

Online Music News: Into the Oven

By Walter Sargent

The Music Oven Network is an innovative promotional service that seems to have one hell of a compelling business model.



For the musician, Music Oven (www.musicoven.com) is a free service that does not try to take possession of your music. All you need is proof of ownership and music that speaks for itself. No risks and no guarantees. This leaves musicians free to make more music.

For the retailer, Music Oven is liberation from the industry monolith. Retailers choose from pre-qualified selections, can insert ads (or not) and can resell those ads (or not). In essence, Music Oven allows retailers to create their own custom radio station/jukebox with high-quality, independent (discounted) music.

Everywhere you click, the Internet seems fraught with peril these days. Download some music, get your pants sued off.

For the typical coffee shop owner, paying hundreds of dollars a year so their customers can hear the same old tunes peppered with someone else's advertisements is not exactly a value proposition. So if you start seeing those coffee shop owners cartwheeling down the street, now you know why.

Playing With Fire

Everywhere you click, the Internet seems fraught with peril these days. Download some music, get your pants sued off. In the wake of the highly-publicized wave of lawsuits against individual Net users, Republican Sen. Norm Coleman of Minnesota stepped in to protect the innocent "who may have simply been victims of circumstance or [who don't know] the rules." Coleman, a confessed Napster user, said he was partly motivated by the case of a grandparent who is facing \$45 million in penalties for downloading oldies.

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TEDESCHI TAKES OVER

Tony Tedeschi (www.naturaltraveler.com) will take over the ISS Newsletter for the October issue during Editor **Pedro Pereira's** absence. Send all newsletter items to Tony at ntbooks@sprintmail.com.

ISS Workshops: Five Towns College, Dix Hills, 7:30 p.m. first Monday of every month, run by Sonny Speed. **Oct. 6, Nov. 3**

ISS Monthly Gig: Borders, Old Country Road, Westbury, 8 p.m., third Friday of the month, hosted by Rich Stein. **Sept. 19, Oct. 17.**

A WEEKEND WITH A STAR-TO-BE

Making friends, hobnobbing at music fest

By Tony Tedeschi

Meeting Andrea England was one of those connection things. We'd struck up a conversation in the boarding lounge of the Air Canada flight from Toronto to Edmonton, Alberta, where I was headed to cover the annual mid-summer folk festival for www.naturaltraveler.com, the travel-content web site I edit. She was meeting her publicist, who wanted her to demo her songs and network with members of entourages for acts like Norah Jones, Bruce Cockburn, Nanci Griffith, among a cast of dozens, representative of the best in roots music from the U.S., Canada, Europe, Africa, even Cuba.

Andrea's new Gibson J-45, an acoustic guitar par excellence, was taking its first trip in the belly of the air beast. As a man who has never met a guitar he didn't like or a singer-songwriter who wasn't worth a listen, I was sure Andrea and I would have a lot to talk about on the three-and-a-half-hour flight. While the journey for Andrea was more fraught with hope than anchored in certainty, she was no un-credentialed artist. Her song "Lemonade" had won honorable mention in the Pop Category of the previous year's John Lennon Songwriting Contest, a competition that draws thousands of entries. (www.jlsc.com/winner2002.html)

By the end of the flight, we'd discussed everything from cosmology to Kant, exotic travel to enlightenment poets, I'd had her press kit and new CD (www.andreaengland.com) in hand, and was anxious to hear her music. As I said, it was one of those connection things and I knew the music would add the appropriate element of emphasis.

The Edmonton Folk Festival is set in Gallagher Park, in the grassy ravine of the North Saskatchewan River that cuts through the city. There is a main stage and seven satellite stages with their backs to the river. Audiences fill the hillsides sloping up from the stages, some so steep you have to dig in to keep from sliding down toward the stage.

At midday Saturday I'd been directed by local contacts to Stage 2 for the "workshop" that included a quartet of acts really resonating with the crowd: Boston-based Melissa Ferrick, whose music and delivery hold back nothing; Stephen Fearing, a wonderfully lyrical singer-songwriter-guitarist; The Brothers Cosmoline, from Toronto, who did a version of Johnny Cash's "Big River" that took me way, way back; and Texas-based Tom Russell, who wrote the cock-fighting classic, "Gallo Del Cielo."

