

August 2009

www.islandsongwriters.org



Time to Move On

Sonny Speed Bids Farewell, Keeps Foot In

Inside

Writer's Choice	2
Sonny Meadows	
Serves Tolerance	3
Homegrown Music	
Café	3

Next Workshop

The next ISS workshop is Sept. 14 at Five Towns College

Walter Sargent

takes over as ISS director after the August 3 workshop.

BY SONNY SPEED

If you didn't get my e-mail on July 2 then this might come as a shock, so the best way for me to get it out is to just get to the point and explain later. I am relocating to Saratoga Springs in upstate New York.

OK, let that sink in.

Now the background: Most of you know I have been retired from my day gig for almost two years now. As a result, my wife and I have been looking for a place that would meet our family's future needs. We think we found it in Saratoga Springs, N.Y., so we will be moving in mid to late August to start a new beginning upstate.

How will this affect the ISS? The ISS will continue as always. I will do my last workshop on August 3 and Walter Sargent will be the new director starting with the September meeting. Sonny Meadows will be Walter's assistant director and Pedro Pereira will continue as the editor and publisher.

I will remain on as an advisor. I have the deepest respect for these guys as businessmen and songwriters and I know they will give it everything they have to keep the ISS running for many years to come. Please give them all of your support as you did for me to help keep original music alive on Long Island. One of my greatest pleasures has always been to sit in from of the workshop over all these years and hear some of the most wonderful and interesting songs I have ever heard. So please keep it going!

As for my other music endeavors on Long Island, the Defibrillators are staying together, so come out and support us and say hello when I'm in town. Tornado Alley will get a replacement for me and continue to play after they regroup. I will do guest spots every now and then with the band. Son Spot Studios will be relocating to Saratoga Springs and will reopen in the fall. I will have room to accommodate guests for recording sessions, or whatever, in the new place.

To all of the clients and friends that recorded with me over the last 15 years: Thank You! It was a real pleasure working with such an "A" list of writers and players. I am truly honored to be a part of your recordings and hope to continue in some capacity in the future. Everyone is welcome to come on up to the new place to record or hang and jam and see the sights. Saratoga Springs has a wonderful music scene full of concert halls, cafes and festivals, and I am looking forward to being a part of it. I was considering starting a new workshop upstate called the Association of Saratoga Songwriters but ASS won't work. I have to rethink that.

This isn't an easy letter to write. Because after 45 years of performing on the Island, 15 years of directing the ISS, and 15 years of running Son Spot Studios – not to mention the countless live shows and events we have shared – it's hard to move

Continued on page 2

Writer's Choice

'Everything's Gonna Be All Right' by Madaras

By WALTER SARGENT

The competition was so strong at the June workshop that anyone who was there might be tempted to think the winner's youth (Derek had just turned 11) gave him an unfair advantage. Not so. I'll admit that I think it reasonable in a case like this to take youth into consideration. Otherwise, "seniority" would be considered the unfair advantage.

Nonetheless, Derek clearly has a very fine voice, an excellent ear and an able way with words and music that completely disqualify him as any sort of "novice." Very well done on all counts. One member wrote, "I wrote my first song 40 years ago at age 14. Your song blows mine away." Let me second that.

Runner up was Frank Gambino, who brought the house down as usual. Frank and Sonny Meadows had to be a tie for "Best Comedic Moment of the Year (so far)."

Many other fine songs and performances were given this night. Steve Robinson delivered "the Dance," another fabulous song even by his impeccable standards. Tim Dillon was also in top form with "You Believed in Me." One member wrote of Tim's song, "All the best elements come together in this song. It evokes real emotion like nobody else."

Members also praised the following:

"Sorry" by Ken Krumenacker: "Beautiful melody." "Which Road I'm On" by Tim Huss: "Lyrically and melodically, great stuff." "The Music Box" by Richard Cashman: "Excellent, very poetic."

"Moment In Time" by Tania Purpora: "Great voice. Really good hook." "To Make a Difference" by Suzanne Ernst: "Original concept and construction. Suits your voice nicely."

