

October 2005

### Next Workshop

The next ISS monthly songwriting workshop is scheduled for Nov. 7.

### University Café Showcase

Hosted by ISS Director Sonny Speed, the second biannual gig in Stony Brook is scheduled for Oct. 20.  
*More on page 2*

### Urban Mic Going Strong

ISS member and local luthier **Scott McDonald's** weekly gig is gaining momentum.  
*More on page 4*

### Find Us On the Web

Visit our web site, [www.island songwriters.org](http://www.island songwriters.org)

# WE HARDLY KNEW YE

## Concert Series Canceled After Second Show

By Pedro Pereira

The second of the ISS live series of performances at the Sea Cliff Coffee Co. was another testament to the kind of talent that graces this organization. Unfortunately turnout was low and, as a result, the series has come to an abrupt end.

The show itself went off without a glitch. All acts put in tremendous performances. The acts were ISS member **Frank Gambino**, local Sea Cliff duo **John Taylor and Phil White**, ISS all-star band **Tornado Alley**, and ISS member **The Tone**.

Frank kicked off the event with his trademark wit and thought-provoking tunes. He played some of his funny stuff, such as "Coming Out Ass First" and the new song "If There's No Such Thing as Free Will," but he also got serious with a poignant tune he wrote about the Sept. 11 tragedy.

---

We cannot stomach having bands of the caliber of Tornado Alley, and all the other great acts, play to an empty room. So, we've decided to end the series.

---

Frank was definitely a crowd pleaser, though the term "crowd" is a huge overstatement in light of the poor attendance. Following him on stage were John and Phil, who did a short set of covers and original tunes, all in the traditional Country and Western vein reminiscent of Hank Williams Sr. John and Phil, who are regulars at the Sea Cliff Coffee Co. Open Mic., put in a wonderful performance.

Tornado Alley was the night's main event, and the band did not disappoint. It seems to get better every time I see these guys on stage. Tornado Alley is ISS Director **Sonny Speed**, ISS members **Tim Huss** and **Vinny Crici** and percussionist **Robert Langley**. This band is a lot of fun as it runs through various styles of American music, such as bluegrass, country and folk.

Tornado Alley used a very democratic set list, playing an equal number of songs from each of its songwriters – Sonny, Tim and Vinny. But come to think of it, Tim seems to have gotten one more song in than the others. No matter, all were great.

Closing the night was The Tone, whose set consisted primarily of roots music originals. Sporting shades, The Tone delivered a solid set that was the perfect closer to a musically flawless night.

**Tony Tedeschi** and I had high hopes for this show, especially since the first concert of the series in July was an unqualified success. We had a packed house in July, but such was not the case this time. Fewer than a handful of people besides the performers showed up for this show.

For a concert series to succeed, it needs two primary ingredients: great acts and an audience. We unfortunately lacked the latter, which made the Sea Cliff Coffee Co. management unhappy. It is disappointing because Tony and I put a fair amount of energy into this initiative, but we cannot stomach having bands of the caliber of Tornado Alley, and all the other great acts, play to an empty room. So, we've decided to end the series.



## More Live Music

# ISS MEMBER SHOWCASE AT STONY BROOK VENU

### Writer's Choice

By Walter Sargent

September produced a two-way tie for Writer's Choice: Sonny Meadows' "Higher Ground" and Vinny Crici's "I Ain't Too Old For That."

---

**Winner:** Vinny Crici tied with Sonny Meadows

---

"Higher Ground" brilliantly combines a first-person narrative of loss and struggle for survival with a plea for social justice and humanity in government. The insistence is palpable:

"They can put their Homeland Security/on a ship that's hellward bound/Don't talk to me about 'liberty'/Me, I just want some higher ground."

Member comments included the following: "simple, riveting folk melody...a timely song with a long life...very poignant".

"I Ain't Too Old For That" is supposedly Vinny's first bluegrass song, but you'd never know it. It's fast, funny, expertly arranged and totally in the bluegrass pocket. Member comments: "great song,  
*Continued on page 4*

By Pedro Pereira

Nine acts will take the stage Oct. 20 at the University Café in SUNY/Stony Brook for the second annual ISS showcase at the venue. Scheduled are a mix of bands, solo performers and a special guest.

