
Musical Events

How unlikely episodes become songs

Double Shot

ISS member Frank Buddine wins Writer's Choice for the November songwriting workshop and tops himself by also nailing Editor's Pick
Congratulations, Frank!
Details on pages 2,4

Internet Radio

ISS member Rich O'Brien launches Internet streaming radio program
Details on page 2

Next Workshop

January 5, 2004
Don't miss the next songwriting workshop: 7:30 p.m. Jan. 5, 2004 at Five Towns College in Dix Hills.

Find It Online

Visit our web site,
www.islandsongwriters.org

by Pedro Pereira

Bill Goldsmith was driving home from work one night when he noticed a big commotion outside a tuxedo shop on Hempstead Turnpike.

"The shop had dumped all of its garbage in front of the store and there was so much that it went into the street," Bill recalls. "There was a squad car there, a crowd of onlookers, and on top of the pile, a headless male mannequin."

Later, the ISS member mentioned the scene to his friend Rick Lehmann and they decided to drive out to pick up the mannequin. "When we got there at around midnight, the cops and the crowd were gone and so was the object of our ride."

With no mannequin to transport back, Rick suggested they write a song about it instead, to which Bill replied: "That doesn't sound like a song to me." He was wrong. The episode spawned the song "Two-Tone Headless Mannequin Blues," which Bill describes as a "Blonde on Blonde" rave-up that ended up in Rick and Bill's band The Sideways' "Upsidedownland" CD.

Bill's headless mannequin experience proves that just about any event can trigger a song. A tragic event such as Sept. 11 can, and did, inspire an infinite number of songs. For months after the tragedy, ISS members were bringing Sept. 11 songs to our monthly workshops.

On the flip side of that, some events are so trivial and fleeting that most of us wouldn't devote more than a half-second to pondering them. But occasionally, one of these fleeting moments trigger the creative spark in us. My song "Pretend," a languid celebration of youth and summer, was triggered by a sign posted on an industrial building along my commuter train route. The sign says, "Made by a human hand."

It made me think of the old industrial buildings in my hometown of New Bedford, Mass. My friends and I passed some of those buildings on our way to the beach in the summer, hence the lines, "Meet me down by the abandoned factory/under the sign that says, 'Made by human hand.'"

For **Tony Tedeschi**, an incident with a pushy driver produced the spark for his hard-driving rocker "Rear-View Mirror."

"A car turned onto the road behind me and the driver immediately switched on his brights," Tony recalls. "The road might be better navigated with brights on if you had no one in front of you, but as anyone who has had this experience knows, the glaring lights in your rear-view mirror are very distracting. Furthermore, the driver was tailgating me, hood-to-trunk."

Tony found himself so distracted by the glaring lights behind him that he ended up looking more at the rear-view mirror than the road ahead. He turned the experience into a metaphor for a protagonist so hung up on a past that he was ignoring his present and future, hence the lines, "I see my destiny approaching in my rear-view mirror/I can't focus on the road ahead/I feel my legacy encroaching on my present demeanor/I fear parts of me are already dead."

ISS member **Walter Sargent** once found inspiration from a purchase. "Back in late '80s when I got my first answering machine, I wrote an outgoing message that was very bizarre. I thought about how these marvelous devices aren't an across-the-board

Continued on page 4



Internet Radio

Rich O'Brien launches web streaming show

by Pedro Pereira

ISS member **Rich O'Brien** keeps busy. In the last couple years or so, he launched a web site to showcase his music, joined ISS and made it a point to get to as many open mics and gigs as his time allows. Now, he's also hosting a streaming radio show on his web site, www.robrien.net/radio. Despite all that, Rich took the time last month to answer a few questions about his web radio project.

How did this idea come about and what did it take to get it up and running?

Well, the seeds of this particular idea were sown by an article in the Sunday New York Times Magazine a year and a half ago called "Where the Music Will Be Coming From." It was about the music business going from the mass culture record industry, where an extremely small percentage of artists are picked by the industry and allowed to distribute their music, to the growing change brought about by technology, where anyone with a four-track tape recorder and a modem can put their music out to the entire world. This inspired me to create my own web site and try to get my music out on the Internet.

Then I read "The Complete Guide to Internet Promotion for Artists, Musicians, & Songwriters." There was a chapter on getting your music on Internet radio stations. One suggestion was to create your own Internet station. I called my son-in-law, John Gray, who has his own computer business and handles my web site. About two weeks later the show was on the air. Isn't high tech great?

Do you have plans to expand this or are you going to stick with the current format?

The idea for now is to do a half-hour show. Right now we're in the testing stage, trying to ascertain if people encounter problems accessing the show, and then seeing if we can help. Soon I'm going to move to a "live" show with an artist being interviewed and performing live.

How are you getting artist involved? Have you encountered any hesitation?

