

2006 Humber Summer Songwriting Workshop

In June of last year, I returned to Humber College for another week at the Summer Songwriting Workshop. This was only the 2nd year for the program, but already the faculty have improved the focus of the workshop and raised the bar for the attending songwriters. With the exception of Monday's movie night, screening "Ishtar", the entire week was incredible. (re: Ishtar – if you're a songwriter, or know a songwriter, you'll laugh yourself silly for the first 20 minutes of the movie. After 20 minutes, though, the movie is reminiscent of dental surgery...).

We had visits from Danny Michel and Bob Snider discussing songwriting and performing unplugged for us, and interviews/discussions with:

- Molly Johnson re: record labels and bad deals
- Artist managers, booking agents, radio programmers
- Justin Nozuka, 2005 attendee whose career is exploding
- Many, many more...

The intensity rose for our in-class workshoping with faculty – Rik Emmett, Blair Packham, Bill deMain, Damhnait Doyle, Fergus Hambleton, Justin Gray and Andy Kim. Imagine the possibilities when a small group of burgeoning songwriters sit in with this calibre of leaders, to work on songs and exercise the craft.

And for those who chose to stay on-campus for the week, there were endless nights of co-writing, recording, jamming, and camaraderie that expanded our network of friends and enriched our skills. Oh, yeah, there was some food and drink involved, too...

As in the 1st year of the workshops, the organizers had arranged a night out for us to perform at Toronto's Rivoli club. Faculty had the task of choosing 16 songwriters to invite onto the stage, to perform with the "house" band – Terrence Gowan, Derek Dunham, Kevin Adamson and Rik Emmett. Yours truly was the one to kick the band off the stage for my performance – not because I don't love jamming with these guys, but simply because the song I performed demands a sparse arrangement. OK, I'm a control freak, too...

For this 2nd year of the workshop, the songwriters in attendance were of an even higher standard than last year's crowd. Notables included (but are not limited to):

Bumni Adeoye – www.myspace.com/thebedsidebusker
Stephen Myers – www.myspace.com/stephenmyers

Christian Caldeira – www.christiancaldeira.com

The last day of the workshop included a fancy lunch with speeches and awards. I came home with one of two Big Boom Entertainment Awards, presented by Justin Gray, Big Boom Entertainment. The award is basically an invitation to work with Justin and his production team on a song. Stay tuned for the results of these sessions later in 2007!!



(Pictured here – Justin Gray, Allister Bradley, Rik Emmett)

It's nearly time to register for the **2007 Humber Summer Songwriting Workshop (July 7-13, 2007)**. It has been improved even further, and offers programs for all songwriters, from beginner to advanced.

- Seminars on topics like "Lyric Writing", "Music Business War Stories", "Hit Song Analysis", "When Can I Quit My Day Job?", and more.
- Sessions with professional mentors who will help you workshop your material.
- Opportunities to showcase live and to record demos of your songs.

New faculty addition for 2007 – **Jules Shear** (MTV Unplugged, Bangles, Cyndi Lauper, etc.). Visit www.creativeandperformingarts.humber.ca or www.myspace.com/humbersongwriting.

2006 Toronto Independent Music Awards

This past fall I had the honour of receiving a nomination for Best Male Performer at the Toronto Independent Music Awards. The show was hosted October 5th at the Phoenix Concert Theatre in Toronto, and was attended by hundreds of indie music fans who came out to enjoy the live performances and support their favourite artists.

While the anxiety of my award nomination was short-lived (the award for Best Male Performer was won by Tim Tibbitts, about 12 minutes into the show), the show as a whole was extremely well organized, including appearances by Canadian music celebrities such as Alannah Myles. The show closed with a 30 minute set by the hot Toronto funk band God Made Me Funky. This band is incredible, check them out at www.godmademefunky.ca.



Congratulations to all the nominees and all the winners. Here are some indie artists you should check out:

- Tim Tibbitts - www.timtibbitts.ca
- Angie Nussey - www.angienussey.ca
- God Made Me Funky - www.godmademefunky.com

2006 Starlight Starbright Christmas Fundraiser

On December 15th and 16th of this year, a handful of independent singer/songwriters from around Southern Ontario turned Whitby's Courthouse Theatre into a garden of song in benefit of the Starlight Starbright Children's Foundation. The show, brainchild of Whitby's Ron Beer, was a chance to showcase independent artists and raise money for a worthwhile children's charity. Seat sales, CD sales, T-shirt sales and other fundraising activities raised over \$2,500 for Starlight Starbright.

Performers included:

Nelly Shin - www.nellyshin.com	Maggie Szabo - www.myspace.com/maggieszabo
Bunmi Adeoye - www.myspace.com/thebedsidebusker	Greg Wyard - www.gregwyard.com
Peter Bloom - www.myspace.com/peterbloommusic	Giasone Italiano - www.giasoneitaliano.com
Jeanette Lee - www.jeanettelee.ca	Heather Whaley - www.heatherwhaley.ca
Tim Tibbitts - www.timtibbitts.ca	



See www.allisterbradley.com/StarLightArtists.php for more information on each of these performers.

