
BLACKLISTED AND BANNED

New Band Tackles Political Themes

Next Workshop

March 7

The next songwriting workshop is at 7:30 p.m. April 4 at Five Towns College in Dix Hills.

On the Air

ISS member Jim Caputo is getting radio play on WFUV and Connecticut's WKZE

Review on page 3

Gangstah Rabbi

ISS member Steve Lieberman, the Gangstah Rabbi himself, was featured in a Newsday story on Feb. 27
Read it at www.newsday.com

Find It Online

Visit our web site, www.islandsongwriters.org

By Sonny Meadows

"These are the times that try men's (and women's) souls." Oh, but my day job and my music career are more than I would ever expect or ask for. It would be a helluva lot easier to sit back and let history take its course, to immerse myself in the intricacies of my job, family, and day-to-day survival, to do my best to adapt to the changing political and social environment, to play the game and wait for retirement.

But that is too easy. I've never been one to take the easy way out.

Musically, things have never been better. I find myself having to turn away as many gigs as I accept. The Defibrillators were called "Long Island legends" by LIE in November 2004. What more could you ask for as a band member and a local songwriter? [*Editor's Note: The author is the lead lyricist and singer for the local blues band.*]

Throughout history art has been a tool to either support the status quo or to challenge the powers that be.

Well, I guess that depends how one perceives one's responsibility as an artist. Throughout history art has been a tool to either support the status quo or to challenge the powers that be, to persuade the populous that these are "the best of times" or to confront those powers and say things could be significantly better, to be part of the propaganda machine or take on the establishment and try to push things forward.

That paradigm has never been more critical then it is in the United States today. Since the fall of communism in the 1990s, there has been a degree of arrogance in our country, spurred on by the corporate elite and the religious right that has turned us far from the goals of the Founding Fathers (and Mothers), placing us on a path to global domination. Parallels are too easily drawn between America today and Nazi Germany in the 1930s. To forget the past for the sake of convenience or personal gain has been the downfall of societies throughout time.

Writing songs of a topical nature has been my driving force since I changed from poet to songwriter in the late '60s. Learning from such masters as Joe Hill, Woody Guthrie, Malvina Reynolds, Bob Dylan, Peter LaFarge, Beverly Grant, Phil Ochs, Sammy Walker, and countless others, pointed me in a direction that is impossible to turn back form. When not performing solo, I would pick up several performers of a like spirit to help move the music a step forward, which more or less led to a jam band format that often worked.

So when recently contacted from folks on the Long Island progressive artistic and political scene for a series of gigs, I decided it was time to formalize these efforts, and so was born "Blacklisted and The Banned."

The band ("Banned") consists of Jon Foreman and myself on guitar, Bob Westcott on bass, and Robert Langley on percussion. "Blacklisted" comes from the fact that I'm on the NRA list of blacklisted performers. (Actually, I was kind of upset I wasn't on their original blacklist, but thanks to Sarah Brady I was added.) So if you are into topical music with a sense of irony and humor, come check us out on March 17 at the Setauket Neighborhood House or May 19 at the University Café at SUNY/Stony Brook.

COOKE'S IN GIG GOING STRONG

Writer's Choice

By Sonny Speed
The Writer's Choice winner for February 2005 was a tie between **Estelle Henrich**, for "Sonny & Sonny," and **Sonny Meadows**, for "I Never Thought I'd Miss Richard Nixon."

Winners: Estelle Henrich
Sonny Meadows

Estelle painted Sonny Meadows and myself as a couple of group therapist leaders with some questionable cures.

Sonny, for his part, was back on target with his political satire longing for Tricky Dick's return.

It was a good night for all. There wasn't a bad song in the bunch.

By Pedro Pereira

One month into the kick-off of the open mic at Huntington's The Cooke's In, the gig was going strong and getting better.

A diverse group of performers has been showing up each week, and on Feb. 10 the place rocked harder than I had seen thus far. In addition to regulars such as Tony Tedeschi, Scott McDonald and myself, that night local music legends **Little Toby Walker** and our own **Sonny Meadows** graced the stage.

