

POP'S MARRIAGE TO ADVERTISING

By Pedro Pereira

Keith Richards had a good laugh when Pepsi paid the Rolling Stones a hefty license fee to use "Brown Sugar" to sell its product. He wondered aloud if the company had any idea what the song was about.

I laughed along when I read Richards' remarks. After all, what's the harm in the Rolling Stones' making more money off one of their songs, even if it is to sell product?

And for that matter, what's wrong with using the Clash's "London Burning" to sell upscale cars? Or Led Zeppelin's "Rock 'n Roll" to sell Cadillacs? Or Janis Joplin's "Oh Lord, Won't You Buy Me a Mercedes Benz?" to sell, well, Mercedes cars?

There's the argument against selling your soul to corporate interests in what amounts to an unforgivable violation of the rebellious spirit of Rock 'n Roll. Ah, but that would be naive in an age of formulaic corporate pop when even the music that is intended to shock with harsh licks and coarse lyrics is carefully calibrated to elicit appropriate reaction and sales figures.



Sure, the affront to the spirit of rock is bothersome enough, but I see a larger issue at play. It's the loss of meaning. And it is particularly irksome to see the music of my youth used in such a callous way. For it is callous and offensive to see "London Burning" used for peddling cars. Or "Revolution" to push Nikes. Just exactly what does the anti-establishment sentiment of "London Burning" have to do with leather seats, anti-lock breaks and horsepower?

It is sad to see the adulteration of these great classics that we believed meant something. But then again, it is simply a sign of the times that advertisers are having huge success in persuading songwriters, or copyright holders, to agree to such use. I certainly never expected to hear a Clash song on a commercial, but I wouldn't say that I was shocked when it happened. Nike's use of "Revolution" paved the way. And if anyone would have been furious at such a misuse of a song, it would have been John Lennon, who used to turn off the TV during commercial breaks.

Lennon aside, however, it may be too much to expect the
Continued on page 2

SONGWRITING SHOWCASE

Weekly Gig at N'awlins Grill in Mineola

By Pedro Pereira

Starting this month, area songwriters will have a chance to perform their songs weekly at the N'awlins Grill in Mineola. The gig, organized by **David Isaacs** of the band Jacalope Junction will kick off at 8 p.m. each Tuesday

"The basic format will be open mic with backup available if the performers desire. We'll have no drums, but there will be a trio of guitar/mandolin, bass, and guitar/keyboard," said Isaacs. "Songwriters can bring charts if they would like to play with the band or they can play alone."

First Writers' Night is on Jan. 7

Jacalope Junction will kick off "Writers' Night: A Different Kind of Open Mic" each week with a half-hour set, after which open-mic performers will take the stage. The weekly gig, the first of which is scheduled for Jan. 7, also will include a featured performer who will play after the first few open-mic acts.

"Open-mic performers get two songs each, with the option of cycling through the list again if things go late. Of course, a successful event might make this impossible. Anyone can sign up, and while original music is preferred, covers are permitted as well," Isaacs said.

He said the idea for "Writers Night" came about after chatting with the owner of N'awlins Grill, who was looking for a Tuesday night entertainment idea. Isaacs thought up the concept and presented it to the owner, who gave it the green light.

N'awlins Grill is a Cajun food restaurant with an active live music schedule, very much in the tradition of the restaurant/bars in its namesake city, New Orleans. The grill features appearances by an array of local musical talent, including a monthly performance by bluesman **Little Toby Walker** [More on Walker on page 3].

The restaurant is located about a block away from the Mineola LIRR station at 44 Willis Ave (516-747-8488). Sign-up for the open mic starts at 8:30 p.m.

ISS Workshops: Five Towns College, Dix Hills, 7:30 p.m. first Monday of every month, run by Sonny Speed. **Feb. 3, March 3, April 7.**

Songwriters in the Round: Barnes & Noble, Commack, 7:30 p.m. second Thursday of every month: **Jan. 9, Feb. 13.**

♫ WRITER'S CHOICE by Gerry Dantone

Peter Pan flies again with Gambino

The greatest challenge for a writer, any kind of writer, is coming up with something new and original. A fresh idea for a love song is worth 100 guitar riffs, or something like that. Clever writers may venture off into uncharted territory in search of a good new idea for a song. The best writers find that new idea, make it sound good, and enlighten us at the same time. That is when you truly hit pay dirt.

*'She says: Hey, Sonny, you can be Peter Pan
Now take your Wendy by the hand
Hey, Sonny, you've been Peter Pan
Now fly your Wendy home to Never Land'*

— Frank Gambino

Pay dirt is nothing new to **Frank Gambino**, who hit it once again with "Peter Pan and Wendy," and he found it the way he typically does — with a unique and inventive insight to the human condition.