Indie Artist of the Month...



Lately, I'm meeting independent musicians all the time, so it's becoming easier to find an Indie Artist of the Month. I can't resist but direct you to the MySpace page of Justin Nozuka, a teenager originally from Queen's, New York, but currently calling Toronto his home.

I first met Justin at the 2005 Humber Summer Songwriting Workshop. It was clear at the time that Justin was well on his way to becoming a successful artist, even at the young age of 16. It doesn't hurt that he's a handsome young man, with a huge, soulful voice, but add to that a repertoire of self-penned songs about sexual angst tempered with sensitivity beyond his years. Canadian Idol would kill for this boy, but he's building his professional team himself, controlling his empire every step of the way. From his top entertainment lawyer to the first-class international entertainment agency booking his shows, and now the distribution deal for his recently-released album, he's taking it one careful step at a time. His goal is to be an internationally known artist, and I have absolutely no doubt in my mind that he's going to achieve that goal.

Check him out at www.myspace.com/justinnozuka.

AB Spin(s) of the Month...

I'm listening to a LOT of independent music lately, so don't be surprised if all my recommendations begin swaying away from the major labels. Here's the latest album by **Danny Michel**, entitled "**Valhalla**". It turns out I've heard Danny perform most of these songs live before the album was released, so I was a little tainted when I heard the album. If you've ever seen Danny Michel perform live, you'll know what I mean - this guy is an incredible live performer, oozing personality and delivering awesome original guitar work along with his quirky vocal (Danny actually hates the sound of his singing voice, but his fans adore it), so it's usually with some trepidation that I first listen to his produced albums. Not to take any credit away from Danny as a producer, but his albums often tend to be missing that "sparkle" that graces his live shows. After only a couple of spins, though, I'm comfortable in saying that "Valhalla" is a great piece of work.

Some surprising arrangements (clarinet solo?), but the recordings beautifully frame his songwriting skills and leave me humming the tunes long after I've turned off the player. Especially contagious are "Midnight Train", "White Lightning" and "Into the Flame". Be sure to pick up a copy, and don't miss a chance to see this first-class artist perform live if you have the opportunity. www.dannymichel.com.

One note of trivia - Danny recorded it at home, mixing and mastering the album on a pair of cheap hi-fi speakers. Does it come across in the finished sound? Not even close. Danny figures they may be home stereo speakers, but he knows the speakers well and doesn't need to use studio monitors to do the job. No surprise that Michel is in-demand as a producer, just as much as he is in-demand as a performer...



What's this? Another spin of the month? Yes, I've neglected this newsletter long enough that you deserve another album to check out... This time it's **Gordie Sampson's "Sunburn"**. Sampson, a native of Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, is currently one of the hottest songwriter/producers around, in demand both in Canada and the United States. Gordie regularly spends time in Nashville, writing for other artists. He has had songs recorded by Faith Hill, among other top names, and just won a Grammy for best Country Song ("Jesus Take The Wheel", recorded by American Idol sensation Carrie Underwood), but in my opinion, nobody delivers his material better than Gordie himself. I had an opportunity to see him live in Toronto in summer 2006, and the show was awesome! Here's another guy singing with a voice that Idol judges would probably pan, but in my opinion it's the unique quality of his deep voice that catches my ear, not to mention the superb quality of his songs and the incredible guitar chops. This is the way "pop" music is meant to sound - forget the boy-band "big sound" production and Timbaland back beats, this is music that will be enjoyed long into the future. You're sure to recognize "Sunburn" and "Someone Like You" from the generous radio play on Canadian radio, but even if you don't, these are the kind of song that seem familiar because they have been so expertly written to tickle our ears in just the right way. www.gordiesampson.com.

Up And Coming...

- ▶▶ Tuesday, February 27th - premiere of the independent film "A Day in the Life of a Psychopath", by Guelph writer/director Peter Szabo, featuring musical score by Allister Bradley. Screening at e.Bar in Guelph, Ontario.
- ▶▶ Friday, March 2nd and Saturday, March 3rd - Waterloo, Ontario House Concerts, featuring Allister Bradley & Friends.
- ▶▶ Friday, March 16th - Bradley/Robinson at Lulu's Dine & Dance, Kitchener, Ontario
- ▶▶ Saturday, March 17th - St. Patrick's Day Toronto double-header as Bradley/Robinson plays The Pour House from 3pm - 7pm and Pogue Mahone from 9pm - 1am.
- ▶▶ Friday, March 30th - Bradley/Robinson at The Duke of Wellington, Waterloo, Ontario.
- ▶▶ See www.allisterbradley.com for more information on these and other upcoming appearances.