"Nobody Else" by David Bailey: "Very emotionally engaging. Very good delivery." "Colors of the Day" by Vincent Crici: "Catchy and clever." "New Mexico" by Dave Anthony: "Very upbeat, fun and evocative." "Same Old Whine" by Hank Stone: "Great groove, Very engaging chords and style."

Sonny Speed Moves On

Continued from page 1

ahead and leave so many great people, friends and musicians behind. So that is why I'm only going three and a half hours north (And not Florida!). This way I can still bridge these great friendships and come down to the Island every now and then. Please stay in touch and do all that you can to support original music. My years with the ISS have been the most rewarding of my music career on so many levels. First and foremost is that I have made so many friends. You have always given me and the membership your support and that has been the key to our continuing success for all of these years. Thank you!

I have estimated that I have heard at least 2,800 original songs at the meetings. Some that were very good, some needed work and some that just plain sucked. BUT they all had originality! And I thank each one of you for your determination in the process of writing and presenting it. I've found the basics are what works best, but it takes all levels to keep us growing and helping each other to become better at what we do. I do have a few favorite songs and artists on both sides of the scale and thank you for a wonderful collection of Long Island artist CDs.

Some of you have been with me all along and some I just met, but all of you have a very special gift that needs to be shared with the group and the public so stay together, support each other as always and keep writing. I will keep the AOL account active for email mcspeed@aol.com, and my cell number is 516-382-4497. I will keep this number after August too. Write that down somewhere. I hope to see you all at my last ISS meeting on August 3. If you can't make it, I understand and we can catch up later. Thank you for all of the support and friendship for all of these years.

Derek clearly has a very fine voice, an excellent ear and an able way with words and music that completely disqualify him as any sort of "novice."

Sonny Meadows Serves Up A Big Helping of Tolerance In New CD

By PEDRO PEREIRA

Sonny Meadows' new CD, "Tolerance!" casts the Long Island bard and ISS stalwart in a slightly new light. The wit is still there, as is the stunning ability to turn a phrase, all delivered with the trademark gravelly voice.

Absent are the old-guy witticisms that dominate his work with blues-band-for-the-retired The Defibrillators. And mostly gone are the overt political declarations that have underwritten Sonny's solo work, despite an off-the-cuff dig at John McCain supporters in the title track and a condemnation of Suffolk County Executive Steve Levy in "Man at the Top."

This is a collection of songs about losers, lovers, heroes and family, as Sonny explains in the liner notes. As such, the master songsmith swings lyrically between the mundane and the ethereal, now forcing the listener to consider the travails of the everyman or woman, now causing an embarrassed giggle at some comical tidbit that you can't help feeling you really shouldn't be laughing about.

In track 1, Sonny gets right down to business by poking fun at the all-American tradition of summertime family reunions. Illicit affairs, obnoxious children and grumpy relatives all get a turn in the crosshairs of the singer's verbal fusillade. Track 2 gives us a tender Sonny, a rare diversion into romantic longing that despite the questionable circumstances of the song's inspiration (a well-endowed casino waitress) still manages to strike an emotional chord.

But lest the listener get too warm and fuzzy, Sonny brings us back to reality in no time. Tracks such as the deliciously blasphemous "She's Got Jesus" (with the phrase "Jesus in the cleavage"), "Angel from the Dark Side of Heaven," "Harassment" and bonus track "Notes from a Distraught Father" reveal the mischievous Sonny Meadows we have come to expect over the years.

The bonus track is so potentially offensive that Sonny didn't even dare include it in the version of the CD that is being distributed to the public. Anyone who wants it has to e-mail Sonny and ask for it, but he warns you that you'd better think about it 10 times before doing so. It's good advice.

In "Woody Guthrie," Sonny pays homage to an obvious influence, interspersing his own lyrics of admiration with refrains made famous by Guthrie in songs such as "This Land Is Your Land." In "Last Church on the Left," Sonny memorializes the late Susan Blake who for years was the force behind the monthly PeaceSmiths Coffeehouse concert at the First United Methodist Church in Amityville. Sonny, who has taken over the event's reins, also pays tribute to the poets, musicians and speechifiers who lend their talents to the monthly event.