The song is a story of a son and mother who relate to each other within the legend of Peter Pan and Wendy. From childhood to adulthood, Frank illustrates the poignancy of parenthood, and later on, the beauty of love being returned in a similar way, from child to parent.

"Every day she's slowing down, it's getting harder to move around/There are monsters to fight, hidden caves to explore/At night he sits by her bed, deciphering words that are said/Searching for clues to unlock the magic door/He asks her, 'Mom, what do you see? Mom, do you know it's me?'/She says: 'Hey Sonny, you can be Peter Pan, now take your Wendy by the hand/Hey Sonny, you've been Peter Pan, now fly your Wendy home to Never Land.'" And these words excerpted from Frank's song pretty much say it all. Congratulations, Frank.

Gerry Dantone lost his father last year, and is the father of two and thanks Frank for this song.

IT'S YOUR NEWSLETTER

Get in touch with Editor Pedro Pereira at peddi@optonline.net to learn what you need to do to submit an item to the newsletter. You may write an article or just submit information. And make sure you take full advantage of page 4, where you can list your gigs, CD releases and other events. Remember, it's your newsletter.

Also be sure to check out our organization's web site, www.islandsonwriters.org, for the latest happenings.

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Continued from page 1

commercial interests to respect the spirit of these songs. Surely matching advertising content is the least of their concerns when the content itself amounts to a barrage of mistruths, half-truths and downright lies. I don't know any women who race vacuum cleaners underground or guys who play polo from behind the wheels of their Pathfinders. But no one seems terribly bothered by these preposterous, though intentionally exaggerated, TV ad claims.

If we readily accept that the claims the advertiser is making are exaggerated or untrue, surely we shouldn't be too bothered by the incongruity between the song and the voice over as well as the use of the song itself. Or should we?

Music is supposed to be special. It is about the human experience. It is meant to elicit emotion, awaken the memory, provoke thought. Indeed, music has immeasurable power. Which the advertisers know all too well, and that's why they have mined this rich repository of memories, emotions and ideas that we call pop music.

Artists such as Moby, Counting Crows and Cracker have resorted to licensing their music for advertising because they could not get enough radio exposure. It's an understandable position. But I would feel much better if when I put "London Burning" on my CD tray I didn't get a mental picture of a silver Jaguar rolling by a London phone booth.

MUSIC LABELS' NEW ALLY: CABLEVISION

Cablevision, Long Island's cable TV company, is warning users of its Optonline.net Internet cable service against some use of music and video file-sharing web sites.

Saying it taxes its broadband service, Cablevision is warning customers against using such file-sharing sites as Kazaa, Gnutella and Morpheus to upload music and video. Such use, Cablevision says, violates the company's terms of service because it effectively can turn a personal computer into a server. Servers, which are usually more powerful than the average PC, send and receive files upon request. File-sharing services search out the most powerful home PCs to use them as servers.

Record labels, which have combated such music-sharing sites, starting with the now-defunct Napster, applauded Cablevision's move. Record companies say music file sharing amounts to copyright infringement.

How far Cablevision will take its file-sharing policy remains to be seen. By targeting uploads, the company is not zeroing in on users who download music files. But it is making it harder to access files, since one user cannot download a file if another had not uploaded it. Cablevision's pitch to prospective Internet customers is fast music downloads..

Online Music News

COPY-PROTECTING MUSIC STRATEGIES ARE 'DOOMED TO FAILURE'

By Walter Sargent

Shortly after the record industry reaffirmed its commitment to copy-protecting music, the media became a chorus of scientists, pundits, and analysts saying "it'll never work" and the effort is "doomed to failure."

GartnerG2, a research service of Dataquest, conducted the online survey of adult and teenage consumers in July and concluded that copy protection efforts are "likely to frustrate users, possibly resulting in a decline in revenue for the record companies."

Researchers at Microsoft presented a paper on Digital Rights Management (DRM) at an annual conference on Computer and Communications Security. In it, they warn that the "severe" commercial and social problems inherent in watermarking schemes, in addition to their technical shortcomings, mean such schemes are just not feasible.



Doomed. That has a very musical sound, doesn't it? Dooooooooooooomed.

But remember, MP3s are just the poster child for online publishing. To really understand where this may all be going, consider the claims of online author and publisher Tim O'Reilly:

- Obscurity is a far greater threat to authors and creative artists than piracy.
- Piracy is progressive taxation.
- Shoplifting is a bigger threat than piracy.
- File sharing networks don't threaten book, music or film publishing. They threaten existing publishers.
- "Free" is eventually replaced by a higher-quality paid service.

O'Reilly's claims are based on his experience as a leading technology book publisher. Yet his argument seems to be that of a content producer -- like a musician's. And although his conclusion appears to be at odds with the researchers at Microsoft, he's really not commenting on copy protection per se.

