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**Sweetwater Studios Supports Emerging Artists with Songwriter-Focused Initiative**

*Best-in-class recording studio complex expands educational offerings and contest opportunities*

**Fort Wayne, IN, November 17, 2021 —** Sweetwater Studios has announced the winners of its 2021 Songwriting Contest. Angela Palivos of Mahomet, IL, Mike Casto of Muncie, IN, and Ibrahim Yoldash of Merrillville, IN, were selected from hundreds of entries to arrange, produce, and record their winning entries with Sweetwater Studios Producer/Arranger Phil Naish in Sweetwater Studios' best-in-class recording studio and production complex. The annual contest is part of a larger initiative of educational and outreach efforts engaged in by Sweetwater Studios to encourage emerging songwriting talent by providing new artists with opportunities to develop their craft at a professional level with Sweetwater Studios' expert team of producers and engineers.

**Opening the doors to the next generation**

Sweetwater Studios has offered regular educational programming for the past decade, with a robust schedule of recording master classes and workshops that have brought aspiring producers and engineers into the studio to learn from its experienced team of producers and engineers under real-world conditions. Curating an 'open-door' reputation that has given its workshop participants access to major artists ultimately led to discussions among the team of how to encourage the 'next generation' of artists within the studio itself. "Being artist-friendly has always been our number one operating priority as a studio," explained Sweetwater Studios VP of Campus Sales Operations and Artist Relations Thad Tegtmeyer. "It was a natural step for us to start pursuing efforts that would encourage emerging artists and give them access to professional coaching in songwriting and artistic development in the same way that we do for producers and engineers."

Sweetwater Studios’ annual songwriting contest has run for the past two years, attracting talent from around the country with the opportunity to arrange and record a song with Naish, a Grammy-winning producer and 37-year Nashville vet who has brought his considerable writing and arranging experience to the team. For Naish, this skillset is a valuable one to pass onto to artists who are coming into the studio for the first time. "Many artists don't get to have the experience of having their art treated seriously by a professional, and I think that's extremely important for someone who wants to take their music seriously," said Naish. "Not only can it give them the confidence to write better songs, but it also exposes them to the techniques required to really make an impact on a listener."

For Naish, these techniques often focus on making the material as memorable as possible and exploring ways of giving the song a 'lift' that will make it stick in listeners heads. When working with Palivos, Casto, and Yoldash, he took the opportunity to dig into each artists' storytelling instincts while still giving them a clear shot at being 'radio-ready'. "Often it's more about teaching structural techniques than it is emotional ones -- if the 'story' is there than you know you have the good basis for a song," he said. "Having that kind of professional feedback is incredibly valuable for a beginning songwriter, and it can help get their heads in the right place when trying to reach an audience and create song that resonates."

**Blossoming talent**

In addition to bring its ongoing contest efforts, Sweetwater Studios has also launched a series of Songwriter-focused workshops which pair attending amateur songwriters with industry professionals. The environment of these workshops encourages collaboration and professional critique, giving writers the opportunity to get immediate constructive feedback on their songs and then develop them in the studio to see the results. "Workshops like these helps us create an environment for these songwriters that is supportive as well as constructive," said Naish. "Bouncing ideas off of fellow writers in a room together encourages people and also gives them access to honest assessments of their work -- something you can't get at home from your friends and family."

With the success of the latest workshop and the imminent release of the winning songs from the Songwriting Contest, the studio team continues to push forward on efforts that will put the spotlight on these emerging talents. Additional songwriting classes and contests have been planned within the next year and a half, ensuring that emerging songwriting talent will have plenty of opportunities to blossom at Sweetwater Studios. "I think one of the more interesting outcomes of the pandemic was that it pushed people to express themselves and make music more than ever before," Naish concluded. "At Sweetwater Studios we really want to encourage that at every level, and by serving that population of emerging songwriters, I really think some wonderful music will come from it."

For more information on Sweetwater Studios and upcoming Recording Workshops, please visit: <http://www.sweetwaterstudios.com/>

 **About Sweetwater Studios**
Sweetwater Studios is a wholly owned subsidiary of Sweetwater Sound, Inc., the largest online music instrument retailer in the country. With three world-class studios designed by Russ Berger and access to a greater diversity of musical equipment and professional audio gear than any other recording studio in the world, Sweetwater Studios is able to accommodate just about any recording, mixing or mastering project, no matter how simple or complex. Sweetwater Studios also has an exceptional staff of producers, engineers, session musicians and studio technicians to ensure that any artist will get personalized, first-class treatment from start to finish.

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