

Connecticut Songsmith

Newsletter of the Connecticut
Songwriters Association



CSA is an educational, non-profit organization dedicated to
improving the art and craft of original musical and lyrical composition.
Serving music's artisans and craftsmen since 1979.



January 2009
Volume XXX
Number 1
Issue #346

Combining Arts,
Education, and
Community Outreach

1979 - 2009 : 30 Years of Combining Arts, Education, and Community Outreach

WELCOME TO A NEW YEAR ! How Do You Make Your Music as Recognizable as Coke, Pepsi, McDonalds, or Walmart ?

Branding Yourself

January 2009, begins our 30th Year ! We want to do everything possible to make this an extraordinary celebration of the art and craft of songwriting. This will only be possible with the support and participation of all of our members. To those of you who have become familiar faces over the years, we say thank you, and we look forward to your continued involvement. For those of you who have been waiting on the sidelines, looking for a place to jump in, this is the time. We will welcome you with open arms.

The January CSA meeting will be held on Tuesday, January 6 7:15 pm at the Mystic Chamber of Commerce, 14 Holmes St. (directions on page 2) The program will be a discussion of one of the most important elements for success in today's music scene -- creating a brand for yourself and your music. This is one of the most basic elements for reaching milestones in the current world of Independent music production and marketing, and it is so often overlooked.

The program will be presented by Bill Pere, recently named one of the "Top 50 Innovators and Guiding Lights of the Music Industry" by Music Connection Magazine.

Lots of valuable, actionable information to be shared at this meeting. Come, and bring a friend.

Following the program, as time permits, there will be a critique session. To participate in the critique session, members may bring a song on CD (or do it live), with 20 copies of typed lyric sheets, and receive constructive feedback. Critique sessions are a good forum for works in progress or rough demos. For best feedback, note on your lyric sheets the intended genre and audience for your song, and what your goals are (i.e. picked up by a commercial artist, self-produce, etc.). The programs at CSA monthly meetings are free to members, \$5 to non-members, applicable toward membership if you join within 30 days. Members are encouraged to bring a friend who might be interested in what CSA offers. .

SNOW ADVISORY: In the event of snow, please check the CSA website for up-to-date info on meeting status.

CSA EVENT CALENDAR (for complete listing see www.ctsongs.com)

Jan 06	CSA Meeting - Mystic Chamber of Commerce Creating Your Brand
Feb 10	CSA Meeting -- Mystic Chamber of Commerce
Mar 10	- CSA Meeting - Glastonbury
Apr 11	- Annual C SA Collaboration Workshop - Mystic
May 09	Spring Pro Workshop - Marci Geller from NYC
Jun 09	CSA Meeting - Glastonbury YMCA
Jun -	CSA Summer Showcase/Picnic - JB Williams Park
Jul 06	- CSA Meeting - Wesleyan Univ.
Aug	CSA Summer Showcase/Picnic - JB Williams Park
Sep	CSA Meeting -Glastonbury YMCA
Oct	CSA Meeting- Workshop
Nov 09	CSA Meeting - Wesleyan Univ.
Nov	CSA Day of Praise Collaborative Performance
Dec 5	13th Annual LUNCH Holiday Show - Stonington
Dec	TBA

Guiding Songs Along the Path from Creation to Realization to Proliferation

COMBINING ARTS, EDUCATION, AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH FOR 30 YEARS

DIRECTIONS TO MEETING LOCATION

How to
Get There!

DIRECTIONS FOR MEETING: Mystic Chamber of Commerce Conference Room (14 Holmes St) : Coming North on I-95, take Exit 89. Go right off the Exit onto Allyn St Go about 2 miles and come to a light and the intersection of Rt 1. Turn left onto Rt 1 and go a short way to the 5-way intersection overlooking Main St, Mystic. Proceed down the Main Street of Mystic, across the drawbridge, to the flagpole (Holmes St). Turn left at the flagpole onto Holmes. Pass a few storefronts and you'll see a red brick building, #14 Holmes St. To park, turn right just before the brick building onto Church St, and park in the lot behind the brick building. The entrance for the Chamber of Commerce is at the far right as you face the rear of the building. Go down the corridor. The room is on the right. Coffee and Snacks available !

