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ISSers at Cool Beanz

Rob Coffin, Pedro
Pereira and Maria
Elaina DiFalco. 8 p.m.
Nov. 16.

Next Workshop

The next ISS
workshop is Dec. 3

Broadjam's musician service The Web as Promotion Tool

BY WALTER SARGENT

A couple of years ago, the ISS got a visit by a real mover and shaker in the online music business. Roy Elkins, founder and CEO of Broadjam. Roy presented his company's innovative online cataloging and promotion services for musicians.

At the time, Broadjam's core product looked like a software program for a couple hundred of bucks that would enable artists to assemble and customize online press kits and sell music downloads.

Broadjam had partnerships with Taxi and other outlets to provide opportunities to pitch. The concept was a winner and their execution was excellent, but not nearly as mature and exciting as it is today.

Broadjam's service has completely revised its package and pricing model. The boxed software is gone, along with the upfront cost and compatibility/upgrade/installation issues.

The service is 100 percent browser-based and it is priced as a progressive subscription with everything a la carte. It's as convenient as it could be and very competitively priced. With a free, entry-level membership, there's no reason not to try it out. (Look for the Broadjam banner on the ISS website.)

Broadjam has also substantially expanded the opportunities for artists to compete professionally. Music for TV and film is hot these days because the TV and film industry knows it can get high-quality/low-cost music from independent musicians and producers. Broadjam publishes a steady stream of projects (about two dozen projects at any given time). Broadjam has song contests, including monthly in-house competitions as well as a dozen third-party contests.

Broadjam offers reviews, both from professional reviewers and from peers. The peer review system is particularly well thought-out. Of course, reviewers are told to keep it constructive and helpful, but a well-conceived incentive system helps it along.

The process begins in complete anonymity. Neither the reviewer or reviewee know anything about the other. Once the review has been delivered, the parties become visible to each other and the reviewee rates the reviewer.

The incentive to review someone else's music is to get your own material reviewed, but reviewers who do not convince the reviewee of a good-faith effort are likely to receive a poor grade. The clever part is the matching algorithm: Good reviewers are matched with good reviewers. Bad reviewers get a taste of their own indifference.

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Using the Web as a Promotion Tool

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Broadjam also delivers your music to radio stations. Notice I said "delivers," not "promotes." Getting your music played on the radio is hard work, but delivering your music to radio stations doesn't have to be.

Artists still have to do all the research and follow up. Artists have to pick the right programs on the right stations and pick their battles to get noticed. Without some rapport or awareness at the station, unknown musicians hardly stand a chance.

The cost to enter a competition, compete for a film/TV slot, get a professional review or send your stuff to a radio station is mostly in the \$5 to \$20 range, depending on your level of membership. This allows musicians of almost any means to compete and get fairly unbiased feedback.

At the very least, Broadjam offers a valuable, yet affordable, learning experience.

Getting your music played on the radio is hard work, but delivering your music to radio stations doesn't have to be.

Writer's Choice

Pereira Wins With 'Sleepwalking'

By WALTER SARGENT

Were we dreaming or did Pedro Pereira sneak one past the competition with a stealth hook and subliminal lyrics? "Sleepwalking" snatched points for originality, superb musical and lyrical craftsmanship. Members wrote: "Catchy, very memorable" and "sneaky social commentary."

October Runner-up, The Sun by Rob Coffin, outshone the pack with a classic, Lennonesque love song. "Inventive, versatile," wrote members.

From the DOSP (Department of Outrageous Self-Promotion), the following spontaneous awards are bestowed forthwith:

House Whoop-Ass Award: "SUV" by Bob Campbell. "Thoroughly enjoyable," "great message."

Uber-punk Anthem: "Love @ Defcon 5" by Steve Lieberman. "Earsplitting, but in a good way."

Country Classic Award: "Maybe Tomorrow Will Be Different: by Mike Capraro/Dennis Westbay. "Great images and detail."

Best Song Intro: "Nothing Sacred" by Rene Davis. "Attention-grabbing with real R&B potential"

Hook City Classic: "Jamaica, Me Crazee by Cousin Steve. "Very catchy, a song with two hooks."

Tone-poem Pop Award: "A Dirty Secret" by Andrew Kirschner. "Unforgettable"

Most Radio-Friendly: "Baby Come Home" by Maria Elaina DiFalco) "I can totally hear this on the radio."

Modern Rock Award: "Try" by Guy Pezzullo. "Solid writing with lyrical depth."

Melody of the Month Award: "Don't Slip Away" by Mike Svezia. "Loved the melody and counter melodies."

Best Storyline (tie): "Why Do You Follow Me Around?" by Estelle Henrich, and "What Does It Mean?" by Lois Morton.

Thanks to everyone presented and everyone who wrote a personal comment with their vote.

Brain Waves

The Music in All of Us

BY PEDRO PEREIRA

Some folks have obvious natural musical talent, and I can think of a number of people I've met over the years at ISS and in the gig circuit who qualify. Other folks have to work at it.

I count myself among the latter. Playing music or singing hasn't come naturally to me. I was always drawn to music with a gravitational force that eventually got me to pick up the guitar with some level of seriousness and commitment. Though playing has become easier, the instrument still baffles me at times and my playing is rudimentary.

