
PLAYING THE IMAC

First-ever show with local artists a success

Next Workshop *December 6*

The next songwriting workshop is at 7:30 p.m. Dec. 6 at Five Towns College in Dix Hills.

Musical Musings

Get your CD recommendations from the editor himself.
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By Pedro Pereira

I almost feel I should apologize to **Little Toby Walker**. No, I didn't call him names or trip him on the curb. It's just that after waiting more than a year to see him play again, I was almost surprised at how truly amazing a guitarist and performer he is.

I should apologize because, how could I possibly forget? But there he was, sitting on his trademark mini stepladder, pulling notes out of his Martin 000-28 and National resonator guitars in torrents that you could swear would require at least three guitarists with extra fingers to accomplish.

Such is greatness; at some point it crosses the boundary of incredulity into the realm of, "I know it's happening but it can't be." Yet it was. And it did. And Little Toby Walker is unquestionably great.

Toby was one of three local acts that took the stage for the first time ever at the Huntington Inter-Media Art Center (IMAC) on Oct. 21. The others were aging-is-hip blues band **Defibrillators** and the husband-and-wife dynamic duo of **Martha Trachtenberg** and **Tom Griffith**. While the IMAC has seen a tremendous amount of national- and international-level talent, its stage had never been graced by local artists. All three acts were in top form and delivered rousing performances that would put many better-known performers to shame.

"The IMAC is a great room to play in. This is truly the best experience you can get for a concert hall on Long Island."

— *Sonny Speed*

The event, hosted by John Platt of WFUV-FM 90.7, was a success, filling more than 300 seats. As a result, organizers said they plan to have a series featuring local artists on a quarterly basis. Organizers also said they have a plan to record future shows for broadcast on WUSB-FM 90.1.

"This is a wonderful thing for our local music community. Hopefully, we will get to see some more ISS performers on that stage," said **Sonny Meadows**, ISS member and Defibrillators lead singer. "It was a tremendous rush playing on the same stage that I have seen so many of my favorite musicians perform. It is the type of venue that the Defibrillators are geared to play. Concerts and festivals where people are coming to sit and listen to the music are the places we get the best audience response."

Toby Walker, second to take the stage, was playing his last set before he headed for a three-week tour in the United Kingdom. Toby has toured Europe a couple times before, and even recorded a live album there, "Live at the Bottleneck," hailed in the London Sunday Times as "best buy in acoustic blues."

The ensuing success of Toby's European outings is allowing him to soon dedicate himself solely to music and quit his day job. In addition, he has picked up endorsements from C.F. Martin & Co. Inc. and National Res-Phonic Guitars. "These companies are nice enough to be endorsing me now," Toby said, adding modestly: "Life sometimes has a way of working out."

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LOCAL ARTISTS PLAY AT IMAC

Writer's Choice

by Gerry Dantone

For the month of October, we had a tie: **Vin Crici** for "This House" and **Jim Caputo** for "Changed My Stars."

Now I know it's election time in the USA, and sure enough, the Writer's Choice winners were difficult to declare because of some voting irregularities! After calling for all the votes at

Winners: Vin Crici
Jim Caputo

the end of the last workshop it certainly seemed all votes were collected. This writer then counted the votes and a winner emerged by a slim margin. Before the results were certified, however, Grand Poobah **Sonny Speed** called a day later to notify me that he had collected three more votes after I had left – and they were all for the same writer! This changed everything!

Before you could say James Baker a re-write of the column was in order, but I couldn't help but feel that it might be best to declare co-winners for this month without identifying the hows and whys. Therefore the "tie." This wouldn't work in the race for the White House, however.

Mr. Crici's tune was a typically melodic affair that also had a touching lyric and storyline. Although a rough mix, it was clear that Vinny's talents are far reaching musically and that every song of his is a treat to listen to, even when it's a

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Martha and Tom were captivating as they traded vocals over well-crafted melodies and now poignant, now witty lyrics. Tom is a talented lyricist and gifted guitarist with an pleasant style and acute sense of melody. His leads are tasteful and complement, rather than overcome, the melodies. Martha has a distinctive voice that wraps around the words and music with purpose and skill.