GET A TAX DEDUCTION FOR YOUR OLD STUFF !

If you have any old music or office equipment lying around or just old "stuff" that you don't need, consider donating it to CSA and you'll get a generous tax deduction !

CSA is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and all items donated to us can be deducted at their maximum fair market value. We have helped many folks get nice deductions for their old items, which certainly can be useful to us either in our regular CSA programs or our community outreach programs through LUNCH.

We can use any office equipment and supplies, old computers, any type of music and studio equipment, and any type of item that could be used for auction or raffle. We'll provide a tax receipt that will give you the best possible tax-deduction.

If you have anything that you might like to donate, contact Bill Pere at bill@billpere.com

HAVE YOU GOTTEN A FRIEND TO JOIN CSA YET ? Make it a goal for 2008 to get at least one new person to become part of the CSA community ! **We need your help to spread the word !**

NEED A BARCODE UPC symbol for your CD ?



If you want to sell your CD's through retail outlets or through online stores like CD Baby or Amazon, a barcoded UPC is required. CSA can provide a unique number for your product that meets CD retailing requirements. No one else would have your UPC number (you need a different number for each different product you have). For a one time cost of \$20 per UPC, CSA will give you a number and a barcode (or you can use the number to make your own barcode). To obtain a barcode, send \$20 per UPC and your e-mail address to CSA, PO Box 511, Mystic CT 06355. You will receive your UPC via e-mail, or by regular mail if you prefer.

CONGRATULATIONS !

CSA lifetime member Lara Herscovitch has been named the 2009 Connecticut State Troubadour, by the CT Commission on Culture and Tourism. Lara joins CSA members Tom Callinan, Bill Pere, and Thomasina Levy as fellow Troubadours.

Bill Pere has been named as one of the "Top 50 Innovators, Groundbreakers, Iconoclasts, and Guiding Lights of the Music Industry" by Music Connection Magazine. Music Connection is one of the oldest, most widely read, and most respected publications in the music business.

The December issue is online at <http://www.musicconnection.com/digital> and you'll see Bill listed along with many other major names in the music business. In addition, the new (10th Edition) of the Indie Bible has just been released. Bill appears on the cover, and he has a feature article included in the book.

CALLING ALL WRITERS

ANNOUNCING THE CSA 2009 COMPILATIONS

Get your songs in by October 31, 2009 to insure eligibility! *(after 10/31, contact us for status)*

CSA Compilation CDs have received radio airplay and are displayed at national conferences, and the digital downloads pay artist royalties.

- 1: **SONGS of SOCIAL RELEVANCE** - We're continuing to collect songs that address an issue of social importance -- hunger, homelessness, the environment, substance abuse, global warming..... This is your chance to speak out and be heard. TIP: Don't just write a song that preaches -- Make your point by showing it, not telling it.
- 2: **SPIRITUAL/INSPIRATIONAL SONGS** - Our 3rd collection in this very popular series. See our previous Spiritual/Inspirational collections "Share the Journey" and "Along the Road" for examples of songs that fit this category.
- 3: **HOLIDAY SONGS** - One of the favorite categories -- CSA has released four great holiday collections. The holidays keep coming, and so do the songs!
- 4: **GOOD OL' COUNTRY SONGS!** - Always popular, and there is no lack of good quality country songs in CSA. NOTE: Because of the many great CSA country songs, submission is not a guarantee of inclusion.