Toby, a blues singer/guitarist with an international following, put on one of his typically stellar performances, and even with a limited three-song set he proved once again why he has become so popular among blues audiences in Europe. He later joined ISS member **Estelle Henrich** member and several other musicians to play lead guitar on a spontaneous performance of the Hank Williams classic "Jambalaya."

The night was full of priceless spontaneous moments, including when Sonny got up from his seat to play harmonica on one of Little Toby Walker's songs. People were jumping in to harmonize and accompany other musicians with their instruments.

I was never more surprised than why I looked up to notice that a handful of people were joining me in singing the chorus to one of my songs. It wasn't the harmonizing that surprised me; it was the fact that the song, "Saudade," is sung entirely in Portuguese. And that means that people were singing along to words whose meaning they didn't know. It was a beautiful moment that showed appreciation of music transcends language; it's about the emotional connection.

The Cooke's In, located on 110 just north of the Big H Plaza in Huntington, is shaping up as a wonderful place to meet, play some tunes, and enjoy good food and the company of friends who share the love of music. If you haven't checked it out yet, stop in one of these Thursday nights. Sign-up for the open mic is at 7:30 p.m. and the music usually starts around 8.

University Cafe

An ISS member concert is scheduled for May 19 at the University Café in SUNY/Stony Brook. The show is scheduled to start at 8 p.m. with five feature acts followed by five soloists. Nominations for the solo acts will be taken at the March meeting. We will vote on them at the April meeting. Three feature acts are scheduled, but two more are needed.

JIM CAPUTO ON THE RADIO

ISS member Jim Caputo's musical journey started in 1972 when he found an abandoned classical guitar under some dust in his parents' garage. He had it restrung, bought a book on how to play guitar, and the whole thing started.

Now, you can hear some of Jim's songs on the radio. Two tracks from Jim's CD, "New Lit Sky," are going to be played April 17 on WFUV-FM 90.7 (www.wfuv.org) during the show "Woody's Children," hosted by Bob Sherman. The two songs are "Melted Toys" and "Home." Two other songs, "Not Even Rand-McNally" and "Patch of Leather," are getting some airplay on WKZE -FM 98.1 (www.wkze.com) in Connecticut during the show "Sunday Afternoons with Tim Schaefer."

"So two of my songs are going to be played on my favorite station. FUV is the only preset in my car on FM. On a scale of one to 10, my 'I'm psyched' level is about a million right now," Jim said.

"New Lit Sky is available for purchase at Jim's site, www.jimcaputo.com, and at Amazon.com. You may also download several songs, including "Patch of Leather" and "Not Even Rand-McNally" from his site.

Jim said he got a copy of WKZE's playlist after the first time it played "Not Even Rand-McNally." "It's very cool to see my name on the list surrounded by the likes of Leonard Cohen, Simon and Garfunkel, Fleetwood Mac, The Rolling Stones, Dar Williams, Randy Newman, Johnny Cash, etc., he said "The song just before mine was 'Growin' Pain' by Peter Wolf and the DJ followed my song with 'Paper Sun' by Traffic."

Online Music News

MUSIC DISTRIBUTION MADE EASY?

by Walter Sargent

The Internet has made music distribution very simple — and very complicated. Guess which one listeners prefer? iTunes and iPods are not perfect solutions. They're simple solutions, and Apple's reward for figuring that out is blistering demand for their hardware and their content (i.e., music). Apple's iPod has sold more than 10 million units since 2001, *and 8.2 million in 2004 alone.* (1)

There is anecdotal evidence that suggests the benefits really do trickle down to the independent musician. Huntington resident and master guitarist, Mike Soloway, says he's averaging \$300 to \$400 per month for his wedding ceremony music on the classical guitar. How'd he do that? Being a truly great guitarist certainly helps, but hooking up with CDBaby and picking the right niche market connected him to music buyers worldwide.

