

Songsmith – Austin Monthly Critique Session  
Monday, June 15, 2020

The Songsmith – Austin Monthly Critique Session was held via Zoom (moderated by Mississippi's indeedly most-excellent Tara Heflin) from 7:00 pm to 9:48 pm. We had 18 Zoom attendees and heard 12 awesome works in progress.

We began the session with an *optional* writing challenge for July – write a song to the title “Covid Hair”.

John Stearle started the session with a video of his song “When the Looting Starts, the Shooting Starts”, a vivid and violent video with regard to violent events plaguing the US. This song was provocative, visually captivating and thought provoking. Constructive comments were few for John's latest work – thanks, John!

Stewart Moser sent lyrics and an mp3 of his song “Banana Republic”, a commentary of the state of the union in the US. Stewart's lyrics and phrasing were excellent, with a very hooky chorus. Listeners really like this song and only a few minor lyric and style suggestions were offered – great, Stewart!

Debra Redmond recited her song “About Now”, which was from the perspective of a down-and-out singer. Debra's lyrics were very thoughtful and evocative. Comments from the group offered a few suggested changes relating to the intro, the outro (spoken word). A super start, Debra!

Michael Stinson sent an mp3 and lyrics for his song, “Sparks From A Dark Moving Train”, a personally-based song about the singer gaining maturity over time. Michael's lyrics were vivid and engaging. Great production, too. Suggestions were few for this heartfelt tune. Outstanding work, Michael!

Joe Strouse submitted a video with his song “Uncle Hap” (written in 2000), a tribute to a wonderful uncle, using images and digitized 8mm film taken by Joe's dad in the mid 1960s. Suggestions were few and included clarifying a few of the lyric terms.

Scott Joffe sent in his song “Still Scared”, a great description of being paralyzed by fear of failure and the unknown. Scott's song nicely conveyed the feeling and it was well supported by the mood of his guitar playing. Comments included some minor changes to the chorus and perhaps some strum/picking contrast in the bridge. Great, Scott!

Greg Livingston sent an mp3 of his wonderfully-re-written “Lonely Road”, another chapter in the life of his heroine's exposure to a difficult life away from home. The group really enjoyed Greg's hard work on this song and only a few small suggestions were offered because of Greg's efforts. Wonderful work, Greg!

Bill Evans sent in an mp3 of his song “Dan The Donkey”, and upbeat tune written for his grandson, describing the different noises teach animal makes as they sound out and

dance. Everyone was smiling on this one and only minimal comments for change were given by the listeners. Great work, Bill!

First-timer Mike Whiteley (living in Odessa, TX) sent Tara an mp3 and lyrics of a recently-written song entitled “You Don’t Want None”, a up-tempo country tune about being careful about who you decide to fight. Mike lyrics and production were first-rate and the group really enjoyed this tune, with few changes. Super, Mike – welcome!

Rick Cates send a re-write of his internal rhyme-rich tune “Old Hot Rod” which described the singer’s robust health as an automobile metaphor. The group really liked this one and Rick’s production very well considered. Listeners offered a few lyrical and bridge suggestions. Regardless, wonderful work, Rick!

Mary Dawson provided lyrics and an mp3 of her co-write entitled “Better Left Unsaid”, a song inspired by a TV interview response about one’s private life. The production was great and the attendees really liked the jazzy feel. Suggestions included an updated production and some minor lyric changes. Outstanding, Mary!

Brenda Merz provided lyrics and played piano live on her song “Last Dance With You”, a sweet description of the singer’s having to bear with many wrong relationships in one’s life. Brenda’s final verse gave great depth to the chorus and significant discussion ensued about potential changes to make it stronger. Thanks, Brenda!

And as always, the Songsmith - Austin monthly critique session meets on the third Monday of each month. We’ll do this again by Zoom conference on Monday July 20, 2020. If you’d like to be included please contact Tara Heflin ([tara.incognito@gmail.com](mailto:tara.incognito@gmail.com)) and she’ll help get you in! Send her your lyrics (Word format, please) and if you’d prefer we hear a recording, please also send an mp3 of your song.

See you on Monday, July 20th!