

IN THE STUDIO

ISS Members Work on CDs of Original Music

April 2006

By Pedro Pereira

In recent months we have seen a flurry of new CDs from ISS members, and judging from the number of members currently in the studio, we should expect to see a few more before the year is out.

Recent releases include **Suzanne Ernst's** wonderful "Little Things with Great Love," **Steve Robinson's** well-crafted "Back Roads," and the second studio release by the always-fun blues stylings of the **Defibrillators**, a band whose members included ISS troubadour **Sonny Meadows** and ISS Director **Sonny Speed**. The Defibrillators' new CD is titled "Triple Bypass," and the title track alone will have you in stitches, pun intended.

Also released recently were CDs by ISS newcomer **Hank Stone's** "Rough Folk" and Long Island singer/songwriter **Dave Drew**, who runs an open mic on Mondays at Bartini Bar in Babylon and another on Wednesdays at the A-D Bar in Huntington (Story on page 3).

Monthly Workshop

The next ISS songwriting workshop is scheduled for May 1 at Five Towns College. See you there.

Special ISS Night in Bellmore

Sonny Speed and Tornado Alley this month will host a special workshop at Bellmore Memorial Library.

More on page 3

ISS members currently in the studio: Sonny Speed, Vinny Crici and Tim Huss, as part of Tornado Alley; Tony Tedeschi, Pedro Pereira; Bill Goldsmith.

Recent releases: The Defibrillators, Suzanne Ernst, Hank Stone, Steve Robinson.

Find Us On the Web

Keep up with what's going on at ISS and the Long Island songwriting community. Visit our web site, www.islandsongwriters.org

As these CDs get into the hands of eager listeners, other ISS members are busy in the studio. Sonny Speed, who also leads the powerhouse Americana roots band **Tornado Alley**, has returned to the studio to record the band's debut project. Tornado Alley also includes ISS members **Tim Huss** and **Vinny Crici**.

Meanwhile, frequent ISS Newsletter contributor **Tony Tedeschi** has spent a number of hours in the studio in the last couple of months recording his first CD. Tony is working with producer **Doug Kwartler**, who is also recording me for my first CD project.

Also in the studio is **Bill Goldsmith**, who unlike Tony and myself, is an old hand at this. Bill has recorded a handful of CDs over the years with his band, **The Sideways**.

I am eager to hear the fruit of the studio labors of my fellow Issers. I already got a preview from Tony, who shared with me a finished track of his song "Soul Mates." Judging by this tune alone, we are in for a real treat. If you have heard any of Tony's blues-oriented tunes at an open mic or one of our monthly workshops, you know what he is capable of. Now, imagine those songs with full band arrangements.

But we'll have to wait for that one, since it will take Tony and Doug a few more months to finish the songs, mix and master them.

We'll be waiting even longer for my own CD, since as of this writing I am still

Continued on page 3

ISSers Hit the Studio

More CD Releases from members on the Way

Writer's Choice

By Gerry Dantone

It's hard to describe Lois Morton's style. It's not exactly "show tunes" or "cabaret" but it is clever and melodic, sometimes touching and, this month, amusing.

Winner: Lois Morton

"Clutter Song" probably was met with self-recognition by more than a few ISS attendees as they contemplated their own closets, basements and garages. Lois sang about being a "clutterholic" who "loves my stuff."

The opening lyrics built a foundation for a bridge that eventually enumerated the actual contents of a clutterholic's home, and it was delivered in a rapid-fire list of items that we all know, love and most likely have buried at.

She sang, "Jigsaw puzzles missing pieces, 40 years of rental leases, baby shoes and old eye glasses, notes from all my college classes..." And so on... and on!

Alas, she is finally rescued by a man with a labeling machine who turns her home from chaos into a long row of filing cabinets.

Continued on page 4

Continued from page 1

in the rehearsal stage, practicing the songs that I am planning to record. Just selecting the songs was an ordeal because I have written so many over the years, but I got the choices down to a dozen or so. As you read this, I will have had my first studio session.

Meanwhile, Bill has been working on his new recordings, some of which he has already brought to the monthly workshops for feedback. Judging from those tracks, we should expect to get more of Bill's typical clever lyrics and infectious rhythms in the upcoming release.

Meanwhile, if you haven't picked up copies of the CDs already released, what are you waiting for? In the past couple of issues we have had first-hand accounts by Suzanne and Steve about their experiences in the studio. If you missed those, go to our web site, www.islandsongwriters.org, and download the February and March issues for those articles.

While Steve keeps his feet on the ground with well-developed images to tell the story, Suzanne's approach is more spiritual, at times in a soul-baring disarming way.

Even though Suzanne and Steve have quite different styles and the production of their CDs is dramatically different, I detected a common thread running through their songs. Both write smart lyrics that celebrate life and the little joys of everyday living. While Steve keeps his feet on the ground with well-developed images to tell the story, Suzanne's approach is more spiritual, at times in a soul-baring disarming way.

