

REPORT FROM SEA CLIFF

First Show at Coffeehouse Is a Big Success

Summer 2005

Next Workshop

The next monthly workshop is scheduled for Sept. 12. It is one week later than usual because of the Labor Day weekend.

Tedeschi in Charge

ISS member **Tony Tedeschi** is hosting the weekly Tuesday open mic at the Sea Cliff Coffee Co. in Sea Cliff. Sign up at 7 p.m.

New on Disc

ISS members **Rich O'Brien** and **Tim Huss** have just released new CDs. More on page 2.

Find Us On the Web

Visit our web site, www.islandsongwriters.org

By Pedro Pereira

The panic set in when **Tony Tedeschi** told me the show was only a week away. Time flies, and between traveling, having guests at the house and trying to keep up with my writing assignments, I had lost track of how close we were to July 21.

That was the date Tony and I had set for the first of what we hope will become a series of shows featuring ISS performers at the Sea Cliff Coffee Co. in Sea Cliff. When Tony mentioned the show, I realized I hadn't done anything to prepare since the initial furor of booking the acts and locking in the date.

I realized I hadn't given any thought to what songs I would play, I really hadn't been practicing, and I hadn't touched base in a while with the other scheduled acts. Hell, I hadn't even decided which guitar to use!

Tony Tedeschi relates how the idea for the concert series in Sea Cliff came about. Turn to page 2.

So in the next few days, I started plugging in my Martin 000-15 to practice my set and sent out a flurry of e-mails to reconfirm with all the booked performers and remind people the show was only days away. Besides me, the performers were **Suzanne Ernst, Walter Sargent, Zoe and Gina** and **Tim Huss**. All reconfirmed, so we were in good shape.

This was the first time Tony and I were playing the role of organizer, as opposed to just showing up to play, and we wanted to make this show a success.

So on the night of the event, when I noticed there were no empty chairs in the café, I knew it all had come together. The tables were full, drinks were flowing and the acts were playing their hearts out, even despite the heat inside the venue.

Most encouragingly, I noticed that a handful of the songwriters and performers who run in our circles showed up just to watch and listen. They included **Frank Gambino, John Flor-Sisante, Bill Goldsmith, Bob Campbell** and **The Tone**. To them, an unqualified thanks. Your support is truly appreciated.

ISS Director **Sonny Speed** also attended to lend his support and joined headliner **Tim Huss** on stage for a few songs. Sonny even dragged along his brother, Frank, who lives nearby.

It's Showtime

The night of the concert was one of those muggy evenings when the air is so thick you could spread it on toast. Halfway through my set I felt the sting of sweat dripping into my eyes, and it was all I could do at that point to not

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THE GENESIS OF A CONCERT SERIES

Pisces Open Mic Is No More

The open mic at Pisces Café in Babylon has been cancelled, after a successful two-year run. The open mic, which took place on Wednesday nights, attracted performers from all over Long Island. Lately, attendance had fallen and that presumably is why it came to an end.

A new open mic may soon kick off on the South Shore at a yet-to-be-announced location. Stay tuned.

New Releases

At the end of July, ISS member **Rich O'Brien** held a CD release party at the Pisces Café for his debut disc, "I'm Moving On." Buy it at www.cdbaby.com/richobrien

ISS member **Tim Huss** has also completed the recording of his CD, "Inner Voice," produced by ISS Director **Sonny Speed**. Buy it at www.cdbaby.com/cd/timhuss

ISS friend **Seth Davis** released his second CD, "Prettier than Blue," in June. Get more information at www.sethdavis.com

By Tony Tedeschi

Not too long after **Pedro Pereira** and I started playing regularly at Sea Cliff Coffee Co.'s Tuesday night open mic, we felt there was something special about the place.

Sure there was the disorderliness of the revolving-door hosts and some of the oddball acts that showed up from time to time, but for anyone who plays open mics, those sort of things are de rigueur. For starters, the place "had good bones," as they say in real estate. Robert Erlich, the owner, had built a raised stage, invested in a sound system, added four floor amps, three mics, even a drum kit. He'd put in stage lighting and reconfigured the rest of the room to the extent that it reminded me of the Greenwich Village coffee shops during the Golden Age of Dylan, Joni Mitchell, Judy Collins, et al.

When the latest emcee quit a number of weeks ago, however, the couple of chaotic sessions that followed seemed to have the potential of really damaging the event. Despite having no experience in emceeing, I went to Robert and volunteered to take over. I'd had a number of conversations with him when I was there for open mics and we had a simpatico relationship. He agreed to let me try it out.

Oddly enough, I settled into the role more easily than I'd expected. I'd been leery of trading my three-songs-and-off-the-stage for having to deal with personality quirks of performers and trying to balance their demands against adding some order to the event. But things settled into a groove. I suggested to Robert that Pedro would be my backup when I am on the trips that are an integral part of my work as a journalist and editor. He agreed.

With the open mic humming along again, a crowd of talented regulars – including some ISSers – showing up, and audience members telling us they looked forward to the event each week, Pedro felt we had enough cachet to try to take things to another level. That was when he suggested we put in place a concert series to fill in the seams between events at the University Café in Stony Brook.

