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## KEEPING IT LOCAL

### Area performers to take IMAC stage Oct. 21

#### Next Workshop

*October 4*

The next songwriting workshop is at 7:30 p.m. Nov. 1 at Five Towns College in Dix Hills.

#### Starbucks Open Mic Is History

After two successful years, management pulls the plug.

*Details on page 2*

#### Online Music

Watching online music distribution these days is like watching a parade

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#### Find It Online

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

By Pedro Pereira

In a first, the Huntington Inter-Media Art Center (IMAC) on Oct. 21 will welcome to its stage three local acts that the center has deemed as "deserving wider recognition." The acts are Long Island's award-winning bluesman **Little Toby Walker**, the aging-is-hip blues band **Defibrillators** and the husband-and-wife dynamic duo of **Martha Trachtenberg** and **Tom Griffith**.

Showtime is at 8 p.m. and tickets were still available as of this writing — \$27.50 for the general public and \$21 public for IMAC members.

Word has it that if this show does well, IMAC will schedule more performances with local artists, which would be a welcome addition to the center's calendar, which typically features national and international acts. For instance, on tap for this fall are shows by comedian Robert Klein, folk musician Richard Shindell and the band Acoustic Alchemy.

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Sonny Speed on Oct. 7 will be the guest on Jill Morrison's show on WUSB 90.1 FM, starting at 7 p.m. He plans to discuss the ISS, the Defibrillators, his studio and the artists he has produced.

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That IMAC has agreed to schedule a show with local artists is indicative of the quality of these artists. If you've seen Toby Walker belt the blues with his powerful vocals and dizzying guitar playing, you can see why. And the same goes for the Defibrillators, with their lighthearted musical approach and clever songwriting, as well as the country-folk stylings of Martha Trachtenberg and Tom Griffith.

Indeed, these artists are some of the best that Long Island has to offer, and if we are to expect to continue to see them and other local performers to take the stage at IMAC, we ought to show our support by attending the show.

I have had the pleasure of seeing all of these acts numerous times. As a fan, I have always left the shows with the satisfaction that can only come from seeing true talent at work. And as a songwriter, I have taken away from these artists' performances the sense that I have just learned something from them that I can apply to my own craft.

The Defibrillators, of course, are no strangers to anyone who's run in ISS circles for a while. This is the band fronted by the brilliant lyricist and ISS member **Sonny Meadows**. ISS Director **Sonny Speed** is the keyboardist, producer and musical director of the band. The other members are **Bob "Pops" Westcott** (guitar) **Bobby "Buddy Boy" Catrano** (bass), **Dr. Max Foreman** (guitar), and **Robert Langley** (drums).

Toby Walker, who refined his blues playing by knocking on the front doors of such greats as R.L. Burnside and Etta Baker to show him some chops, is a true guitar virtuoso and a thoroughly entertaining performer.

Martha and Tom are smart performers and songwriters with serious musical credentials. Martha is a founding member of the Buffalo Gals, the first all-female bluegrass band, and has sung on records by Marty Stuart, Tony Trischka and Stacey Phillips, as well as on commercials for everything from Miller Beer to Red Lobster Seafood Restaurants. Tom is an award-winning producer, composer and arranger who has worked with Michael Bolton, Marc Cohn, Ry Cooder, Fats Domino, Jimmy Buffett, Kenny Rogers and George Benson.



# BRING THE ESPRESSO, HOLD THE MUSIC

## Huntington Starbucks pulls the plug on weekly open mic

### Writer's Choice

by Gerry Dantone

In an election year and time of war, it is inevitable that songwriters reflect the times in which they live. And so it is for this month's Writer's Choice champ, **Tim Huss**.

#### Winner: Tim Huss

No stranger to the winner's circle, Tim outdid himself with a clear and convincing victory with a sober tune that leaves more questions unanswered than answered. How much more disturbing can a lyric be than, "So with patriotic fervor/We charge into the line/And though you are my brother/It is you or I must die."

If one believes in a brotherhood of humanity, this pretty much sums it all up as both sides die for God and country, or so they believe. As usual, Tim had an "unfair" advantage because of his strong performing talents and produced a song that deserves to be recorded.

