

ISS Showcase At Stony Brook

ISS will showcase some of its member songwriters at a show scheduled for May 19 at the University Café in SUNY Stony Brook.

Members were asked to nominate performers. The show is scheduled to start at 8 p.m. Don't miss it.

Details on page 2

Next Workshop June 6

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

O'Brien in Newsday
ISS member Rich O'Brien appeared in an April 27 Newsday story.
Details on page 4

Find It Online

Visit our web site,
www.islandsongwriters.org

'TORNADO' HITS SYOSSET

Sonny Speed's new band rocks Borders Cafe

By Pedro Pereira

Tornados are not a common sight on Long Island, though they have been known to hit as close as New Jersey. But on April 7 a musical tornado filled the Borders Café in Syosset with sound.

That was the night ISS Director **Sonny Speed's** new band, Tornado Alley, played a 40-minute set to kick off the monthly ISS-sponsored open mic at the bookstore.

Tornado Alley is a four-piece acoustic group modeled after hippie-era roots bands such as Crosby, Stills and Nash. Besides Sonny, Tornado Alley features ISS members **Tim Huss** and **Vinny Crici**, and percussionist **Robert Langley**, who also plays with Sonny in Long Island's favorite blues band, the Defibrillators.

ISS invades the University Café at SUNY-Stony Brook this month for its semi-annual showcase. Performers are Little Toby Walker, Tornado Alley, Banned and the Blacklisted, Universal Dice, Rusty Lugs, Sarah Haddock, Pedro Pereira, Walter Sargent, Jim Caputo and Bob Campbell. See details on page 2.

The band took the stage shortly after 8 p.m., and from the first note of the Huss-penned "It Ain't Easy," it filled the bookstore with undeniable groove and energy. The set opener, an uptempo, bluegrass-flavored song Tim wrote for a friend, was a perfect choice. It spotlighted Tim's amazing voice, which he underscores with a conviction of delivery that only the best performers can muster.

The band kept up the energy, even through the slower songs, as it twisted through a repertoire of rootsy tunes penned by Sonny, Tim and Vinny.

Among the songs in the set were Vinny's "Palace of Pain," which he brought to the ISS workshop last month. Delivered by Tornado Alley, with Tim, Vinny and Sonny taking turns on lead vocals, the song took on a remarkably different character from the recording Vinny played at the workshop. While the recording had a psychedelic Beatles feel, the live version was straight acoustic blues.

The set also included several of Sonny's compositions, folk-based, well-crafted tunes tackling typical themes, such as the road and heartbreak. One song, "Cruisin'," was written on a bus during Sonny's hippie days three decades ago.

Throughout the set Sonny and Vinny traded instruments, now playing acoustic base, now mandolin, now six-string guitar. Sonny also brought out his harmonica for a couple of tunes and Tim stuck with his boomy Guild. Robert Langley kept a steady beat with a snare drum and a set of congas.

Sonny's idea in creating Tornado Alley was to deliver a repertoire that borrows from some of America's best roots music. And even though the set meandered from folk to bluegrass to country and western to the blues, it had undeniable cohesion and an appeal that kept the audience tuned in the whole time.

Sonny said he has plans to record Tornado Alley, though no timetable is set. With any luck, we will have some recorded music from the band in a few months.



ISS SHOWCASE AT UNIVERSITY CAFE

Gig expected to be first in a semi-annual series

Writer's Choice

by Gerry Dantone

No one can accuse the members of the ISS for being "clannish" or xenophobic: We treat newcomers and long-timers equally cruelly!

Winner: Steve Robinson

Actually, we treat everyone well and that means that even a songwriter attending a workshop for the first time has an equal chance of being awarded the coveted "Writer's Choice" award as anyone else.

And so it goes this month: First-time attendee **Steve Robinson** wins for his heartbreaker "Forever and Always."

Nicely recorded, performed and sung on CD, this bluesy, jazzy, country-ish tune hit that right note of regret and sadness that was familiar and recognizable but original and smart enough to avoid the "love song police."

Lacking a chorus or bridge, the song had a strong verse with the memorable title refrain. You could just imagine hearing it on your favorite lite FM or country station.

Current events affect ISS songwriters just as they do everyone else, so it was inevitable that the tragic Terry Schiavo case inspired a tune. **Tim Huss** captured the runner-up spot with "Angels Cry" with a more thoughtful exploration of the situation

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By Pedro Pereira

Several months after ending its monthly open mic at the University Café in Stony Brook, the ISS this month returns to the venue for the first of what is expected to be a series of semi-annual gigs.

The showcase, scheduled for May 19, will feature four bands with ISS members, five soloists who are ISS members and special guest **Little Toby Walker**, Long Island's own bluesman who has built a loyal following in Europe in the last couple of years.

Sonny Speed said the idea for the semi-annual gigs came about because scheduling the monthly open mics, which included two featured performers, became too much of a challenge.

The bands scheduled to perform include **Tornado Alley**, which features ISS Director **Sonny Speed**, members **Tim Huss** and **Vinny Crici**, and **Defibrillators** drummer **Robert Langley**. Also scheduled is ISS member **Sonny Meadows'** new band, **Blacklisted and the Banned**, which features another Defibrillator, Bob **Westcott**, on bass guitar. Both Sonny Meadows and Sonny Speed also are members of the

Defibrillators blues band.

The two other bands on the event's lineup are ISS member **Gerry Dantone's Universal Dice** and **Rusty Lugs**, which features recent ISS additions **John Graybosch** and **Andy Martinez**.

Also scheduled to perform are five soloists who are ISS members, **Jim Caputo**, **Sarah Haddock**, **Pedro Pereira**, **Walter Sargent** and **Bob Campbell**. The soloists were chosen by the ISS membership, which voted for the artists it wanted to see on stage.