Sales are up, but confusion persists as a result of an unsustainable variety of file formats, players and terms of use. One of the major distinctions is between "pay-per-copy" services like iTunes and "subscription" services like Rhapsody, XM Radio and the newly remodeled Napster. Conceptually, "pay-per-copy" service is simple. You buy a copy for a fixed price and listen to it as much as you want, as you would a CD. In reality, listening when and where you want is made much more complicated by the copy-protection, file formats and hardware failure, obsolescence and replacement issues. Making a backup and copying the music to the new device will never be simple. In fact, business depends on keeping it complicated.

Subscription services are also simple conceptually. Consumers already subscribe to magazines, cable TV and Internet access without knowing exactly what they are going to get. Music subscriptions can either be pre-programmed like XM Radio, or they can offer unlimited user-directed access to an online library. The reality of music subscriptions, I believe, will ultimately be simpler than the pay-per-copy model for all concerned. For the producer, it is easier to control access to a centralized resource than embedding control in millions of end-user files and systems. For the consumer, it's very simple: If it doesn't work or I am not happy with the service, I stop paying for it. There's little or no investment or risk. It's simple to understand and use.

According to researchers at MusicWatch Digital who track the contents of people's hard drives, the percentage of MP3 files is dropping. "The data does not show that MP3 is losing much of its popularity. Files encoded in the format are just more disposable than rivals. People are still downloading boatloads of MP3 files, but they are discarding them at an even faster rate." (2) We only like a fraction of what we hear and we only want to buy a fraction of what we like. The math favors the subscription. Greg Norton (GearLive.com) also remarked, "I saw some staggering numbers today about how subscription services (such as Rhapsody and Napster's subscription service) are outpacing pay-per-song services."(3)

Petersen, editorial director of Mix magazine, says "the new format is no format... What the consumer would buy is a data file, and... create whatever you need. If you want to make an MP3, you make an MP3. If you want a DVD-Audio surround disc, you make that." "We're moving beyond the media stage to the delivery stage," agreed Mitch Gallagher, editor of EQ magazine. At some point, he said, "you won't have something to hold in your hand" until you transfer a data file to a blank disc or tape. (1)

So is the CD dead yet?

Jazz composer, Maria Schneider won a Grammy this year for her album "Concert in the Garden," without selling a single copy in a record store.(4) She financed her album through an Internet-based music delivery service called ArtistShare.(5) Schneider said she had funded the cost of her CD before she started recording. "They (fans) came

Who Played What

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

Steve Lieberman
"Summer of 449"
Bob Campbell
"True North"
Vincent Crici
"Mind Your Manners"
Estelle Henrich
Sonny & Sonny
Sonny Meadows
"I Never Thought I'd Miss
Richard Nixon"
Bill DeZego
(no title)
John Graybosch
"I Could Still Be"
Conrad Tyras
"Where Were You, God"
Bill Goldsmith
"Maybe So"
Suzanne Ernst
"Dreams"
Michael Svezia
"Just one/Joey B"
Mark Hussey
"Zombie Shuffle"
Lois Morton
"Now That You're Gone"

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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: April 4

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. The fee is \$30 a year.

In addition to creating a web presence for yourself, 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>

Online Music News

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into the project long before I completed my CD," she said. Is it a stretch to call them "subscribers"? After all, they did buy CDs, but they bought them in advance. They like her work, and using a CD is very simple.

For further reference:

1. 10 Million iPods, Previewing the CD's End:
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A19831-2005Feb12.html>
2. MP3 losing steam? By John Borland CNET News.com October 15, 2004, 4:00 AM PT:
http://msn.com.com/2100-9588_22-5409604.html?part=msn&subj=ns_5409604&tag=tg_bz
3. The Future of Digital Music:
http://www.gearlive.com/index.php/news/article/the_future_of_digital_music/
4. Web-only album wins Grammy:
http://news.com.com/Web-only+album+wins+Grammy/2100-1027_3-5574470.html?tag=nefd.top
5. ArtistShare source: <http://www.artistshare.net>

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: April 7*

The Cooke's In, Huntington, 7:30 p.m. Thursdays

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

Sea Cliff Coffee Co., Sea Cliff, 7:30 p.m. Tuesdays

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