

May 2004

# GLEEFUL CYNIC SYNDROME

## Sonny Meadows releases music for our times

by Pedro Pereira

First a personal note: **Sonny Meadows** is the reason I joined ISS. I figured I could learn something from him and the group when I joined three years ago. I was right.

Now for the important part: Sonny's new CD "How Does a Patriot Act?" will be out soon. Containing 15 songs, many of which Sonny has brought to ISS workshops for feedback, the CD is Sonny's commentary on our post-9/11 world. In case you haven't figured it out, Sonny is a true-blue liberal with a keen sense of social justice and political insight. He gives voice to the oft-heard concerns that our nation's policies have been barreling down the wrong track the last several years.

"The new CD is my view of America and our leaders in the post-9/11 world," says Sonny. "It is filled with anger, humor, frustration and a plea to not only dump George W. but to change our fear-based decision-making and culture."

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Revenge knows not right from wrong  
Turns the weak ones strong  
Clouds the sun a dawn

— Sonny Meadows, "Revenge"

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At press time, Sonny's long-time collaborator, producer **Sonny Speed**, who doubles as ISS Director, was mastering the tracks at his SonSpot Studios in Commack. The two Sonnies have worked together on six recording projects thus far.

"I have done work on all of his CDs, so at this point we are joined at the hip and call these productions 'Sonny-Squared' since we are working so close," says Sonny Speed. "It's a great team, He has the best lyrics, intelligent and witty, and I think I paint a great musical background to give the listener an added dimension."

Sonny Meadows, whose musical foundation is deeply entrenched in folk and blues, refuses to fit into a simple musical categorization. "How Does a Patriot Act?" dives with gusto into a myriad of styles, from sea chanties to hip hop and everything in between, including drum-and-fife marching numbers and 60s-style folk.

Despite the weighty topics, an undercurrent of playfulness runs through the songs as a result of the Sonny Speed-conceived arrangements. In "Rules," a sea chanty that could easily become the Libertarian Party's hymn, Sonny Meadows intones with a gruff sea dog affectation: "Our prisons are filled with two million or more/Poor folks who got caught defiling our laws/While the rich and the powerful never serve a day/Rules don't apply if you know who to pay."

The flamenco-flavored arrangement of "Revenge" provides a dramatic backdrop to a sardonic indictment of our culture's bloodlust: "Revenge knows not right from wrong/turns the weak ones strong." Sonny delivers the lines with an eerie Leonard Cohen-like intensity. But the playfulness, call it the "Gleeful Cynic Syndrome," returns

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### Get Your Web Site Here

ISS is now offering  
songwriters their own  
web pages on the  
ISS web site.

*Details on page 3*

### Guest Speakers

Jack Thompson, of  
Broadjam.com, will talk  
at the May 3 ISS  
workshop about  
software that helps you  
promote your music.  
James O'Malley will  
address songwriting at  
the June 7 workshop.

### Next Workshop

*June 7*

The next songwriting  
workshop is at 7:30 p.m.  
June 7 at Five Towns  
College in Dix Hills.

### Find It Online

Visit our web site,  
[www.islandsongwriters.org](http://www.islandsongwriters.org)



## Bill Goldsmith Releases CD

by Pedro Pereira

**Bill Goldsmith**, one of ISS' most recognizable musical stylists, just released his fourth CD, "Superheated Sunshine," under the auspices of his band The Sideways.

In "Superheated Sunshine," Bill regales listeners with his quirky brand of Harrison-esque pop. The CD kicks off with "Cloud of Smoke," with the refrain, "Whatever you once had/right now is just a cloud of smoke," then goes into the superb title track, a bouncy number about global warming. "They say that summer's here/that summertime is here to stay/They say that summer's here/It's never gonna go away," Bill sings. And as he does so, the beat makes you want to get up and dance.

On the fifth track, "Ruminations of a Suit," Bill tackles another contemporary social ill: corporate greed. He sings, "In boardrooms across the nation/We plan, conspire and plot/We somehow get all our hands upon/more than we've already got."

From track 1 through 17, the CD is replete with catchy melodies and thought-provoking lyrics, with "Garbage" standing out as one of the most infectious and intriguing cuts.

"Superheated Sunshine" is available for purchase at [www.cdmp.com](http://www.cdmp.com).