My singing has also taken a lot of work, and though my voice can handle most of the songs I attempt these days, it remains a work in progress. I have found the keys with which I am comfortable, and for the most part I stick with those. And the better I get with my comfort keys, the easier it becomes to try others.

I suppose I am an incomplete living example of the maxim that "practice makes perfect."

Along the way, I remember plenty of times when it all seemed so hard that I almost gave up. But I didn't, either out of sheer masochism or what one might call "drive." Or perhaps it was because what pulled me in ultimately was my passion for writing, and songwriting gave me a viable outlet.

I got to thinking about all this partly as a result of releasing my CD, "Last Man on the Planet," an accomplishment I wouldn't have thought possible only a few years ago, and also from reading a fascinating new book titled, "This Is Your Brain on Music: The Science of a Human Obsession," by Daniel J. Levitin. Though at times confounding when it gets inevitably technical, the book is an insightful dissertation of how the brain interacts and processes rhythm, pitch melody, tempo, timbre, loudness and reverberation. It's a must-read for those of us who have been drawn into the craft of songwriting and music-making.

Levitin, a cognitive psychologist, neuroscientist, musician and producer, attempts to explain what music is and reaches inside the brain to do it. He also reflects on the influence of music in our daily lives and how before the advent of television, many families sit together to play music.

In places such as Lesotho, a small country surrounded by South Africa, he points out, music is something everybody does. Everybody sings, regardless of age or social status. Folks from Lesotho, therefore, would be puzzled by our Western division between the masses of music listeners and the select few who make the music.

It's a distinction, Levitin suggests, that goes back about 500 years. "Throughout most of the world and for most of human history, music making was as natural an activity as breathing and walking, and everyone participated," Levitin says. He points out that some of the oldest artifacts discovered in human and protohuman excavations are musical instruments. This means that even before humans evolved into all the features and characteristics we share today, hominids were making music.

The ability to make and perform music was passed down through the millennia until the division Levitin talks about five centuries ago. So the question in my mind becomes whether this once omnipresent human ability remains inside all of us, though for many it goes untapped.

I've always insisted to anyone who would care to listen that I believe music is in all of us. If you can hear it, feel it, hum it, and let it trigger emotion and bodily motion, my belief is that you most likely can also create it, either by simply repeating a melody you've heard before or, indeed, by sitting down with an instrument, a piece of paper and a pen to

Who Played What

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

Steve Lieberman

Love @ Defcon 5

Mike Capraro/Dennis Westbay

Maybe Tomorrow Will be Different

Cousin Steve

Jamaica, Me Crazee

Mike Svezia

Don't Slip Away

Rene Davis

Nothing Sacred

Guy Pezullo

Try

Pedro Pereira

Sleepwalking

Maria Elaine DiFalco

Baby Come Home

Andrew Kirshner

A Dirty Secret

Lois Morton

What Does It Mean?

Rob Coffin

The Sun

Estelle Henrich

Why Do You Follow Me Around?

Bob Campbell

SUV

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We're on the Web!

See us at

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The Music in All of Us

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compose a sonata or write a pop song.

So next time a friend tells you he can't sing or she could never learn to play an instrument, just tell them that centuries ago it probably would not have occurred to him or her to even utter such words because music was so ingrained.

Of course it remains ingrained in daily life today, but more in a spectator sense for most of us. Perhaps because human's music-making ability has remained untapped for most of us in the last five centuries, we now talk about those with "natural" ability and those who "have to work at it."

But before we start lamenting this development, consider this: If everyone were a Beethoven, Lennon or Bernstein, whom would we call musical geniuses?

Pereira at Indie Revolution Showcase Nov. 24

ISS Newsletter Editor Pedro Pereira will play a set Nov. 24 at Indie Revolution Radio's (www.indierevolution.fm) showcase at Bartini's in Babylon. The show starts at 9 p.m. and features several acts.

ISS Open Mics

Don't forget: The next open mic at **Borders Cafe**, Route 25, Syosset, is Dec 7. Hosted by Vincent Crici, this gig is monthly, on the first Friday of the month. Sign up at 7:30 p.m.

Monthly Workshop

Test out your songs in front of a crowd by playing them for fellow musicians who will provide constructive feedback with the goal of helping you improve as a songwriter.

The ISS workshop takes place the first Monday of every month, except if it falls on a holiday, at Five Towns College, off Burrs Lane in Dix Hills. Run by ISS Director Sonny Speed, the workshop starts at 7:30 p.m.

Bring a guitar if you wish to perform your song live, or you may bring a recording on CD or tape. A piano is available for those who write their songs at the keys.

Be sure to bring 25 copies of your lyric sheets so the other workshop attendees can follow along while listening to your song. It is much easier to provide constructive criticism when people can read the lyrics.

The ISS workshop is at the center of the organization's mission to help songwriters perfect their craft. Many performers on Long Island got their start at ISS.

General Information

For general information about ISS or how to join the organization, contact ISS Director Sonny Speed at mcspeed@optonline.net or 631- 462-3300.

To submit items for publication in the newsletter, contact Pedro Pereira at pedropereira@verizon.net.

Visit our web site at www.islandsongwriters.org.