labor Day holiday, the meeting will not be on the first Monday of the month.

Rockers Against Bush

Bruce Springsteen, Steve Earle, REM, Pearl Jam and others to launch anti-Bush rocking crusade.
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Find It Online

Visit our web site,
www.islandsongwriters.org

by Pedro Pereira

Got the blues? Put them to good use. Join ISS on August 19 at SUNY-Stony Brook for the organization's first open-invitation summer blues jam, an event Director **Sonny Speed** hopes will become an annual gig.

The even, tentatively dubbed "The First Annual Swingin' Johnson's Open Blues Jam" in honor of blues great Robert Johnson, will take place during the ISS monthly gig at the University Cafe. The gig, which kicks off at 8:30 p.m. on the third Thursday of the month, usually features two 30-minute performances by ISS and affiliated songwriters and is followed by an open mic.

"We will start out doing our favorite Robert Johnson songs and move on from that," Sonny said about the blues jam. "This is open to the public, and all are welcome to come up and play. Bring your axe. All instruments are welcome."

The blues jam idea is a way to not only celebrate the blues, but also to try to improve attendance at the monthly gig by ISS members and give the cafe some business during the slow summer months, when students are off campus.

"I hope this will bring more ISS members," Sonny said. "Very few show up now so I am racking my brain on how to pick up attendance for the summer-month events. It's kind of a way to introduce the outside world to the ISS, maybe get a few new members, and have a little fun at the same time. You don't need to be a pro to play."

In September the regular format of the University Cafe gigs will resume. Sonny said he has already booked ISS member **Bob Campbell** for the Sept. 16 gig. He will book one more act for that date and is looking for performers for subsequent months. Remember that an open mic follows the featured performers, so everyone is welcome to play.

Bill Goldsmith Gets NPR Exposure

By Pedro Pereira

ISS member **Bill Goldsmith** caught the ear of the folks at National Public Radio's web site with his tune "Cloud of Smoke," off the latest Sideways album, "Superheated Sunshine."

After submitting the tune to the site, it was picked to be showcased on the NPR site's "Open Mic" section, <http://www.npr.org/programs/asc/openmic>. The song was up for a week with seven others, and site visitors were asked to rate it on a 1-5 scale, 5 being the highest.

"Open Mic is an online music community where unknown artists can have a chance to be heard, and listeners can vote for their favorite songs," said NPR's Jenny Arsanow in an e-mail to Bill. "Consider it a virtual stage for independent, unsigned or self-produced musicians to share their songs with www.npr.org users."

"Cloud of Smoke" is the first cut on "Superheated Sunshine," a 17-track CD that Bill recorded with his band The Sideways.



Suzanne Ernst to release her first CD

By Pedro Pereira

ISS member **Suzanne Ernst**, she of the breezy melodies and thoughtful lyrics, is readying her debut CD for release this fall. Suzanne has recorded some 15 tracks at ISS member **Vinny Crici's** recording studio in recent months, and is now moving toward the final phase of the recording process.

"I am shooting to go back into the studio in mid to end of August, and hoping for a completed CD a month or two after that," Suzanne said, adding she was in the process of copyrighting the songs that will be on the CD.

Suzanne has recorded vocals and guitar for 15 songs, with Vinny, her husband Doug and herself co-producing the project. Vinny is playing additional instruments.

I am shooting to go back into the studio in mid to end of August, and hoping for a completed CD a month or two after that.

— *Suzanne Ernst*

"Vinny is doing a great job. He wears many hats during the sessions — musician, producer, technician, and most importantly, friend," Suzanne said. "Doug is our anchor, keeping us on schedule and focused, providing the view of the listener/audience, and adding his own artistic integrity to the experience. His support is immeasurable."

Suzanne joined ISS about two years ago and has provided the organization with some of the most memorable songs that are played at the monthly songwriting workshops. She has a fluid guitar-playing style and an angelic voice that are sure to make the CD worth listening to. Look for more details on Suzanne's debut CD in these pages when it is released.