As usual, Sonny co-produced "Tolerance!" with Defibrillators collaborator, ISS Director Sonny Speed, at Speed's Son Spot Studio, and as usual, the production and arrangements are top-notch. Sonny Meadows also gets a hand from his wife Pamela, who did harmonies on the song "Dinner, Dishes and Bed."

"Tolerance!" is not a work for the intolerant, the faint-hearted or the prude. But if you can embrace the dark humor in the intended spirit, you will be assured of a satisfying, if at times uncomfortable, listening experience. Get a copy of "Tolerance!" at www.cdbaby.com/Artist/SonnyMeadows.

Who Played What

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

Ken Krumenacker
Sorry

Tim Dillon
You Believed in Me

Vincent Crici
Colors of the Day

Bill Ryan
Cellphone Lovers

Derek Mandaras
Everything's Gonna Be All Right

Tania Purpora and John Finerty
Moment in Time

Richard Cashman
Music Box

Andrew Kirshner
Your Mommy Put Sugar On You

Hank Stone
Same Old Whine

David Anthony
New Mexico

Jules Jacob
The King of Shoeshine

Frank Gambino
Scotch for Lent

Tim Huss
Which Road I'm On

Sonny Meadows
Notes from a Distraught Father

Suzanne Ernst
To Make a Difference

David Baily
Nobody Else

Steve Robinson
The Dance

iss

Director

Sonny Speed

Webmaster

Walter Sargent

Writing Coach

Mel Glazer

Newsletter

Editor

Pedro Pereira

Contributors

Walter Sargent

Tony Tedeschi

Suzanne Ernst

Dave Cook

Gerry Dantone

Sonny Meadows

Mike Svezia

Steve Robinson

Frank Gambino

We're on the Web!

See us at

www.islandsongwriters.org

ISS Open Mics

The next open mic at **Borders Cafe**, Route 25, Syosset, is August 7. Hosted by Vincent Crici, this gig is monthly, on the first Friday of the month. Sign up at 7:30 p.m.

Welcome to the Homegrown Music Cafe

ISS Newsletter Editor Pedro Pereira has teamed up with his good friend Ralph Antignano to produce a monthly concert series at the St. Gerard Majella Roman Catholic Church in Port Jefferson Station. Proceeds of the shows go to the St. Gerard Majella parish outreach program, in which Ralph has been involved for years. Over the years, the outreach program has fed, clad and comforted hundreds of families in need.

The fall session of the Homegrown Music Café concert series kicks off Sept. 19 with performances by ISS members Lois Morton and Pedro Pereira, as well as Jose de Jesus and featured performer Johnny Cuomo. Shows also are scheduled for Oct. 24 and Nov. 14. A number of ISS members, including Suzanne Ernst, Hank Stone and Frank Gambino, will be performing during the spring session, which starts in January.

St. Gerard Majella Church is at 300 Terryville Road, Port Jefferson Station. The concerts will take place in the church chapel, which seats about 100. A \$5 donation, or as much as you can contribute, to fund the outreach program is requested.

Monthly Workshop

Test out your songs in front of a crowd by playing them for fellow musicians who will provide constructive feedback with the goal of helping you improve as a songwriter. The ISS workshop takes place the first Monday of every month, except if it falls on a holiday, at Five Towns College, off Burrs Lane in Dix Hills. Run by ISS Director Sonny Speed, the workshop starts at 7:30 p.m. Bring a guitar if you wish to perform your song live, or you may bring a recording on CD or tape. A piano is available for those who write their songs at the keys. Be sure to bring 25 copies of your lyric sheets so the other workshop attendees can follow along while listening to your song. It is much easier to provide constructive criticism when people can read the lyrics. The ISS workshop is at the center of the organization's mission to help songwriters perfect their craft. Many performers on Long Island got their start at ISS.

General Information

For general information about ISS or how to join the organization, contact ISS Director Sonny Speed at mcspeed@optonline.net or 631- 462-3300. To submit items for publication in the newsletter, contact Pedro Pereira at pedropereira@verizon.net. Visit our web site at www.islandsongwriters.org.