Oddly, only a few others garnered any votes at all in a tie for runner-up. **Vin Crici** with "Can't Sit Down," newbie **Jim Caputo** with "Though Her Eyes," and yours truly with "One Good Thing," brought up the short list of contenders. For this month, Tim rules!

*Gerry Dantone remembers the good old days when presidential sex was the topic for ISS songwriters.*

By Pedro Pereira

After two successful years of providing a stage for local singer/songwriters, poets and comedians, the Starbucks on Main Street in Huntington pulled the plug Sept. 27 on the Monday night open mic. About 20 performers took the stage that night, ensuring the event would go out with a bang.

Starbucks has been the place to go on Monday nights, as host **Seth Davis**, a talented singer/songwriter, welcomed dozens of performers to regale what was typically a full house. It appears that Starbucks, the large caffeinated corporation with the ubiquitous logo couldn't find enough funds in its budget to pay the host's modest stipend.

That's right, folks, those \$3 cups of coffee and \$4 slices of cake just weren't bringing in enough cash, so out goes the biggest weekly live event in town.

Seth tells me he tried to renegotiate his fee with Starbucks management to make it more palatable in a last-ditch attempt to keep the event going, but his efforts were in vain.

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It is disheartening that this popular event has come to the inglorious end of serving as a sacrifice to the profit-margin gods. We live in a profit-margin world, after all, and the Starbucks management move shouldn't necessarily surprise anyone, despite Starbucks' oft-repeated rhetoric that it wants to be involved with the communities in which it does business. Canceling a wildly popular event enjoyed by the community seems to fly in the face of that priority. Still I'm not too surprised; Starbucks is a profit-making enterprise.

What perplexes me, however, is how much business the Huntington Starbucks expects to make on Monday nights without the open mic. I am not privy to the store's books, but I spent enough time there to conclude that probably more than half the business the store got on Monday nights was from the performers and the audience.

Perhaps these folks didn't spend enough. This is a common complaint with the managers of establishments that host open mics. It is, therefore, in the best interest of those of us who take advantage of these events to give these places some business, rather than just waiting for one's turn at the mic without buying anything. Some establishments, such as the Pisces Cafe in Babylon, which hosts an open mic on Wednesday nights, have two-drink minimums. At least at Pisces, this approach seems to work. The event is going strong.

The Starbucks open mic is the fifth one in Huntington to be discontinued in the past year and a half. One of them, at the Madonna restaurant, lasted exactly two weeks. It is unreasonable to expect that such an event become a community institution in that amount of time, but Madonna's owner made a snap decision that the open mic simply didn't draw enough business.

Seth said he is looking for another local venue where he can host an open mic. I am rooting for him, and for all of us who have taken advantage of these events to play our songs in front of audiences. Let's just hope that if he succeeds in finding another venue, the owner or manager cares enough about original music to allow the event some time to build a following. It is also important that those of us who perform at open mics do our part in supporting the businesses.

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## Online Music News

# THE PEOPLE AND THE PARADE

By Walter Sargent

Watching the online music industry these days is like watching a great parade. It is a steady stream of products and services rolled out with maximum fanfare while music producers and consumers stand expectantly on the sidelines.

We're all accustomed to seeing the larger-than-life floats from the technology producers. iPod's dancing silhouette floats are everywhere, expressing the sheer joy of selling \$100 million worth of 99-cent songs. Microsoft's float, which arrives later this year, probably needs to be bigger than iTunes just on principle. With Yahoo's purchase of MusicMatch for \$160 million, in addition to their own MusicNet-based player, we can expect two more floats. eMusic just came back online with a nice little MP3/subscription-based float too.

The RIAA folks don't have a float, so they're handing out parking tickets. The CD is not dead, but sales are terminal and analysts predict that the MP3 portable market will reach \$58 billion over the next five years. Well, that explains the spectacle.

Running alongside are the consumer electronics vendors juggling file formats and copy-management schemes, like Amazon's 20-GB Zen Touch, a portable MP3 player that also handles WMA files. Running all over the place is Sony, the only technology giant with a roster of platinum acts in-house. Their highly advanced portable NW-HD1 is incompatible with absolutely everything. Their proprietary ATRAC3 format will make sure it stays that way. iTunes (AAC) and Windows Media Player (WMA) are incompatible with each other, so both are looking for exclusive deals with top artists. Super Audio CDs, mp3PRO, DVD Audio... If it's not on the way in, chances are it's on its way out.