Bill Goldsmith Gets NPR Exposure

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"'Cloud of Smoke' was influenced by the Sept. 11 attacks, although it doesn't specifically make reference to them," said Bill. "Instead, the song concerns itself with what I see as a terrible predilection some people have for destroying things. The lyrics of the middle section sum up what I was trying to say: 'One person's nightmare/Is another person's dream fulfilled/They spend their time knocking down/Something they could never build.'"

After their week in the limelight, the songs showcased on NPR's Open Mic remain accessible through a drop-down menu on the left-hand side of the web page. If you want to listen, go to the site and select "Stage 44" from the drop-down menu.

Promote Yourself on the ISS Web Site

The ISS is now offering songwriters *their own web pages* on the ISS web site. Whether you already have your own web site or not, a personal web page on the ISS site brings you closer to the traffic with a polished and professional look. If you don't already have a web site, it is an especially good deal. Prices range from \$20 to \$60 per year with a range of options.

Plus, you are supporting ISS web site development. So if you like the way the web site is going, you can help *keep it going* by signing up. Please see the web site for details: <http://www.islandsongwriters.org>

Writer's Choice

by Gerry Dantone

Island Songwriters Showcase members are a pretty open-minded bunch apparently.

Winner: Conrad Tyras

No, we're not married to one style of music and one style only. Although guitar-playing singer-songwriters tend to dominate, that is perhaps a function of the guitar's ubiquity, not a particular bias. Most sax players would have difficulty presenting a tune, chord changes and all, while singing the lyrics at an ISS workshop.

Still, we do hear and appreciate many forms of music, from heavy industrial thrash punk to folk-rock to the other extreme. This month, the other extreme ruled!

Conrad Tyras presented "Each Dream I Spend with You" on tape, and it didn't hurt that the performer of the tune played a swell piano and sang a bit like Judy Garland. Garland would have been a great singer to cover this tune, which recalled the melodic 1930s. Completely authentic-sounding and appropriately grand, the tune brought a feeling of recognition that this was the real thing. Sometimes it doesn't have to be new, it just has to be good. And the members of the ISS knew it!

Runners-up were culled from the rock and folk-rock category, though both were socially conscious in nature.

Rockers Turn Up Political Heat

By Pedro Pereira

Democratic Presidential Nominee John Kerry should have an easy enough time defeating George W. Bush this November, considering the fiasco the current administration has turned out to be. Yet, in most polls Kerry has yet to pull ahead decisively. This may have to do with Bush's war chest or the Democratic Party's inability to put up a candidate that stirs the passions of enough Americans to vote against the incumbent.

Thankfully for Kerry, a number of high-profile rock 'n rollers is about to step up the pressure on Bush by touring together in an effort to raise awareness about the current administration's disastrous policies. The Los Angeles Times reported July 25 that Bruce Springsteen, Neil Young, R.E.M., Pearl Jam, Dixie Chicks, Dave Matthews Band and Steve Earle, among others, are planning to target swing states this fall for a politically minded tour aimed at encouraging people to vote out Bush.

Chances are heavyweights Bob Dylan and James Taylor will also join the tour. Throw in a couple of other high-profile acts, such as the Rolling Stones and Cheryl Crow, (neither of which has been reported to be joining the tour) and Dubya might as well start packing for a permanent relocation to Crawford.

_____The pundits always like to say a Southerner has to be on the ticket for the Democrats to have a chance at winning, hence the choice of Edwards. But have you ever heard Springsteen talk? _____ The man sounds Southern to me.

_____As I write this, the Democrats are disrupting the daily lives of Boston residents and workers with their staged convention. John Kerry got booed at a Yankees-Red Sox game at Fenway Park. And writers for left-wing publications seem to be holding their noses as they halfheartedly throw their support behind the Kerry campaign.

It may just take The Boss himself, New Jersey's favorite son Bruce Springsteen, to help the lackluster Democrats. Really, if Kerry had thought this thing through, he would have named Bruce as his running mate, instead of pretty-boy Edwards from South Carolina. The pundits always like to say a Southerner has to be on the ticket for the Democrats to have a chance at winning, hence the choice of Edwards. But have you ever heard Springsteen talk? The man sounds Southern to me. And he sure can sling a Tele!