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## Sonny Meadows releases music for our times

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immediately with the fife-and-drums arrangement of the title track. "I had a lot of help from my friends on this project," Sonny says. "**Rich Stein** plays some terrific viola and violin. There are soothing female backing vocals from **Lorraine Berger**, **Jane Ross** and **Martha Trachtenberg**. **Robert Langley** did some wonderful percussion and drum work. **Bob Westcott** and **Jon Foreman** delivered some excellent electric guitar work." Westcott, Langley and Foreman are members of The Defibrillators, the blues band in which the Sonnies also play. Sonny Meadows also plays guitar and banjo on the CD and Sonny Speed plays the rest of the instruments.

The real creative genius of the project, says Sonny Meadows, is Sonny Speed. "His musical skills and dexterity are surpassed only by his ability as a producer. Sonny and I have a great chemistry in the studio that is stirred by his unceasing desire to dig deeper and deeper into every song until the texture of the music blends perfectly with the lyrics. I've learned from him to see each piece in very visual artistic terms, to see each tune painted on a canvas that must have the right colors, lines, textures and movement before it can be considered complete. We both enjoy experimenting and taking risks and don't mind throwing it away if it doesn't work."

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Recording for "How Dows a Patriot Act" began last August. Sonny Meadows went into the studio intending to record a double CD of about 30 tracks of topical material, but the sessions evolved into two separate projects. The first CD, "Let the Light Shine," was released in November and is available exclusively at [www.evolvefish.com](http://www.evolvefish.com) and contains songs celebrating the Humanist holiday "HumanLight".

Recording resumed in January, culminating in "How Does a Patriot Act?" which includes Sonny's first recording of a cover tune, Jen Chapin's "Passive People." "I think it is the best song about apathy that has ever been written," he says. Sonny Speed says he worked on "How Does a Patriot Act?" exclusively in the past four months because the project is "so topical and needs to be out now." He says he views it as a continuation of Sonny Meadows' 2001 "Bibles, Guns and Flags," also very political. One of the "Bibles, Guns and Flags" songs, "Just Like Germany Before the War" appears on a compilation, "Soundtrack Against Empire," available at [www.peopleagainstepire.org](http://www.peopleagainstepire.org), which also includes tracks by Bruce Springsteen, John Lennon, Bob Dylan, Bob Marley and John Mellencamp. Now comes "How Does a Patriot Act?" at a time that our nation, after pulling together for about five minutes after the greatest tragedy in our history, has become dangerously polarized. "People will either love or hate" the CD, Sonny Meadows says. "I don't think there will be many folks in the middle. I would like to think that individuals of the conservative persuasion would give it a listen and instantly change their way of thinking. But it will probably have the reverse effect and drive them to be even crazier and resolute in their doctrines. But that is OK too." Sonny says he is marketing the CD to all Pacifica stations around the country, Air America Radio and select college stations. "I've already contacted Michael Moore and maybe he can use some for the film he is currently working on, "Faranheit 911."

# MP3 Security Move Is Suspect

by Walter Sargent

Thomson and Fraunhofer, the companies that own the MP3 digital music technology, announced they are developing a DRM enhancement to the ubiquitous format.

Citing “incompatible proprietary technologies by companies such as Apple, Microsoft or RealNetworks,” Thomson and Fraunhofer said “we think it will be served well by (Digital Rights Management) that is based on standards. No one else seems to be proposing that.” MP3’s DRM will be “based in large part on open standards” from the MPEG group and the Open Mobile Alliance, and it will be free to anyone who licenses the MP3 format, they said.

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So this is not about securing the music for artists, let’s be honest.

This is about securing royalties for Thomson and Fraunhofer.

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Wait a minute. If MP3 is only based “in large part” on an open standard, it means it is not completely based on it. This means there will be discrepancies and, when it comes to technology, discrepancies usually mean incompatibilities. When we’re talking about the technology sector, incompatibilities are usually introduced to give the vendor a wedge. In this case, Thomson and Fraunhofer are saying they will give away their DRM to anyone who licenses their proprietary MP3 technology.

So this is not about securing the music for artists, let’s be honest. This is about securing royalties for Thomson and Fraunhofer.

Why would Apple or Microsoft want to pay to adopt this “open-standard” DRM, when they could create their own open standard that they don’t have to pay for? If it comes to it, Apple and Microsoft could adopt an open-standard encoding technology and give it away in order to obviate the need for MP3. The technology exists.