ISS members voted for the performers they wanted to see at the showcase, so you could say that all acts will be there by popular demand.

Expected to take the stage are two bands, ISS member **Gerry Dantone's Universal Dice** and **Blacklisted and the Banned**, featuring ISS troubadour **Sonny Meadows**. Each band will play a 30-minute set, said ISS Director **Sonny Speed**.

Solo artists also scheduled to play are **Steve Robinson, Frank Gambino, Walter Sargent, Tim Huss, Bill Goldsmith** and **Bob Campbell**. Each solo performer is slated for a 15-minute set.

The special guest will be **James O'Malley**, who garnered the most votes from the four artists nominated for the slot.

The show is scheduled for 8 p.m. to midnight. Making a return to the Stony Brook stage are Universal Dice, Blacklisted and the Banned, Walter Sargent and Bob Campbell, all of whom performed during the first showcase last April. Tim Huss, who is playing solo and with Tornado Alley this time, also played in April.

The University Café biannual gig is an offshoot of a monthly open mic ISS used to have at the venue. As a result of poor attendance and scheduling conflicts, Sonny decided last spring to end the open mic series and instead organize the twice yearly shows.

## Songwriting Competition Deadline Soon

The deadline for the International Songwriting Competition is Oct 14. Songwriters have the option of participating in the lyrics-only category or they can submit a CD or tape if they also have music. MP3s are not accepted.

Organizers say the competition offers \$100,000 in cash and prizes and an opportunity for songwriters to receive extensive press and publicity should they win. Entrants get the rare opportunity to have presidents and executives of record companies, in addition to well-established artists, read their lyrics, say organizers.

Judges this year include Tom Waits, Steve Vai, John Scofield, Charlie Musselwhite, Amy Ray (Indigo Girls), The Donnas and Loretta Lynn.

Categories include: Pop/Top 40, Rock, Gospel/Christian, Country, R&B/Hip-Hop and Lyrics Only.

Get more information at <http://www.songwritingcompetition.com>

# COMPARING CD BABY'S DISTRIBUTION PARTNERS

By Walter Sargent

In addition to its highly successful order-fulfillment service, CD Baby offers musicians more than 30 digital/online distribution channels including iTunes, Napster and Rhapsody. The terms vary widely, the apparent value even more so, and this raises more than a few questions: How do these services compare? Do some services meet certain objectives better than others, or are some services simply better across the board?

Rather than launching into a top-down comparison, I'll share my own experience. I signed up for these services when CD Baby introduced this program back in 2003 and now have some download data to look at. While the net revenue generated for this period is hardly worth mentioning, a surge in 2005 sales completely surprised me, especially since my quirky CD "Songs of Dunder" is 10 years old and I don't do any promotion. With more than 90 percent of my paid downloads occurring in 2005, I figured that not only are more people buying music online, but they are even buying from the most obscure artists on the planet.

My next revelation, however, was less encouraging. I noticed that my average income per download was only 2 cents. Since iTunes pays 65 cents per download, I wanted to know who's dragging down the average. The answer was not immediately obvious because the lowest-paying service, MusicNet, pays only 0.2 cents per download, but its volume was nil. The highest-volume service by far was Rhapsody at 1 cent a download. Compared to iTunes, Rhapsody and MusicNet look like dogs, but appearances in this case are deceiving. Rhapsody and MusicNet actually sell downloads at 65 cents per download, but *also* offer them at the basement rate for their streaming/online radio. This is great because it increases exposure *and* income. In my case, iTunes was number one at 50 percent of revenue and Rhapsody was number 2 at 34 percent.

An incidental benefit of the Rhapsody data was that I noticed that an overwhelming majority of downloads were for the track "I'm Blue." In my opinion, this is not one of my stronger tracks, but someone at Rhapsody must have put it on a playlist. In a future article, I'll be looking at the composition of the other services' playlists to see which ones add independent musicians.