Alas, Bruce and Co. will likely best serve the timid Democratic Party by doing what rockers do best — turn up the volume in front of a screaming audience. This may be the first time an election gets decided not on the persona and policies of a candidate, but the charisma and popularity of his high-profile supporters, though I have my doubts about how many minds these rock 'n rollers can sway.

In any case, Bush seems impervious to any kind of attack. Michael Moore's anti-Bush "Fahrenheit 9/11" tops \$100 million at the box office, breaking all kinds of records, and Kerry still has trouble pulling ahead in the polls. A continuous barrage of anti-Bush books, including one that psychoanalyzes him as sadistic and paranoid, (just thought I'd throw that in) and Kerry still has trouble pulling ahead.

Will rock make the difference? Doubtful. But hey, some people believe Dylan ended the Vietnam War. And perhaps the sum of all this high-profile anti-Bush activity will help Kerry. But if he loses, it's time for the Democrats to get serious about being a real opposition party, rather than one that isn't just quite as bad as the Republicans.

If nothing else, enjoy Bruce if he comes to your town. Of course, since New York isn't a swing state, you may have to travel to see him. Oh heck, just go to Best Buy and get his fine "Live in Barcelona" DVD. At least you'll get your digital fill of The Boss.

Who Played What

Here's the list of songwriters and songs from the June ISS workshop:

Steve Lieberman
"Rock me in the bomb shelter"
Bruce Kanin
"Here for you"
Bob Campbell
"The Gathering"
Estelle Henrich
"No Reported Delays"
Gerry Dantone
"To The Fundamentalists"
Conrad Tyras
"Each Dream I spend with you"
Steve Archdcacon
"True Character"
Rich O'Brien
"Let it Flow"
Michael Svezia
"Starr's Big Day"
Frank Gambino
"It's All About the Girl"
Andrew Kirschner
"Lizzie's Song"
Mark Hussey
"Questions for Extremists"
Bill Goldsmith
"What is Charisma"
Ellen Micca
"No Mistake"



What's Doin'

ISS members are always out and about. Check your local listings for appearances live, on the radio or even on TV. Go to www.islandsongwriters.org for gigs and links to member sites with information about CD releases, shows and MP3s. Here's what's happening in the coming weeks. (*Check with the venue first because dates and times may change.*)

ISS Workshop

Test out your songs in front of fellow musicians, who provide constructive feedback. The workshop is on the first day of each month at **Five Towns College, Burrs Lane**, Dix Hills. Run by ISS Director **Sonny Speed**, It starts at 7:30 p.m. Bring a guitar to perform your song live, or you may choose to play a CD or tape. A piano is available for keyboardists. Be sure to bring 25 copies of your lyrics so other workshops attendees can follow along and provide feedback.

Next workshop: Sept. 13

University Cafe

Look who's playing at Stony Brook in coming months:

August 19: Blues Jam. All invited.

Sept. 27: Bob Campbell. Don't forget, an open mic follows the featured performers.

Writer's Choice: Conrad Tyras Wins

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Bob Campbell brought "The Gathering" which sounded much better than a protest song has any right to sound while lyrically being reasonable and non-hysterical. If you don't think that's a big deal, *you* try writing a protest song.

Yours truly was the other runner-up for "To the Fundamentalists," another song about the times we live in. I would hope that such songs would not be necessary for much longer, but my advice is, "Don't hold your breath."

Gerry Dantone is nearing completion of his band UniversalDice.com's third CD, which will contain "To the Fundamentalists" among other complaints.

Open Mics

Borders, Jericho Turnpike, Syosset, hosted by Bill Ryan or Vincent Crici, first Thursday of the month. Sign-up at 7:30 p.m. *Next gig: August 5.*

Starbucks, Main Street, Huntington, 7 p.m. Mondays.

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

University Cafe

Suny/Stony Brook, hosted by **Sonny Speed**, 8:30 p.m. third Thursday of the month. Featured performers followed by open mic. *Next gig: August 19.*

Borders Showcase

Borders, Old Country Road, Westbury, hosted by **Rich Stein**, 8 p.m. third Friday of the month. *Next gig: August 20.*

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