Sonny Speed said the idea for the semi-annual gigs came about because scheduling the monthly open mics, which included two featured performers became too much of a challenge. It was hard to get enough performers, audience attendance was low, and a couple of scheduling mishaps as a result of miscommunication with the venue's management made it necessary to make a change.

University Café Directions

To get to the University Café, enter the Stony Brook campus at the main entrance on Nichols Road. Go straight past the guard shack stop sign, stay to the right and look for signs to the stadium parking lot. Go to the stop sign at an intersection with Stadium Road on your left and make a left onto Stadium Road. Go all the way to the end. As you enter the stadium parking lot you are facing the football stadium. The Student Union Building is on your left. Park and walk around the right side of the Student Union Building (the side closest to the football stadium). Enter the University Cafe directly from the door in the courtyard.

Promote Yourself on the ISS Web Site

The ISS is now offering songwriters a chance to have *their own web pages* as part of the organization's web site. Regardless of whether you already have a web site, 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. The fee is \$30 a year. In addition to creating a web presence for yourself, by signing up you are supporting ISS web site development. So if you like the way the

site is going, you can help
keep it going by signing up.
Please see the web site for
details:

<http://www.islandsongwriters.org>.

Online Music News

MUSICAL MINDREADING

By Walter Sargent

April 22nd, 2005 — Change.TV, Inc. releases “Indy” version 5 – a “discovery tool” for listeners and a promotional vehicle for independent musicians.

“Indy uses an advanced collaborative filtering system to predict what kind of music you’ll enjoy hearing. As you rate songs, Indy finds out what you do and don’t like. It compares your preferences with the ratings of all the other Indy users. For example, if you rate a song highly, and another user also likes the same song, Indy guesses that you’d probably like other music that they enjoyed. As you rate more songs, Indy will get better and better at picking songs that you’ll really enjoy.” (1)

Pretty sick, huh? Top 40 to the eleventh power? The web site claims “no adware or spyware.” It’s another exercise in heady Internet economics: free for all and open to all.

Who creates this stuff — and why?

Consider the closed alternative Rhapsody by RealNetworks. The contrast could hardly be starker. Rhapsody is a \$10-per-month subscription service from a company that calls itself “the intersection of digital media and technology” addressing consumers, businesses and developers.

Content creators literally do not exist in the Real world. I checked. They offer “over one million songs” with not a single mention of a recording artist, record label or submission policy. Real just announced they will be giving away 25 songs a month to boost sales. (2) Like buying a PDA on the street, it’s a steal.

I don’t know but maybe Indy was published to put a little dignity back into the transaction between musician and fans. Indy publisher Change.TV is virtually anonymous, but the domain owner, Steve Starr is the coordinator of the Freenet Project (3) non-profit corporation, a band of pro-freedom and pro-democracy liberators of technology.

“The only way to ensure that a democracy will remain effective is to ensure that the government cannot control its population’s ability to share information, to communicate. So long as everything we see and hear is filtered, we are not truly free. Freenet’s aim is to allow two or more people who wish to share information, to do so.” (4)

Despite the contrast between Real and Indy, both offer free music as a loss leader, a promotional expense for the content producer. Andy Gershon, president of V2 Records, home to established acts The White Stripes and Moby, puts it this way: “The cat is so far out of the bag and so far gone that it’s pointless to keep fighting it. I might as well make as many people fans of our music, whether they illegally download it or not.” (5)

For further reference:

1. Indy Website: <http://www.indy.tv/>
2. RealNetworks to give away music to boost sales
<http://www.chron.com/cs/CDA/ssistory.mpl/business/3154182>
3. The Freenet Project
<http://www.freenetproject.org>
4. The Freenet Philosophy
<http://www.freenetproject.org/index.php?page=philosophy>
5. File-Sharing Case Worries Indie Artists
<http://apnews.myway.com/article/20050325/D89213R00.html>

Walter Sargent is the Island Songwriters Association webmaster. Check out his web site at www.zerojack.com.

Who Played What

Here’s the list of songwriters and songs from last month’s ISS workshop:

Seve Robinson
“Forever and Always”
Stuart Markus
“Nobody’s Girl”
Estelle Henrich
“Fine-boned Woman”
John Graybosch
“Junk that Thing”
Frank Gambino
“Apples and Pork”
Bill DeZego
“Anymore”
Tim Huss
“Angels Cry”
Vincent Crici
“Palace of Pain”
Jim Caputo
“Half a Key”
Pedro Pereira
“Before I Wake”
Guy Pezzullo
“Stand at A-tension”
Andrew Kirschner
“Can’t Catch Her”
Mark Hussey
“Family Tales”
Walter Sargent
“Conversation with Myself”



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: June 6

Member News

ISS Member Rich O'Brien was featured on a Newsday story April 27 about radio "podcasts." Podcasts are digital radio shows that listeners can download to their MP3 players. Rich has had a web-based radio show for about a year and just did his first podcast, which he says boosted his web site hits.

Check out the full Newsday story at <http://www.newsday.com/entertainment/news/ny-etlede4233542apr27,0,5399404.story>

Writer's Choice

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than would ever be heard from a political figure posturing for votes or some huckster with his hand out looking for donations. Not claiming to have the answers, Tim puts his finger on the inexact nature of life, death and right and wrong.

Gerry Dantone pleads with his fellow ISS members: No Michael Jackson trial songs, pleeeeeeeeeeeeeee!

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: May 5*

The Cooke's In, Huntington, 7:30 p.m. Thursdays

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

Sea Cliff Coffee Co., Sea Cliff, 7:30 p.m. Tuesdays

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To submit newsletter items, contact Pedro Pereira at peddi@optonline.net.

Visit our web site at www.islandsongwriters.org.