We approached Robert with the idea and he approved. Next, we e-mailed **Sonny Speed** about ISS support and Sonny, typically, threw his full level of enthusiasm behind the event. Pedro and I envisioned a line-up made up of a mix of ISS performers, plus some of the more accomplished groups around, along with some performers from the Sea Cliff area, as well as other parts of the island. That would give us an opportunity to showcase a range of performing styles, while at the same time allowing musicians from different areas to have a common venue to display their art and to interact. We would promote the event as "Island Songwriters Showcase and Sea Cliff Coffee Co. present the Long Island Live Concert Series . . ."

Pedro was instrumental in creating the balance we enjoyed in the first of the series on the night of July 21. Everyone there felt it an unqualified success. For me the confluence of events that started this process rolling, plus the support from all elements involved, has been very gratifying. The next event will be on Thursday, Sept. 22. Stay tuned.

SEA CLIFF CONCERT A BIG HIT

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lose my place in the song.

Despite the heat, I had a blast playing five of my originals to a seemingly appreciative crowd that knew to keep its chatting voices down during the performances. I book-ended my set with two of my more recently penned tunes, opening with "(Let me Dream) Before I Wake" and closing with "Lay Down Your Sword." I also played some older songs, including what had become my signature song at the Starbucks open mic when it was running, "Last Man on the Planet," as well as "Saudade" and "Along the River."

Halfway through my set, when it looked I was about to melt from the heat, a kind-hearted coffeehouse employee set up a fan that provided some relief.

Following me on stage were Zoe and Gina, a wonderful folk duo whose stage presence and lyrical content on songs such as "I'll Take the Day In" and "Unhealthy State of Mind" are mature beyond their college sophomore ages. **Zoe Speed** (no relation to Sonny) and **Gina Bechtold** are the kind of act that when you see perform for the first time, it's like discovering a book you can't put down or buying a CD you can't get sick of.

Zoe and Gina harmonize like angels, their music has enormous appeal and their humble stage presence is utterly charming. I was very glad when they accepted the invitation to play at the show because I knew they wouldn't disappoint. And they didn't.

"The show was awesome," said Gina. "We definitely would love to do it again."

ISS member Walter Sargent had a tough act to follow, but he was up to the challenge. What else can I say about Walter that I haven't already said in these pages? Not only has he become a trusted friend in my years at ISS, he is a generous performer and fellow songwriter.

Walter delivered rousing renditions of some of his originals, including a new song that he penned with his wife in mind, "Easier to Love." The song is somewhat of a departure for Walter, in that it has an alternative country flavor that I haven't heard in his songs before. Walter has the gift of tackling big concepts in easy-to-follow verses and his big voice never disappoints. His Sea Cliff Coffee Co. appearance was no different.

Following Walter was one of my personal favorites, someone I told Tony we absolutely had to have in our first show – Suzanne Ernst. It was an easy sell, since Tony is a big fan as well. If you haven't seen Suzanne perform yet, you need to drop everything and run to her next appearance.

Suzanne regaled the Sea Cliff crowd with a handful of originals and a wonderful rendition of the old standard "Pennies from Heaven." Her voice is like honey, her lyrics life-affirming and her guitar playing life enriching. I'm convinced sitting through a Suzanne Ernst set must feel a lot like what it's like to have a holiday in heaven.

After Suzanne, Tim Huss took the stage. Now, if you've had the pleasure of attending one of Tim's performances, you can take a pretty accurate guess at what I'm about to describe. Tim was positively phenomenal. Between his powerful voice, poignant lyrics and skillful guitar playing, he left the crowd begging for more. Literally. He was ready to leave the stage at the end of his set but we wouldn't let him go, so he played his rousing gospel-influenced number "Dear Lord," with Sonny Speed piping in with some background vocals.

Tim's set was flawless, top to bottom. He started with the song "Men's Lives,"

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Who Played What

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

Fred Bredfry

Words Like Songs

Amy Uleis

If You Believe

Tim Huss

It's Just a Matter of Time

Estelle Henrich

If I Had \$10,000

Steve Lieberman

Jews Who Rock

Frank Gambino

Prayer of Cab Calloway

Tony Tedeschi

Take Me With You

John Marrantini

Hurricane Lisa

Mark Hussey

Talking Herd Mentality

Mike Svezia

Last Night at the Window

Steve Robinson

Every Minute

Sonny Meadows

To See You Again



Sea Cliff Concert a Big Hit

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: Sept. 12

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one of my favorite Huss compositions, and played a couple of catchy new numbers as well as some of his older tunes, such as "Tarzan." His voice never faltered and his energy was infectious. Tim is a consummate performer with equal parts heart and talent.

Sonny joined him on stage for a couple of tunes Tim plays with **Tornado Alley**, a band that also features Sonny, ISS member Vinny Crici and percussionist **Robert Langley**. Sonny played mandolin and harmonized with Tim, adding a nice dimension to the set.

All acts put in stellar performances, and judging from the turnout, it appears we may get a real chance at keeping this concert series running for a good while. A well-deserved kudos to all involved!

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: August 4*

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

Sea Cliff Coffee Co., hosted by Tony Tedeschi, Sea Cliff, 7 p.m. Tuesdays

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Visit our web site at www.islandsongwriters.org.