Earlier, Andrea and I had reconnected by cell phone and we

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♪ WRITER'S CHOICE

by Gerry Dantone

Where do songs come from? Some say that songs are "discovered," not written, while others point to hard work and dedication. Others will say they heard a phrase that inspired a whole song. Yet for others, a guitar riff is enough and the lyrics follow obediently. These examples probably represent 1 percent of the possibilities.

And of course then there's the dream. One dreams a melody or lyric and is lucky enough to wake up and remember it, and the process could not be easier — sort of. This month's winner, **Suzanne Ernst**, says she dreamed the idea of "Ignore the 17,000" and was able to put it on paper. And the rest is ISS history.

Suzanne, probably watching too much unreal reality TV, dreamed that she or someone she identified with, was on a window ledge being offered \$1 million to jump while 17,000 people cheered her on. (Actually, this scenario is a bit too mild for reality TV.) In a quandary she asked various questions en route to her final lyric: "Wouldn't you be happier ignoring the 17,000 people?" I couldn't agree more, especially if the window was any higher than the first floor.

For this provocative, timely and relevant tune, Suzanne reigns as this month's winner.

For the runner-up position we have ISS Newsletter Editor **Pedro Pereira** (who does a great job, it must be noted by the founder of this newsletter) with his tune calling for an open mind, "Awake." Apparently August was a good month for asking questions and exploring options, and Pedro got right to the point: "I'm not looking for salvation/I'm not in search of redemption/So you can save your judgments, I am not afraid." Way to go!

Gerry Dantone is a sucker for freethinking lyrics.

RICH O'BRIEN ON THE RADIO

ISS member **Rich O'Brien** is scheduled to perform live Sept. 25 on Jill Morrison's radio show on WUSB 90.1 FM. Rich will be on from 7 p.m. to 8 p.m. Morrison's show focuses on Long Island's original music scene.

Rich (www.suburbanworkingham.com) got the gig after contacting Morrison. He had heard through the Long Island Music Coalition she was looking for talent to fill some slots on her show. He sent her an e-mail and a link to his web site, which contains some MP3s of his songs.

"She went to it, listened to some of my songs, and then sent me her phone number," Rich said. "I then called her, had a long conversation with her about my background, my songs, why I had returned to music after so many years, etc. Then she invited me to be on the show."

♪ EDITOR'S PICK

August Workshop

In agreement with the masses

This month the editor agrees with the masses that **Suzanne Ernst**'s song, "Ignore the 17,000," was the standout track at the August songwriting workshop. So either the editor finally got a clue or the rest of the group smartened up.



"One morning you wake up/to noise outside your window/You look out below and see 17,000 people...telling you to jump." So starts Suzanne's finger-picked commentary on the voyeuristic impulses of our society.

With each passing day, it seems a new reality TV show is daring another group of suckers with low self-esteem to make utter fools of themselves for a pot of money they will surely spend before they ever knew what hit them. Suzanne captures this mania with perspicacity in "Ignore the 17,000," lending her soothing vocals to a great melody.

Suzanne has won Writer's Choice awards several times before, and with good reason. She is one of ISS's brightest lights. And now she can add an Editor's Pick to her list of accomplishments. As with Writer's Choice, she gets absolutely nothing for winning. Well, there's the recognition.

Another standout in the August workshop was **Tony Tedeschi**'s "Rearview Mirror." Despite some controversy among the ISS faithful as to whether Tony had fully consummated the metaphor in the song, this number boasts the wonderful imagery typical of Tony's work set to a stomping rock beat. Well done.