GUIDELINES

- At least one writer must be a current CSA member
- All songs must be professionally produced, up to 'radio-ready' standards.
- Social Relevance songs must address a specific topic and social issue, such as hunger, homelessness, substance abuse, the environment, global warming, etc...
- Spiritual Inspirational songs must be appropriate to the category. See examples on the previous CSA Compilations "Share the Journey" and "Along the Road".
- Songs for the Humorous/Novelty compilation must be appropriate for the theme of the collection. Songs should feature unusual topics, tongue-in-cheek lyrics designed to bring a smile to the listener, or to just present a totally whimsical idea or story.

Please specify for which CD Collection you are submitting.

- Any musical style is okay
- Submission is NOT a guarantee of acceptance. Songs will be selected based on :
 - Appropriateness to the theme
 - Song Crafting
 - Production Quality (must be professionally recorded and radio-ready)
 - Available space on the CD (if there are more acceptable submissions than can fit on the CD, those submitted earlier and those of shorter length will be given greater consideration.)
- Songs must not violate the terms of any third-party agreement (e.g. with a publisher). Unsigned songs are preferred. If a song is under contract to a publisher, a signed release from the publisher must be provided.
- Songs may not have been included on any previous CSA CD Compilation
- Submissions will not be returned.
- At CSA discretion, songs from the compilations may be made available for digital downloads, with royalties paid to the writers.

TO SUBMIT, PLEASE SEND THE FOLLOWING:

- A recording of the song on CD, suitable for duplication (put your name and contact info on the CD)
- Clearly indicate the TIME of the track, in minutes: seconds
- A lyric sheet (put your name and contact info on the lyric sheet)
- A signed release form, printed out from the CSA web site (www.ctsongs.com)
- A non-refundable one-time \$10 per song processing fee payable to CSA.
If you want your complementary copy to be mailed to you, please include \$2 for postage.
(there are no additional costs, whether a song is accepted for inclusion or not)

Send your recording, lyric sheet, release form, and \$10 (+ \$2 postage) to CSA, PO Box 511, Mystic CT 06355.

IF YOU HAVE A SONG which is not yet fully produced and you want to know if it acceptable for consideration before doing the production, you may bring it to a CSA critique session

SONGCRAFTERS' COLORING BOOK

How to Lead People to Your Music in a Digital Age

by Bill Pere

President of the Connecticut Songwriters Association and author of "Songcrafters' Coloring Book: The Essential Guide to Effective and Successful Songwriting" ©2009 Bill Pere

With the maturity of digital delivery and a proliferation of websites that allow easy uploading and legal downloading of music, the old models of making and marketing CDs are gone. The shift from an album-based economy to a track-based economy spawns many new considerations for the Indie artist when the time comes to go into the studio and record.

In the old days, the typical strategy was to record an album, release a featured "single" and people would then purchase the whole album, never having heard the other songs. Albums often contained several 'filler' tracks of songs which never would have stood alone.

Today, anyone can easily hear up to 2-minute samples of tracks before purchasing, so the notion of using filler tracks is essentially useless – ALL the tracks have to be good or the consumer will just bypass them and download the ones they want. More than ever before, the quality of the songs is important helping your music rise above the baseline of filler tracks that are out there on CD Baby, i-Tunes, and other internet music stores. If you spend the time and money to record a filler track, it's not going to give you the return on your investment in a track-based music economy as it might have in the old album-based economy.

This leads to the obvious question, is the concept of an "Album" even valid anymore? Should an artist spend time and money making a physical CD, when CD sales are rapidly declining and digital sales are increasing? If you are a touring artist, you'll still (for now) want physical CDs to sell at gigs, but remember that the ultimate goal is always to be able to generate income without having to be physically present.

Content is King

Consider how a typical listener comes to find new music. As an Indie artist, it's fair to assume that most people have never heard of you. How will they find your songs? The most likely path to your music will come from consumers doing Internet searches on topics which have nothing to do with you. However, if your website contains content that might be of interest to particular groups of people, they will find you and then discover your music. For example, I have lots of website content about hunger and homelessness, and also about songwriting techniques. I've had lots of folks around the world find me and my music because they were searching on those topics, and now they've become fans. Think of the content on your website as a net to catch Internet searchers.