I approached eight artists I know mostly through the ISS, two from the LIMC. Seven got back to me, one I didn't hear from. Since then two or three have contacted me asking to be on the show. So, hopefully, there won't be a problem finding people.

What are your plans for promoting the show and how many hits do you expect?

I have a personal music mailing list of about 70 people. I also have posted it on the LIMC list, which has 540 members. ISS Webmaster **Walt Sargent** is going to make a link on the ISS web page. I'm asking the artists to send the link to the show to their mailing lists. So, slowly but surely, I hope the audience will grow. How many hits do I expect right now, I really don't know, but I'm guessing somewhere between 30 and 50 for the first show. More over time.

You could just play, write songs and do gigs. But you want to make a contribution to the songwriting community, as evidenced by the radio show. What drives you?

I believe the entire DIY (Do It Yourself) or indie music scene is about trying to help each other. I also think the best audience for the singer-songwriter is other singer-songwriters. They are the people who really listen to the music and the lyrics. They are kindred souls, and I find, very interesting people. They really understand what you are trying to do in way that nobody else does.

Is this why you joined ISS?

When I joined the ISS, I was actually very apprehensive. I had started writing songs, but I didn't really think of myself as a songwriter. But, I found the ISS to be a very welcoming group. The most important thing is that after the first meeting, I left with the impression that the group seemed to consider me a songwriter.

Writer's Choice

by Gerry Dantone

Often it seems tunes that are novel in some way — funny, silly, weird, unique,

Winner: Frank Buddine and Mike Blaymore

experimental — have an advantage when being judged after only one listen. Tunes that have "legs" can withstand repeated listenings and stand up to the test of time, but are at a disadvantage even though, it could be argued, they are ones we should honor.

Of course, there is no way to determine in one evening which songs we'd like after hearing them a dozen or so times, so we do the best we can under the circumstances. This month the winner and runner-up created tunes that probably would still be enjoyable after many spins.

The overall winners are **Frank Buddine** and **Mike Blaymore** for their collaboration on "Poundin' On My Door," a classic country rocker if there ever was one. Extremely well produced for a demo in Nashville, it's a song with a story that will engage most listeners. The protagonist is a divorced man pursued by a romantic neighbor and during the course of the song, his reluctance morphs into anticipation. It rocked and rolled in a radio-ready manner.

Continued on page 4

Internet Music News

Suing the Children Won't Work

by Walter Sargent

The RIAA continues its curious shock-and-awe style customer relations policy by suing 15-year-old Megan Dickenson for downloading music on the Internet. Miss Dickenson apparently didn't realize our society is far more tolerant of drunk driving. If only she got drunk and gone a ride, the maximum fine she would face would be a mere \$1,000. Driving without a license? Add \$200. Reckless driving? Add \$200. Leaving the scene of an accident? \$500. Driving without insurance? Well, we don't have a fine for that, but downloading music on the Internet? \$825,000. Granted, the industry is willing to settle for \$3,500, but what's lacking here is a serious sense of proportion. CDs are overpriced. We're in a recession. So sales are down. Suing your target demographic is not the answer.

CDs are overpriced. We're in a recession. So sales are down. Suing your target demographic is not the answer.

Making It Legal

First Apple and now Microsoft announced that they are in the online music distribution business. As usual Microsoft is fashionably late to the party, but when they show up, competitors are lucky if they last the night. Content providers, which include TV, print, news and entertainment, have a vested interest in copy protection and have threatened to withhold their content if the online delivery systems can't provide the controls.

Naturally Microsoft has a solution. Naturally people suspect it won't work. And, naturally, Microsoft has an alternate solution, entire product line and business plan just in case it doesn't. Microsoft has two visions for the future home computer/entertainment center/home office: one with copy control and one without. As long as Microsoft is selling software, it doesn't need to make a dime on music distribution (especially since it doesn't cost anything). Will the RIAA get its cut? Sure. But who and what are they representing? What do they bring to this party apart from a really tired catalog of overplayed songs?

Education to the Rescue

This file-swapping free-for-all has turned out to be a gold mine of market research data for the industry. While the legal arm is suing the 15-year-old file swappers, the marketing arm is pouring over their preferences to see what they can tempt Miss Megan with next.

Meanwhile, the RIAA's public brainwashing unit has come up with a plan to save the day: get school kids to play the "Starving Artist" artist game. Yes, you read that right. As early as next month the industry will begin promoting a "stealing is bad" message in schools. Fifth through ninth graders will enjoy a lesson on the history of copyright law and the evils of online file sharing, which includes games like Starving Artist, in which students pretend to be musicians whose work is downloaded free from the Internet. Pass the earplugs.