Martha, who years ago sang the jingle, "The best part of waking up is Folgers in your cup," told the audience she had been looking forward to the show since April, when planning for the event started. She expressed gratitude to IMAC for allowing the event and for the strong audience showing.

It was, after all, a historic night since local bands had not played at the IMAC before. The Defibrillators, whose members include ISS Director **Sonny Speed** in addition to Sonny Meadows, closed the night with a rousing performance of selections from their first album, released two years ago, and some tracks from their sophomore effort, due out in the spring. ~~The band has refined its act with humorous banter between songs to play up the aging-rockers angle.~~

"The IMAC is a great room to play in. This is truly the best experience you can get for a concert hall on Long Island," said Sonny Speed. "The staff was attentive to our every need, from carrying our gear up the block and up the stairs to supplying the clean and roomy dressing rooms with plenty of food and snacks. The most noticeable difference in doing a concert-level show is the sound quality. We each had excellent monitor mixes that helped us to hear everything, and that made it easier to relax and do the 'show' part of the act. Now I want to play there every weekend!"

'It was a tremendous rush playing on the same stage that I have seen so many of my favorite musicians perform.'

— *Sonny Meadows*

Sonny Speed said he was gratified by the attendance at the show. Concert-goers were a veritable who's who of the songwriting and musician circles in the area. Spotted were folks like singer/songwriters **Seth Davis**, **Jane Ross**, **Doug Kwartler** and **Tim Huss**, "Beatlemania" performer **Ricky Vacca**, luthier **Scott McDonald**, guitarist **Nick Vermitsky**, ISS Newsletter founder **Gerry Dantone** and webmaster extraordinaire, ISS member and columnist **Walter Sargent**, who by the way also plays a mean acoustic and writes damn fine songs.

"It was like a big homecoming party. A lot of ISS members and local artists were in the seats too and the standing ovation at the end was great," said Sonny Speed.

There was a real sense of camaraderie as concert-goers caught up with one another before the show and during intermission, and filled the seats to express their support for the local music scene. For the local music series to be successful, strong audience showings will continue to be necessary.

Sonny Speed said IMAC management was so pleased with the Defibrillators' performance that they are talking about having the band open shows for national acts. After the show, he mused about what the success of the event means for the Defibrillators' future.

"As the bands producer and arranger, this is the kind of gig I had focused on since the beginning. To see it come to be and to get the great feedback only helps to validate the efforts we made. One fear we had was that a lot is riding on how you play at this level. You have to please the audience, the promoters, the owners the press and it can be tough keeping focused. you know, the bigger the stage the bigger the expectations are."

Musical Musings

QUALITY MUSIC STILL IN STYLE

By Pedro Pereira

Good music is still out there. You just have to find it, though that it is not always easy, considering most radio stations are either feeding you the latest formulaic sonic swill or beating the classic rock dead horse.

With that in mind, I count myself particularly lucky to have picked up several CDs in recent months that I have been enjoying thoroughly. And being the generous sort of editor that I am, I decided to share some thoughts with you about these CDs by way of recommendation. Let's start with a couple of local-artist CDs I picked up last month:

Doug Kwartler: "Silver Meteor." If you haven't had the good fortune of chancing upon one of Doug's performances at an open mic or local gig, drop everything right now and check out his web site, www.dougmusic.com. Listen to song samples from his sophomore solo CD, and you might just become as enamored of his music as I have. Among my favorites in the disc are the title track, "Wilmington," "Nothing" and "82nd Street." This has quickly become one of my favorite driving-around CDs, and my 21-month-old daughter gave it her stamp of approval after hearing "Wilmington" by clapping and exclaiming, "Yay!" Doug's music is available at www.cdbaby.com.