The Defibrillators' "Triple Bypass" revisits the themes about aging the band tackled in its first CD and that have become its signature. There is a fair amount of hilarity, some dirty-old-guy humor and a sprinkle of pathos. The latter manifests itself mostly in the Sonny Meadows-penned "Widower's Waltz."

Hank Stone's "Rough Folk" showcases the work of one of the finest songwriters in the Long Island performing circle. Presumably the title refers to the production, at the forefront of which is Hank and his Guild guitar. Included in this set of recordings is "Blue Crayon," the song Hank brought to the ISS workshop last month. This is a cleverly written song that explores complex themes with easy-to-grasp images.

Finally, I also want to mention Dave Drew's CD. Dave is a rocker at heart, something you will figure out very quickly from the moment you press the play button. Even though the production is minimalistic – primarily vocals backed by acoustic guitar – there is undeniable foot-tapping energy. Dave sings with passion and conviction about how to make the best of what you got. Be sure to check out "Just Getting Started."

Special ISS Night in Bellmore

By Sonny Speed

I will be hosting an ISS night at the Bellmore Memorial Library from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. on Thursday April 20.

The evening has two parts to it.

The first hour will be a "writers in the round" event that features **Tornado Alley**. We will play our songs and talk about the writing process from concept to performance, keeping it relaxed and encouraging audience participation.

We are doing this to get new members to the ISS, expand our reach and to promote songwriting in general. It should be a nice evening. Come out and help spread the word about songwriting.

The second hour will be an "open to the public" writers critique session. Just like the ISS meetings, Members of the audience will be invited up to do a tune, either by playing a CD or performing live with a guitar. A piano also will be available.

As with the ISS monthly workshops, lyric sheets are required. The ISS members in the room, including Tornado Alley members **Vinny Crici**, **Tim Huss** and I, will provide the critique

We are doing this to get new members to the ISS, expand our reach and to promote songwriting in general. It should be a nice evening. Come out and help spread the word about songwriting.

The Bellmore Memorial Library is located at 2288 Bedford, Ave., Bellmore. The phone number is 516-785-2990 and the web site is <http://www.bellmorelibrary.org>.

New Open Mic Kicks Off in Huntington

By Pedro Pereira

In recent months Huntington has been quiet in the open-mic front. When the Cooke's In Thursday gig petered out in September, there was a Monday-night gig at Urban Coffee inside the Book Revue. But that too lost momentum after a while.

Two weeks ago **Dave Drew**, a singer/songwriter from Bay Shore, launched a Wednesday-night open mic at the A-D Bar, formerly known as the Artful Dodger, on New Street in Huntington. The opening night featured about a dozen performances, which isn't bad at all for a debut.

Among the performers were local luthier **Scott McDonald**, Dave and his wife **Magge Drew**, **Kev and Steve**, **Bob Krummenacker** and myself. It was a lot of fun, and the bar management seems to be really into the music scene. Open mic night was the first time the bar opened under new ownership and the place is still undergoing renovations. Once it is all set up, it should provide a quite pleasant atmosphere.

Sign-up starts at 8:30 p.m. and performances begin a half-hour later.

Dave also runs an open mic on Monday nights at Bartini Bar in Babylon. He was also hosting one at Café Mojo in West Islip, but that came to an end last month because of lack of interest by the management.

Who Played What

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

Pedro Pereira and Tony Tedeschi

Nothing's Changed
Mark Hussey

The Center

Bill Goldsmith

Blending into the
Background

Mike Svezia

Dry Ice

Sonny Meadows

Shed a Tear

Lois Morton

Clutter Song

Andrew Kirschner

Raunchy Monster

Hank Stone

Blue Crayon

Tim Huss

The Note



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: May 1

Writer's Choice: Lois Morton Wins

Continued from page 2

And as for her future, she hopes to meet a "guy with a shredding machine."

This may have been as universal a song as imaginable! No wonder she won this month's Writer's Choice. I hope she has room for it!

Gerry Dantone has filing cabinets, a shredder and still can't get rid of stuff!

Open Mics

The ISS Open Mic at Borders Books, Jericho Turnpike, Syosset, hosted by Bill Ryan or Vincent Crici, first Friday of the month. Sign-up at 7:30 p.m. *Next gig: April 7*

Bartini Bar, 124 North Carl Ave, Babylon, 9 p.m. Mondays. Sign up at 8:30

Trinity Restaurant and Bar, 190 Jericho Turnpike, Floral Park, 8 p.m. Mondays

O'Reilly's Pub, 927 Sunrise Highway, Oakdale, 9 p.m. Tuesdays

Cool Beanz, 25A, St. James, 8 p.m. Wednesdays

A-D Bar, 30 New Street, Huntington, 9 p.m. Wednesdays. Sign up at 8:30

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Visit our web site at www.islandsongwriters.org.