The other songs performed during the August workshop were as follows:

- "My Favorite Daydream," Andrew Kirschner
- "Jewish Riot," Steve Liberman
- "The Center Holds," Mark Hussey
- "The Blue Ridge Mountains," Rich O'Brien
- "Myopia (The Nearsighted Cowboy)," Barry Braumstein
- "One More Thing," Bill Goldsmith, Richard Lehmann
- "Awake," Pedro Pereira
- "Got My New Teeth Today," Sonny Meadows
- "Mr. Know-It-All," Walter Sargent
- "Night Journey," Rich Crawford
- "Pretty Girls," Frank Gambino

ISS RETURNS TO THE SPOT

ISS resumes its monthly gig at The Spot in SUNY/Stony Brook this month. The first gig is Sept. 18.

A WEEKEND WITH A STAR-IN- WAITING AT EDMONTON MUSIC FEST

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arranged a spot to meet. She escorted me backstage and introduced me to her publicist, Richard Flohil, British-born, Toronto-based, his flowing white locks reminiscent of another era – one that did me and clearly did Richard, too.

“You’re going to do something for that woman,” I said with conviction, when she wondered off a bit. “Oh, yes,” he said, his accent still markedly British. “I may even make some money with her.”

So there it was again, an example of that inexplicable sense of satisfaction that comes with having participated in something good – a guy doing his thing for the joy of it. Richard’s pale eyes lit into one of those smiles that cannot be counterfeited.

As I wandered about the grounds with Andrea, we noticed a tent where they were playing selections from CDs of artists showcased at the festival. “Come on,” she motioned toward the tent, then asked one of the attendants if we could play her CD. Among the wonderful tracks she played for me was “Lemonade,” the superlative piece that so impressed the judges of the songwriting contest.

Later Richard, whom I had begun to feel knew everyone, introduced me to Mary Gauthier (www.marygauthier.com) as a trio of near-anorexic women with Crayola-colored hairdos strode by on tall, tall stilts. Mary excused herself to get ready for her gig on a satellite stage. Richard was wearing that smile again. I nodded toward Mary. “Later,” he said.

Anyone who has any kind of desire to share his or her music will find him/herself sucked into the energy core of the Edmonton Festival. It’s a function of the musical genre, this roots music that seems so inextricably wedded to both urban sidewalks and gravel roads. The performers walk among you here, creatively and literally: Mary Gauthier in her stiletto-pointed boots, Eric Bibb in his plantation hat, members of soul singer Solomon Burke’s contingent in their red tuxes, even Norah Jones in a baseball cap. There is an intense sense of connection that scales that wall between performer and audience, which seems endemic to other musical forms. These people sing your songs, in your language. Even when the dialect ostensibly is foreign, the thematic venues unfamiliar, they are somehow yours, having become yours in the dark recesses of long-dissipated formative processes, and are now articulated by these gifted artists of the proverbial road, which somehow now runs by your front door.

“Have you seen Mary ‘Go-Shay’ yet?” Richard asked. I replied, “Never heard of her, until you just introduced us.”

“Man, are you in for a treat,” he countered as he motioned the three of us toward her venue. We got a spot just left of

the stage. Mary Gauthier played with Gurf Morlix, a guitarist with a huge contribution to Lucinda Williams’ “Car Wheels

on a Gravel Road.” Her set was the most dramatic example of the ability to connect I have ever experienced. You are with her battling addiction, overnighting in a cheesy motel, coughing in the burning cane fields of the Delta. To hear her take on Christmas among the homeless is to stop dead in your tracks alongside all those poor souls sleeping below a highway overpass or on a sidewalk grate, all those souls you’ve turned away from as you raced along your far-more-important course through life.

“Who,” I asked myself as I recalled my own calloused indifference, “who the *hell* am I?”

The woman is a poetic genius. The audience leapt to its collective feet as she and Morlix wound down the chords of her final number. It was an audience in a trance, a set nothing short of brilliant. And the woman on the stage was the embodiment of humility, as she bowed low and smiled. When she signed my CD, “love,” I told her the only appropriate comment for her performance was “thank you.” She seemed overwhelmed that I was so moved. Like I say, someone truly special.