Meanwhile, the music lovers on one side of the parade and musicians on the other side are left wondering whether any of this will work for them. Consumers are looking at a dizzyingly complex array of hardware, software, formats and utterly new hybrids with intellectual property restrictions that only a lawyer could love. The technical, legal and content selection compromises they are being asked to deal with are unprecedented.

Want John Mayer or Aerosmith? You need Sony. Want the new U2 single? You need iTunes. Want the Beatles? You need a CD Player. Want to make a backup copy? We're working on it. Consumers' collective response can only be "you have got to be kidding." Talk to anyone who has a computer. This is not the time to make it more complicated.

The musicians are facing a very different scenario. The legal and technical contortions intended to keep the two crowds apart add little or no value for buyer or seller, and time is not on their side. The gaps between the floats are only getting bigger. Ogg Vorbis, the once obscure and irrelevant alternative to MP3 has made major inroads into the computer game industry. Creative Commons(.org) and Gnomoradio(.org) also represent an open lifeline between musicians and listeners that is as legally and technically impervious as pencil and paper. The most efficient connection between buyer and seller on the street is probably Weed. Like a credit card, Weed is an economic short-circuit facilitating online music transactions with minimal overhead.

Ultimately, none of these online music distribution vehicles are going anywhere without the music. None of them are going anywhere without an audience either, and that's why the technology is on parade. Apple has fans (Microsoft has captives) and music is cheap. *Musicians*, however, are a wild card. Consumers vote for a platform with their money and musicians vote with their music. Consumers need a reason to be interested in a format, and musicians create reasons. The formats on display offer

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## Who Played What

Here's the list of songwriters and songs from the September ISS workshop:

**Pedro Pereira**  
"The Joke is on You"

**Steve Lieberman**  
"My Call Girl"

**Rich O'Brien**  
"Liquid Blue"

**Sonny Meadows & Orel Protopopen**  
"Right-Wing Woman"

**Frank Gambino**  
"They"

**Mark Hussey**  
"Still Here Now"

**Bill Goldsmith**  
"The Organ-grinder's Monkey"

**Jim Caputo**  
"Through Her Eyes"

**John Pagliarulo**  
"When I Look in Your Eyes"

**Estelle Henrich**  
"1 800 537 EASY"

**Lois Morton**  
"Who Can Believe It"

**Gerry Dantone**  
"One Good Thing"

**Bob Campbell**  
"Cries in the Street"

**Mike Svezia**  
"The Swagman"

**Vincent Crici**  
"Can't Sit Down"



## 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: Nov. 1*

### University Cafe

Look who's playing next at Stony Brook:

**Nov. 18:** Pedro Pereira, Steve Lieberman.

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

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## 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>

## The People and the Parade

*Continued from page 3*

widely different terms to bring the two together. The most competitive ones are non-exclusive, allowing musicians to compete on multiple formats (in turn allowing the formats to compete with the same music). The most efficient ones are those that compensate all the players fairly for their investment. Consider them all, get out the vote and maybe we'll see a joyous musician silhouette someday.

For more on this topic:

*The Observer, "iWar looms as Gates muscles in on music," July 25, 2004; ZDNet, "Yahoo to launch its own music player," Sept. 20, 2004; ContraCostaTimes.com, "Here comes the MP3 revolution," July 25, 2004; Mp3NewsWire.net, "MP3 Portable Market to Hit \$52B by 2008," Sept. 21, 2004; IEEE Spectrum Magazine, "Music Everywhere," Sept. 27, 2004.*

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### Open Mics

**Borders, Jericho Turnpike**, Syosset, hosted by Bill Ryan or Vincent Crici, first Thursday of the month. Sign-up at 7:30 p.m. *Next gig: Oct. 7.*

**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: Nov. 18. No October gig!*

### Borders Showcase

**Borders, Old Country Road, Westbury**, hosted by **Rich Stein**, 8 p.m. third Friday of the month. *Next gig: Oct. 15.*

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