The Ogg Vorbis compression format project is already open, and both Apple and Microsoft have encoding technologies that they could turn into “open standards” with the stroke of a pen.

*For more on this topic:*

[http://news.com.com/2100-1027\\_3-5167841.html?part=rss&tag=feed&subj=news](http://news.com.com/2100-1027_3-5167841.html?part=rss&tag=feed&subj=news)

## Promote Yourself on the ISS Web Site

The ISS is now offering songwriters *their own web pages* on the ISS web site. Whether you already have your own web site or not, a personal web page on the ISS site brings you closer to the traffic with a polished and professional look. If you don’t already have a web site, it is an especially good deal. Prices range from \$20 to \$60 per year with a range of options.

Plus, you are supporting ISS web site development. So if you like the way the web site is going, you can help *keep it going* by signing up. Please see the web site for details: <http://www.islandsongwriters.org>

## At the Workshop

The April workshop was canceled as a result of a snafu in scheduling. So there is no list of songs to report this month.

But here’s something for your consideration: Local songwriter **James O’Malley** will give a presentation at the June 7 workshop about a lyrical approach to the art of songcrafting. Jim will focus on cohesive lyrical content and clarity.

“Jim is an excellent songwriter who I feel will be very insightful to the group,” said ISS Director **Sonny Speed**.

James’ scheduled ISS appearance is two days after a release party for his new CD, the follow-up to 2002’s “I’m Ready.”

For more information about James O’Malley, visit his site at <http://jamesomalley.com>.

## New Open Mic

Huntington-based artist and songwriter **Gary Ivan** is hosting a weekly open mic starting May 5 at the Madonna Cafe, 1 Clinton Ave., formerly known as The Veranda. Sign up to perform by 8 p.m.



## What's Doin'

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.org](http://www.islandsongwriters.org) 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: June 7*

## University Cafe

Look who's playing at Stony Brook in coming months:

May 20: **Jeff Curtis, Sarah Haddock**; June 17: **Bob Westcott, Vinny Crici**; July 15: **James O'Malley, Nick Vermitsky**

Don't forget, an open mic follows the featured performers.

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## ISS Member News

### Rich Stein CD Continues Adds Radio Stations

Over the past month, seven more radio stations added ISS member **Rich Stein's** "Unspoken" CD to their playlists. The CD has been getting radio play locally and in stations as far as Los Angeles and Seattle. Staten Island-based WSIA-FM 88.9 is one of those stations. Visit Rich's site at [www.clearsteer.com](http://www.clearsteer.com) and watch for his column, "Theory 101," periodically in these pages.

### Princess Peapod Song Selected for Compilation CD

**Princess Peapod's** song "Move to the Moon" was selected by Oasis CD Manufacturing for inclusion in its "OasisAcoustic Collection Volume 43." Princess Peapod is an acoustic duo composed of ISS members **Michele Frimmer** and **Dave Cook**. Visit their site at [www.princesspeapod.com](http://www.princesspeapod.com).

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## Open Mics

**Borders, Jericho Turnpike**, Syosset, hosted by Bill "Scoop" Ryan, first Thursday of the month. Sign-up at 7:30 p.m. *Next gig: May 6.*

**Starbucks, Main Street**, Huntington, 7 p.m. Mondays.

**Book Revue, New York Ave**, Huntington, 6:30 p.m. Thursdays (except first week of the month).

**Madonna Cafe, 1 Clinton St.**, Huntington, 8 p.m. Wednesdays.

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

## University Cafe

**Suny/Stony Brook**, hosted by **Sonny Speed**, 8:30 p.m. third Thursday of the month. Featured performers followed by open mic. *Next gig: May 20.*

## Borders Showcase

**Borders, Old Country Road, Westbury**, hosted by **Rich Stein**, 8 p.m. third Friday of the month. *Next gig: May 21.*

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## 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.

For general information about ISS or how to join, contact, Sonny Speed at [mcspeed@aol.com](mailto:mcspeed@aol.com)

To submit newsletter items, contact Pedro Pereira at [peddi@optonline.net](mailto:peddi@optonline.net).

Visit our web site at [www.islandsongwriters.org](http://www.islandsongwriters.org).