On Sunday, I’d had an invitation from the sous chef at the wonderful Fairmont Macdonald, where I was staying, to enjoy dinner at the hotel’s superb Harvest Room and asked Andrea if she’d like to join me. After a deliciously prepared meal with buttery Alberta beef as its centerpiece, she spotted a piano in an alcove at the far end of the hall. She had told me that piano was really her instrument.

“Would you mind?” she asked, already heading in the direction of the piano. “Are you kidding,” I replied.

Now the songs really resonated. There’s something about a live performance, and it’s even more dramatic when it is for you alone. I was absorbed in that shower of sound that only a piano can produce and the lovely timbre of her voice.

At the end of this impromptu set, a hotel guest poked his head around the corner of the alcove to say how much he had enjoyed the beautiful music. It was a wonderfully serendipitous, third-party endorsement of Andrea’s artistry, directly supporting what I had been telling her, at a moment when she needed to know that my comments were not simply a matter of a new friend saying nice things.

Andrea’s suggestion that we jam together fell victim of logistics and scheduling, but she insisted we would get to do that sooner rather than later, and that is an opportunity I simply will not allow to pass unfulfilled.

The experience with Andrea was emblematic of one of the principal reasons I am so enamored of these summer music

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Enter Jane Doe, one of the hundreds who were sued, but the only one so far who has turned around and sued back. According to court documents, Jane used the Kazaa file-swapping software as a music player largely to listen to songs she had ripped from her own CDs and to music that came pre-loaded on her family computer. Furthermore, her attorneys argue that the RIAA's unconventional subpoena process has violated her rights to due process, privacy and anonymous association, along with her contract with Verizon. Go Jane.

To help us see the way out, it's Cringely to the rescue. Calling his latest idea "Son of Napster" ("Snapster" for short), Robert Cringely presents a solution that is legally viable, maintains consumers' rights and forces the industry to face reality. Cringely calls himself a diabolical loon, but he is hardly alone.

As Tim O'Reilly mentions in a recent interview, "The question isn't whether P2P networks will spell the end of media companies. The question is whether the companies that succeed on the new medium will be upstarts or existing players. We saw this same dynamic on the web, where folks like Yahoo and Google and MSN, and even AOL despite its troubles, built substantial businesses because they learned the rules of the new medium rather than trying to force users into their old business models."

For more on these topics:

- Senator Says RIAA Subpoenas Could Harm Innocent People
<http://www.mtv.com/news/articles/1475221/20030801/index.jhtml?headlines=true>
- Lone file-swapper sues RIAA
<http://news.zdnet.co.uk/business/legal/0,39020651,39115877,00.htm>
- RIAA's Subpoena Strategy is Chilling Downloads
<http://www.atnewyork.com/news/article.php/3066851>
- I, Cringely
<http://www.pbs.org/cringely/pulpit/pulpit20030724.html>
- Tim O'Reilly interview - why DRM will fail
http://stage4.co.uk/full_story.php?newsID=272

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If you would like to have a newsletter e-mailed to you, please send your request to Pedro Pereira at peddi@optonline.net.

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

Here's your chance to test out your songs in front of an audience of fellow musicians, who provide constructive feedback on how to make improvements. The workshop is at **Five Towns College, Burrs Lane** 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: **Oct. 6, Nov. 3., Dec. 1**

Borders Showcase

Borders, Old Country Road, Westbury, hosted by **Rich Stein**, third Friday of the month. Starts at 8p.m.:
Friday, Sept. 19: Rich Stein, AKIVA
Friday, Oct. 17: Sarah Haddock, Princess Peapod
Friday, Nov. 21: Martha Trachtenberg with Tom Griffith, Dave Isaacs
Friday, Dec. 19: Rich Stein and Jim Dexter solo and together, holiday show

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. **Oct. 2, Nov. 6, Dec. 4**

Starbucks, Main Street, Huntington, 7:30 p.m. Mondays.
City Deli, New York Ave., Huntington, 8 p.m. Thursdays.
Ruby's, Oakdale Ave, Port Jefferson, 8 p.m. Wednesdays.
Starbucks, Long Beach, 7:30 p.m. Wednesdays.

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