

July/August 2010
www.islandsongwriters.org



Next Workshops
Monday, August 2nd and
Monday, September 13th
at Five Towns College.

**Borders
Open Mic**
The next shows are
August: TBA
September: TBA
(check ISS Website)

Writer's Choice
Find out what song won
on Page 2.

**ISS nights at the
Bellmore Library**
Details on page 2.

**Songwriting
in the Movies**
~ Tender Mercies ~
Robert Duvall plays a
down-and-out country
singer/songwriter who
tries to put his troubled
life back together.
This 1983 Oscar Winner
is available on DVD.

**The Dog Days
of Summer**
*Mad dogs and
Englishmen go out in
the midday sun.*
- Noel Coward

...But it ran too long.... How long is too long in a song?

BY SID CHERRY

Back in the days of Tin Pan Alley and the American Songbook, most popular songs were very short. They usually needed to be repeated with an intro and instrumental section added to make it to the 2:00 minute mark. At some point in the sixties and early seventies, that length was stretched to 3:05 for radio play. Album cuts began getting even longer. These days, songs are much longer and there is no set formula for song structure and length. To songwriters, this can be a blessing and a curse.

Tell enough but not too much.

You're staring at a blank page searching for words to fill it. The next thing you know, your song is 5:00 minutes long and you've still got more to say. How do you tame this beast? You must first go through every line and make sure it says exactly what you want it to say and contributes substantially to the story you are telling. Do you have any lines that are simply redundant thoughts said in a different way? Have you given information that really isn't necessary or even interesting? This is where some tough love and a cold eye come in to play. In story telling, events are condensed into only the most important details. Make sure your song follows that rule.

Is it a song or a jam session?

Instrumental sections and instrument solos can provide a nice break in a song. They can also help build tension while moving toward a climax. The downside is that they can also kill momentum and distract from the story being told. If you want your song to have a certain pace and your lyrics to be felt in particular way, be wary of the length of your instrumental sections. Try various lengths of intros, interludes and solos to make sure they are serving the song. If breaks are based on certain sections of the song, try condensing them for variety and pace. This also helps create musical surprises.

Your list is starting to list.

There are types of songs that are essentially lists of interesting and often amusing thoughts - "Let me count the ways I love/hate you." As evidenced by Cole Porter's (*Let's Do It*) *Let's Fall In Love*, these lists can go on endlessly. Unfortunately, your song can't. If you are writing this type of song, careful ordering of the thoughts is crucial. Ideas need to build on each other, using the information or momentum of the last thought to deliver the next. This is the same with jokes if your song is humorous. There may be certain lines that are funny only when they follow a particular thought. Another way to order is to make sure that lines become more interesting and/or funnier as the song goes on. Never put your most outrageous details or funniest lines in the beginning of the song. Also, if anything in your list doesn't get the reaction you are expecting even after reordering it, consider cutting it.

Once more with feeling.

The main guideline in determining the length of your song is how it feels. Does it reach its conclusion when it feels like it should. Only you and your listeners can tell that. A good song is like a good meal, at the end, we want people to feel satisfied, maybe wanting a little more but certainly not bloated.

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We're on the Web!

See us at

www.islandsongwriters.org

Resources

Free Summer Concerts

Check out the websites of the towns of Babylon, Huntington, Oyster Bay, The Jones Beach Bandshell, the Planting Fields Arboretum and other Long Island venues to find dozens of free concerts scheduled for almost every day during July and August.

Writer's Choice: "Too Big To Fail" by Frank Gambino

Who Played What

Here is a list of the performers and songs from the June workshop:

1. Sevi Regis - Show Me Your Darkness
2. Bill Goldsmith - Wilson Motor Lodge
3. Derek Madarasz - Schools Out
4. Mark Hussey - William Vincent
5. Hank Stone - One Side Up
6. Jules Jacob - The Road Of Life
7. Dave Anthony - The Devil In The Eye
8. Frank Gambino- Too Big To Fail
9. Estelle Henrich - Leave Me Alone
10. Sonny Meadows - Designated Driver
11. Jeff Landgraf - The Comet
12. Ben Boeker - My Secret Double Identity
13. Jeremy Brown - Please Stand By Me
14. Ken Krumenacker - Darkness
15. Vin Gangi - Your Voice
16. Sid Cherry - Love Will
17. Mike Svezia - Fern Schwartz

ISS Bellmore Memorial Library Showcase

Aug 30 - Walt Sargent / Suzanne Ernst / Vin Crici

Sept 27 - Lois Morton / Vin Gangi / TBA

Oct 25 - Dave Anthony / Frank Gambino / Mike Svezia

Nov 29 - Mark Hussey / Estelle Henrich / TBA

2288 Bedford Ave Belmore NY 11710

1-516-785-2990

www.bellmorelibrary.org

Huntington Folk Festival

Saturday, Aug 7th 1:00 PM – 10:00 PM

ISS Performers from 2:00 – 3:00

Heckshire Park, Huntington

Presenting *ISS Members*:

Dave Anthony, Susan Cohen, Tim Dillon, Sonny Meadows, Walt Sargent and Hank Stone.

"I Wish I'd Written That Song."

Send in your submissions to sidcherry@optonline.net

Monthly Workshop

Test 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 holidays, at Five Towns College, off Burrs Lane in Dix Hills. The workshop starts at 8:00 p.m., with performer sign-up beginning 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 20-25 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, visit our web site, www.islandsongwriters.org. To submit items for publication in the newsletter, contact Sid Cherry at sidcherry@optonline.net.