Another way to increase the effectiveness of your net is to put the lyrics to all your songs online as a separate page for each song. If you write songs about various topics, people searching those topics will be more likely to find your content. Again, the importance of the songwriting comes to the fore. If you just write generally about love and how you broke up or got together, you're going to be lost in an ocean of similar content. If however, you want to write about those things and use some interesting metaphors, like "your love is kryptonite" (a Superman reference) or "My heart is as parched as the desert of Tatooine" (a Star Wars reference), you're now providing potential hooks for people with specific interests. In this age of niche marketing, specificity is always going to be a big plus. Over the years, I've been commissioned to write songs about a submarine, a river, a statue, horseback riding, Special Olympics, and various other unusual but specific things. These songs get found by people searching for related content. As an example, my submarine song about the USS Connecticut, co-written with fellow Troubadour Tom Callinan, is often mentioned on websites of Navy personnel.

In a track-based digital music world, there are some things we've lost from the album-based model. Concept albums like the "Days of Future Past" (Moody Blues), or "The Who Sell Out" (The Who) don't translate well to a track-based model. The order of tracks and the

transitional content between them were essential to making concept albums work as a whole. With individual digital tracks available in any order, the artist can no longer control how the listener will hear the content. Each song will have to be able to stand alone, and transitional material between songs is meaningless, and complicates where to place the track markers. If you want to do a concept album with transitional material, it is a good idea to submit a different version for digital download, where any inter-song transitional material is omitted. With most sites giving a 30-second clip to preview the song, it's important to limit the length of musical introductions and get right into the song, unless you can specify the section to use for the preview clip.

Critical Mass

Similar to a concept album, but more in tune with today's market is the themed-album. This is a collection of individual songs, each of which could stand alone, but all of which relate to some common and specific theme e.g., high school life, baseball, rural life, spirituality, boats, etc. This serves two purposes. It makes it much easier to identify a target audience, enabling you to focus your promo efforts. It also provides a critical mass of content on the Internet, making a much bigger net for catching Internet searches about that topic. The more specific the theme, the better.

What's In a Name ?

One of the most important things to think about in a digital world is the song title. Typically the title of a song going to be a phrase in the first or last line of the chorus, as that is the most easily remembered part of the song. But it might not be the most unique phrase as far as search keywords go. So you can use the technique of double-titling, where the song has one primary title, followed by a second in parentheses. An example would be Rupert Holmes' song "Escape" (The Pina Colada Song). In the aftermath of hurricane Katrina, I produced a song by a fellow CSA writer called "Daydream" about memories of growing up in New Orleans. I suggested that it would be advisable to double-title the song calling it "Daydream (The Levees of New Orleans)". You can see the difference that would make in number of search hits the song receives. The web statistics for hits on this song bear this out.

If you can come up with a title which is similar to some word or phrase which is commonly searched, it will be a big help to you. Before there was the "High School the Musical" phenomenon, I released my CD and song "High School My School". This gets many hundreds of hits each day from people searching "High School Musical". If you can generate high web traffic, you only need to convert a small portion of that into sales to start seeing meaningful royalties.

To Summarize:

In today's world of individual tracks and search engines, make it a part of your overall planning to think about how you can maximize the web traffic that each of your songs can generate. Think of lyrics, titles, and subject matter as web content. Make sure each song is truly strong enough to stand on its own as if it were a featured single. Learn how search engines like Google work and optimize your website content to draw people to you. Cast a well-thought-out net, and you'll be well-rewarded.