Little Toby Walker: "Live from the Bottleneck." This is Little Toby (www.littletobywalker.com) at his best, playing in front of an audience. There are no overdubs or second takes on this disc, though it may seem hard to believe considering the quality of the playing. Toby Walker is an electrifying acoustic-blues player and this CD is a good introduction to his style if you don't have any of his discs yet. If you do, this will round out your collection. Although, wait just a second there, if you don't have any of Toby's music yet, I must say, "What is wrong with you!?" Visit www.cdbaby.com to buy Toby's CDs.

Sonny Meadows: "How Does a Patriot Act?" I've written at length about this one, but it doesn't hurt to mention it again. This is thoughtful, socially aware music for our time from one of ISS' best songwriters. Buy it at www.cdimp.com. Sonny's site is www.sonnymeadows.com.

Camper Van Beethoven: "New Roman Times." Camper Van Beethoven had a cult following in the mid-to-late '80s with songs such as "Take the Skinheads Bowling" and "All Her Favorite Fruit." The band makes a triumphant return after 15 years with a rock opera of sorts set in an alternate-reality America in which California and Texas are separate countries. The main character joins an elite combat group in the song "51/7" and the song cycle follows his evolution from gung-ho combatant to doubtful soldier who eventually joins a rebel group and becomes a suicide bomber. The album has strokes of brilliance in songs such as "White Fluffy Clouds," "Civil Disobedience" and "Hey Brother." Typical of Camper Van records, musical styles vary from riff-based rock to pop ballads to Eastern European music to ska. Another thoughtful, if irreverent, commentary on our times. Visit www.campervanbeethoven.com.

Steve Earle: "The Revolution Starts Now." I swear this isn't intentional, though based on this and the last couple of recommendations you might think I have a political agenda to push. No, not me! Steve Earle's new CD is now poignant, now angry, now irreverent, as he tackles the ills of a society in which he sees the rich calling all the shots and the less fortunate facing few and unpalatable choices. In a scathing attack at government institutions, Earle minces no words when he says, "Fuck the FCC, fuck the FBI, fuck the CIA..." Not exactly high-minded stuff, but it gets the message across over an infectious rock progression. Irreverence reaches new heights in "Condi, Condi," in which Earle, ahem, pays lustful tribute to a certain administration official. There are also some real gems here, including "Home to Houston," "Rich Man's War" and "Comin' Around." Visit www.steveearle.com.

Who Played What

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

Mark Hussey
"Playing Billiards"

Terence Burke
"Sunset Horizon"

Conrad W. Tyras
"Each Time I Dream"

Vincent Crici
"This House"

Gerry Dantone
"Out of Many, One"

Jim Caputo
"Changed My Stars"

Bill Ryan
"Searching"

Tania and Tom
"World of Color"

Bruce Kanin
"The E Train Doesn't Run Here Anymore"

John Pagliarulo
"Nobody Would Cry"

Frank Gambino
"Backing Out Ass First"

Andrew Kirschner
"My House"

Steve Lieberman
"Rainbow Bridge 07'07'455 Buttons"

Estelle Henrich
"Song to Franklin Delano"

Mike Svezia
"Cover Me"

Bill Goldsmith, Richard Lehmann
"Two-tone Headless Male Mannequin Blues"

Pedro Pereira
"Springtime"



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 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: Dec. 6

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.

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>

Writer's Choice: It's a Tie

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a sad love song.

Jim Caputo's "My Stars" was a more hopeful love tune, though it was clear the protagonist has had an unfortunate past as far as love affairs go. In fact, like a Red Sox fan, they're happy now but are resigned to an ignominious ending at some point. He sang, "I stand here looking up/The night sky is rearranged/I fight the part of me/That struggles against the change."

Close behind the leaders was the inimitable and runner-up this month, **Frank Gambino** for "Backing Out Ass First." Yeah, you heard me!

Gerry Dantone checked with Katherine Harris regarding proper procedures to follow and almost declared George W Bush this month's winner.

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: Nov. 4*
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.*

Borders Showcase

Borders, Old Country Road, Westbury, hosted by **Rich Stein**, 8 p.m. third Friday of the month. *Next gig: Nov. 19.*

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