Another thing to consider is the time it takes for the income to be paid to the artist account. Again, iTunes shines with a speedy 32 days (on average). MusicNet took 90 days. Rhapsody took 122 days and Napster took an inexplicable 217 days. We might be tempted to excuse Napster because the amount in question was so small, but MSN Music paid for a single download (65 cents) in 15 days. Rhapsody was among the slowest, had the biggest variation and the longest maximum wait: 293 days! When I re-examined my earlier claim that 90 percent of my paid downloads occurred in 2005, I realized that almost half of them were in fact in 2004. The trend is less dramatic than the sales data made it appear.

The remaining services (Napster, MusicMatch and MSN Music) produced so few downloads they are all but irrelevant. Most of the services generated no downloads at all. Maybe it's my quirky music, or maybe they have promotional opportunities I am unaware of. Either way, that investigation will have to wait. For now, I'd put iTunes at the front of the pack of CD Baby's online distributors. That, at least, is not surprising.

For more articles on this and marketing ideas for musicians, visit CD Baby's '.org' site: <http://cdbaby.org/>

## Who Played What

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

### Mike Svezia

Move Tonight

### Sonny Meadows

Higher Ground

### Guy Pezzullo

Cheering Up a Friend

### Jim Caputo

Lake Pontchartrain Flood

### John Marranzini

The Wind of Change

### Tim Huss

Not Quite Ready

### Steven Pepeas

I Remember Me

### Vincent Crici

I Ain't Too Old for That

### Mark Hussey

Walkin' on Clouds

### Bill Goldsmith and

### Richard Lehmann

Greek Chorus

### Frank Gambino

If There's No Such Thing

As Free Will

### Bob Campbell

A Simple Democratic

Dissent

### Steve Robinson

Lucinda



## 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](http://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: Nov. 7*

## Urban Coffee Open Mic Going Strong

### *Tony Tedeschi to Be Featured Oct. 17*

Local luthier and long-time ISS member **Scott McDonald's** open mic is growing in popularity, judging from performer participation and audience attendance. The weekly event runs from 8 p.m. to 10 p.m. on Mondays at Urban Coffee, the café inside the Book Revue bookstore in Huntington.

Each week a songwriter alternates with a poet as the featured artist. On Oct. XX the feature is ISS member and frequent newsletter contributor **Tony Tedeschi**.

Meanwhile, don't forget there is another weekly open mic in Huntington, at The Cooke's In on 110. Attendance and performer participation has been declining lately. If you want to see this event continue, better check it out soon.

## Writer's Choice

*Continued from page 2*

great arrangement...great feel".

Frank Gambino's "If There's No Such Thing As Free Will" came in a close second. He got a lotta votes, a lotta laughs and a spirited discussion afterwards. Frank is definitely onto something.

Note: Most votes do not have comments. We can't print 'em if we don't get 'em, so if you want to more comments, *write them down*.

## 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: Nov. 3.*

**Urban Coffee, Book Revue**, Huntington, hosted by Scott McDonald, 8 p.m. Mondays

**Sea Cliff Coffee Co.**, Sea Cliff, 7 p.m. Tuesdays

**The Cooke's In**, Huntington, hosted by Gary Ivan, 7:30 p.m. Thursdays

---

### ISS Staff

**Director:** Sonny Speed

**Webmaster:** Walter Sargent

**Writing Coach:** Mel Glazer

### Newsletter

**Editor:** Pedro Pereira

**Contributors:** Tony Tedeschi, Walter Sargent, Gerry Dantone, Bill "Scoop" Ryan, Tim Huss, Shari Diamond, Frank Gambino, Sonny Meadows.

For general information about ISS or how to join, contact, Sonny Speed at [mcspeed@optonline.net](mailto:mcspeed@optonline.net) or 631- 462-3300.

To submit newsletter items, contact Pedro Pereira at [peddi@optonline.net](mailto:peddi@optonline.net).

Visit our web site at [www.islandsongwriters.org](http://www.islandsongwriters.org).