Bill Pere was named one the Top 50 Innovators, Iconoclasts, Groundbreakers and Guiding Lights of the Music Industry by Music Connection Magazine, December 2008. His book "Songcrafters' Coloring Book: The Essential Guide to Effective and Successful Songwriting" will be released in 2009. Bill is the Director of the Connecticut Songwriting Academy, and he presents workshops nationally on all aspects of the craft and business of songwriting. Bill is a 2003 Immie Award winner, and one of Connecticut's Official State Troubadours. Visit www.billpere.com This article was first published in the 10th Edition of the Indie Bible.

THE UN-COMFORT ZONE with Robert Wilson

The Pleasure Principle

Swing and miss. “Strike Two.” cried the umpire. I threw one more pitch right in at the player’s wrists. He swung hard, but the ball just dribbled right back to the pitcher’s mound. I picked it up and gently tossed it to the first baseman for the out.

As the batter turned back toward the dugout, his team captain stepped out and screamed, “Darrell, you’ve got to get over your fear of this guy!”

The words poured like sweet honey into my ears.

It was the third time I had gotten him out that night including two strike outs. I had completely shut down the best hitter on the best team in the league. It was the most fun I’d had in weeks.

No, I wasn’t throwing heat. Quite the contrary, I’m talking about slow-pitch recreational softball for the over-thirty crowd.

But, I was totally into it. Once a week I stood on the mound under the lights with everyone’s eye on me. Despite the butterflies in my stomach, I can’t image anything more exciting (OK, maybe skydiving!).

And, I w

as totally motivated! I spent several hours each week tossing balls in my driveway. I set up an area with a pitcher’s rubber and home plate laid out to the exact dimensions of those on the playing field. After I mastered the two standard softball pitches, I developed two of my own. The best was a softball version of the knuckleball. A spin-less ball that baffled batters the first time they saw it, but even when they did hit it - they could never get any distance on it.

I have friends who are obsessed with golf; others with tennis. None of them have a clue what drives me to play softball. But, then again, I don’t get why they play golf or tennis.

What motivates me to play softball or for that matter my friends to play golf and tennis? That’s easy... it’s fun! It is all about having fun... pleasure is very motivating. We all seek some pleasure in life. It’s what keeps us going. And, for those pursuits that we enjoy, we are never too tired; we always seem to find time and energy for them. It comes to us easily. If only we could find that kind of relaxed energy for work.

What is it that you can’t wait to do everyday? Is it a hobby? A sport? Sigmund Freud described that driving creative spirit as the *Pleasure Principle*. But, he also spoke of a contrasting principle that existed to put the brakes on our desire called the *Death Instinct*. Thankfully that theory has been disproved, however, it’s still very true that “all work and no play make Jack a dull boy.” Not only dull. Where happiness is absent - health is often absent too.

I look forward to work every day. I have clearly followed the advice of my father who encouraged me to find a job I enjoyed so that I would never “work” a day in my life. In her book *Do What You Love, The Money Will Follow: Discovering Your Right Livelihood*, Marsha Sinetar tells us to do the same thing. But, what should you do if you’re not happy in your work? Make changes! That may be easier said than done. So, if you can’t change your job, then change your work environment.

It’s a well known fact that employees who enjoy their work are more productive. This is so true that people frequently turn down better paying jobs to stay with one that is fun. There are many ways to make your workplace more fun. Authors Dave Hemsath and Leslie Yerkes in their book offer us *301 Ways to Have Fun at Work*. Every company is different so it will be up to you to discover what you can do to make your place of business more fun. But, if you want to motivate your staff - I always say, “Give them something to laugh about!”

CSA SHOWS THE POWER OF COLLABORATION AND PARTNERING WITH THE NONPROFIT SECTOR

**The 6th CSA Day of Praise Collaborative Concert.
November 15 2008, Hamden. 10 CSA Artists with the LUNCH Ensemble
performed for a full house, raising more than \$1,700**



**The 12th Annual LUNCH Holiday Show
December 6 2008, Stonington. CSA artists with a cast of 40,
performing for a standing room crowd, raising almost \$4,000
for Social Services**