He simply points to the inexorable economic truth that finding music worth listening to is something worth paying for. What drives that price is not the cost of production or distribution, but the cost of and value realized by the marketing. To prove the point, he asks, "How many of you

watch free television over the airwaves, and how many of you pay \$20 to \$60 a month for cable or satellite television?" Is cable TV copy-protected? Nope.

Has it hurt sales? Nope.

Is cable TV doomed? No, and not because what's on TV is so great. It's just better than what's on the radio.

For further reference:

- <http://www.newscientist.com/news/news.jsp?id=ns99993020>
- <http://www.pbs.org/cringely/pulpit/pulpit20021128.html>
- <http://www.openp2p.com/pub/a/p2p/2002/12/11/piracy.html>

Walter Sargent is an ISS member and webmaster of the independent music web site www.cyber-songs.com.

BLUESMAN LITTLE TOBY ON A ROLL

By Pedro Pereira

2002 was the year of **Little Toby Walker**. And if he keeps it up, 2003 could be just as successful.

With the start of the new year, Little Toby is making plans to tour the United Kingdom and his CD "Cool Hand" continues to receive high praise. In addition, he just re-released his first album, 1988's "Thumbs Up for the Blues," in CD format and under the title "Back in the Groove," available for sale at his site, www.littletobywalker.com.

"A few folks had asked me if I ever was going to re-release it as a CD and seeing as how it was such a bit hit back then, I decided to do so. Nothing was re-recorded, everything is exactly the same," said Toby, who won the acoustic division of the Memphis International Blues Challenge Award in 2002.

"Cool Hand," released last spring, has piled up accolades, the latest its inclusion in John Platt's Top Picks for 2002 along with releases by Bruce Springsteen, Elvis Costello and James Taylor. Platt is the marketing director for WFUV-FM 90.7. "Little Toby Walker is Long Island's musical ambassador to the world," Platt said.

This year, Toby will take his brand of acoustic blues to the United Kingdom, where he has been working with a promoter to book a tour. "The promoter has just informed

Continued on page 4

BLUESMAN LITTLE TOBY ON A ROLL

Continued from page 3

me that I'll be working quite a bit during the 18 days doing concerts, festivals, a major radio show and even a few pubs," Toby said. But he has some ulterior motives: "I'm also very interested in the food."

Toby has also kept busy writing new songs with more of his trademark lyrical wit and jaw-dropping guitar playing. He's even been tapping his bluegrass influences. "Believe it or not, I always held Doc Watson, David Bromberg, Norman Blake and others in very high esteem, and played bluegrass a long time ago. You might say that with the recent advent of roots music, my appetite for the stuff has returned," he said.

Though it may seem too early to talk about, expect a new album about a year from now. Of course, that is subject to change. Regardless, with all that is going on in Little Toby's world, this could well turn out to be his decade.

WHAT'S DOING

This Month

ISS members are always out and about. Check your local listings for appearances live, on the radio or even on TV. Also check www.islandsongwriters.com for gigs and links to member sites with information about CD releases, shows and MP3s. Here's what's happening in the coming weeks (*Remember to check with the venue first because dates and times may change*):

ISS Workshop

Five Towns College, Dix Hills, run by ISS Director **Sonny Speed**, first Monday of the month. Starts at 7:30. Bring a guitar to perform your song live, or play a CD or tape. A piano is available for keyboardists. Bring 25 copies of your lyrics so other workshops attendees can follow along and critique your work. Upcoming workshops: Jan. 6, Feb. 3.

Open Mics

Borders, Jericho Turnpike, Syosset, hosted by ISS Webmaster **Bill "Scoop" Ryan**, first Thursday of the month. Sign-up starts at 7 p.m. Try to get there early to guarantee your spot. Upcoming gigs: Jan. 2, Feb. 6, March 6.

Starbucks, Main Street, Huntington, 7:30 p.m. Mondays.

Ruby's, Oakdale Ave, Port Jefferson, 8 p.m. Wednesdays.

69 Wall Street, Huntington, 8:30 p.m., Tuesdays.

Starbucks, Long Beach, 7:30 p.m. Wednesdays.

Songwriters in the Round

Barnes & Noble, Commack, hosted by **Sonny Meadows**, second Thursday of the month. Starts at 7:30 p.m. Upcoming gigs: Jan. 9, Feb 13.

Local Music Online

Find lots of music from local artists at www.cdimp.com. Buy CDs or download individual songs from such artists as the **Defibrillators**, **Blonde Lemon Pledge**, **Little Toby Walker**, **Michele Monte**, **Dogs Gone Fishing**, **Angelwing** and **Tod Shea**.

Director's Message

ISS workshops are increasingly popular and we want to ensure all members get enough time for comments. If you want your song heard but don't want critique, please save the debut for the showcase. If you want feedback, **please remember to bring 25 copies of the lyrics sheet** (or be prepared to pay a hefty fine – just kidding!)

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