

February 2008

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### Next Workshop

March 3

### Borders Open Mic

March 7

### Defibrillators In Greenlawn

The blues rockers will take the stage at 2 p.m. Feb. 10 at the Harborfields Library.

## Compression abuse

# Too Man CDs Mixed Too Loud

BY PEDRO PEREIRA

I really, really want to like the most recent Bruce Springsteen CD, "Magic," but no matter how much I try, I can't seem to get into it. And it's not that the songs suck or Bruce has lost it lyrically. He may not be writing any more "Thunder Roads," but his song-craft remains strong.

The problem is the sound. The damn CD is too loud! And I would never have expected to say this in years gone by, but the fact is some of my CDs are way too loud. That is true of "Magic," and it is true of A3's most recent, "M.O.R.," and of Gnarl's Barkley's "St. Elsewhere." Those are only a few examples, but the list could go on.

The sound on a lot of current CDs is being overly compressed so that quieter and louder passages in a track all pretty much come out at the same level. And it has to do with competition in the marketplace, as artists, producers and labels try to make their songs stand out in the crowd. Instead, the listener gets a muddied sound with little sonic definition between tracks. Everything ends up sounding like the sonic equivalent of a mud pie.

A lot of the emotional connection you would otherwise make is gone. When every last sound is so in your face that even a whispered vocal sounds like a megaphone, it's hard to make that connection. When you listen to something like Ray LaMontagne's debut album, you actually notice subtle sonic differences in the overall approach from song to song. On a track or two, you can even detect a little bit of that airy fuzz that you would get in between songs or during low-volume sections of tracks when listening to a cassette.

The issue of loudness in mixing has been the subject of an ongoing debate in music

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## Writer's Choice: 'Goodnight to You' by Hussey

BY WALTER SARGENT

When Mark Hussey sat down at the piano at last month's workshop, I really wanted to say, "And now for something completely different," because his songs are often so surprising both lyrically and musically. The surprising thing about "Goodnight to You" was a more traditional use of chords and subject. The music reminded me very much of contemporary musical theater – rich but with more conventional harmonic content and lyric themes. The melody was a bit more unconventional, but striking nonetheless.

No need to pull out the abacas this time. The vote was unambiguous. "Goodnight to You" won by a comfortable margin. Members wrote: "One of Mark's best pieces," "beautiful melody, chords and transitions," "beautiful, lush, romantic."

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## iss

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## My CDs Are Too Loud!

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circles, with everyone from Bob Dylan to Steely Dan's Donald Fagen weighing in. Dylan told *Rolling Stone* that modern albums "have sound all over them. There's no definition of nothing, no vocal, no nothing, just like — static."

The master troubadour has it right. If only others in the industry would see it as it does, we might end up spending good money on CDs that deliver an unpleasant barrage of sound that makes you want to reach for the "off" button.

## Hussey Wins Writer's Choice with 'Goodbye to You'

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For runner-up, we're looking at a three-way tie: Phil Kennelty, John Finnerty, and myself.

Members wrote:

"Home Sick Blues" (Phil Kennelty): "Great country swing song," "loved the boogie woogie."

"It's Always Something" (John Finnerty): "Great music and lyrics."

"Bad Girl" (Walt Sargent): "Great job, catchy chorus."

Thanks to all for showing up, sharing your music, your comments and suggestions.

## ISS Open Mic

The next open mic at **Borders Cafe**, Route 25, Syosset, is March. 7. This gig is monthly, on the first Friday of the month, hosted by Vinny Crici. Signup is at 7:30 p.m and the music starts at 8 p.m.

## Who Played What

Here is a list of the performers and songs from last month's ISS workshop:

Mike Svezia: Take a Penguin to Lunch; Cousin Steve: Time to Pack It In; Denis Westbay: Closing Time at the Lone Star; Estelle Henrich: Estelle Henrich; George Palmer: When Newsday Was a Nickel; Phil Kennelty: Homesick Blues; Guy Pezzulo: Suggest(ing); Howard Pavane: Oil and Water; John Finnerty: It's Always Something; Jim Baron: Inside Out; Mark Hussey: Goodnight to You; Walt Sargent: Bad Girl

## 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](mailto:mcspeed@optonline.net) or 631- 462-3300. To submit items for publication in the newsletter, contact Pedro Pereira at [pedropereira@verizon.net](mailto:pedropereira@verizon.net). Visit our web site at [www.islandsongwriters.org](http://www.islandsongwriters.org).