For more on these topics:

Local Teen Sued For Downloading Music, <http://www.komotv.com/stories/28363.htm>

Microsoft Enters Online Music Retailing, <http://washingtontimes.com/upi-breaking/2003/11/7-082023-8883r.htm>

Industry Taps P2P, http://story.news.yahoo.com/news?tmpl=story&cid=487&e=1&u=/ap/file_swapping_intelligence

Let's Play Starving Artist, <http://www.mp3newswire.net/stories/2003/starvingartist.html>
<http://www.nytimes.com/2003/09/25/business/media/25STUD.html?ex=1069563600&en=31d35be81433c16c&ei=5070>

Who Played What

The following songwriters brought songs to the ISS workshop in November:

Steve Lieberman, "MP3 Star;" **Bill Goldsmith**, "The Oozy Weed Twist;" **Barry Be**, "Do a Little Two-Step;" **Frank Gambino** "Damned Yankee;" **Sonny Meadows**, "Duct Tape;" **Frank Buddine**, "Poundin' on My Door;" **Mark Hussey**, "Just Like That;" **Bob Campbell**, "Song for My Daughter;" **Estelle Henrich**, "Those Were Not My Boots;" **Vinny Crici**, "Once Upon a Time;" **Rich O'Brien**, "Sunlight;" **Scott Diamond**, "Bridge of Forgiveness;" **Walter Sargent**, "Georgie Boy"

Editor's Pick

by Sonny Speed

Since Pedro was still on diaper duty (Congrats on the new addition) I got to select the Editor's Pick. While we had a strong turnout and I had plenty of great tunes to choose from, I went with Frank Buddine's "Poundin' on My Door" simply because he had the room jumping with this straight-up country rocker.

Everyone agreed this song is ready for the market; toes were tappin' and the feedback was positive. The song is about a guy being chased by a fun-loving woman who just won't let him be and since he's been out of the saddle for a while... well, you get the rest. The music was recorded by ISS member Mike Blaymore, and he did a fantastic job with Frank's lyrics. Way to go Frank. Now how does that old cowboy song go? "I'm back in the saddle again..."

ISS members are always out and about. Check your local listings for appearances live, on the radio or even on TV. Go to 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. (*Check with the venue first because dates and times may change.*)

ISS Workshop

Test out your songs in front of fellow musicians, who provide constructive feedback. The workshop is on the first day of each month at **Five Towns College, Burrs Lane**, Dix Hills. Run by ISS Director **Sonny Speed**, It starts at 7:30 p.m. Bring a guitar to perform your song live, or you may choose to play a CD or tape. A piano is available for keyboardists. Be sure to bring 25 copies of your lyrics so other workshops attendees can follow along and provide feedback.
Next workshop: Jan. 5

Borders Showcase

Borders, Old Country Road, Westbury, hosted by **Rich Stein**, third Friday of the month. Friday, Dec. 19: Holiday Show with Rich Stein and Jim Dexter solo and together

How Unlikely Episodes Become Songs

Continued from page 1

improvement. As we started catching calls we would've otherwise missed, we screened calls we didn't want. Whether the technology was an advancement depends on what side of the call you're on."

Years later, Walter set his thoughts about that experience to music in a song called "In the Future." The song, he recalls, "just seemed to write itself."

Another ISS member, **Tim Huss**, has found inspiration in many places and from a range of events. Recently he wrote the song "It Ain't Easy" as a tribute to a friend who died suddenly "He always fought the good fight to right wrongs and was often ridiculed for it, but fight on he did," Tim recalls.

You never know where your next song idea will pop up or what will trigger it. As Bill proved, it can come out of the oddest episodes. And as Tim suggests, the spark may come from the most sober of experiences. Then of course there are ideas that you literally dream up, as was the case with **Suzanne Ernst's** "Ignore the 17,000," a satirical look at reality TV.

So don't discard those ideas, no matter how odd they may seem. They may just trigger your next coffeehouse hit.

Writer's Choice: Frank Buddine Wins

Continued from page 2

Coming in a close second was the master of melody, **Vin Crici** and lyricist **R. Miles** for "Once Upon a Time." The lyrics are standard pop love song material, with a decent catch phrase, but in Vin's hands it soars. Great chord changes and harmonies highlight another tune that display a unique talent for pop song writing.

Open Mics

Borders, Jericho Turnpike, Syosset, hosted by Bill "Scoop" Ryan, first Thursday of the month. Sign-up at 7:30 p.m., *Jan. 1, Feb. 5.*

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

Pisces Cafe, Railroad Ave, Babylon, 8 p.m. Wednesdays.

University Cafe

Suny/Stony Brook, hosted by **Sonny Speed**, 8:30p.m. third Thursday of the month. Dec. 18: Martha Trachtenberg and Bob Westcott, followed by open mic.

ISS Staff

Director: Sonny Speed

Webmaster: Bill "Scoop" Ryan

Newsletter

Editor: Pedro Pereira

Contributors: Tony Tedeschi, Walter Sargent, Gerry Dantone, Bill "Scoop" Ryan, Tim Huss, Shari Diamond, Frank Gambino, Sonny Meadows.

E-mail: mcspeed@aol.com