

Songsmith – Austin
January Critique Session
January 16, 2023

The Songsmith – Austin December Critique Session was held via Zoom from 7:06 to 9:21 pm on January 16, 2023. We had eleven Zoom attendees and heard ten remarkable works in progress. Joe mentioned the annual February is Album Writing Month (FAWM) exercise, inviting everyone to participate, and also talked about some songwriting tools (to be discussed at the end of the session).

Newbie Chris Cavello started this session with “Beautiful Hard Life”, a song wonderfully describing the difficult and enjoyable parts of the singer’s life. Very heartfelt and filled with great images, the group really enjoyed this song and offered several suggestions concerning his lyrics. Great start and welcome, Chris!

Michael Wesley Stinson continued the session with his song “Hello Rain” a wonderfully rhythmic acoustic guitar tune about the singer’s embracing what the rain can bring. Listeners offered several clarifying lyric and musical suggestions to help the song possibly become stronger. Thanks, Michael!

Mary Dawson sent in a John Green tune re-write “Randy, Mickey, and Me”, describing the singer’s family and growing up in Kentucky. Mary had forwarded this tune to a Nashville musician friend who provided the demo that we heard. Comments were positive and there were a few lyrical/colloquial questions. Regardless, good work!

John Stearle sent in his song “Woody Wamasy”, describing teens making out during an older man’s funeral. This song was very descriptive and everyone had an opinion on how to make it stronger. There were a lot of distinct, interesting characters and (according to John), this song was about 20 years in the making. Congratulations!

Stewart Moser sent his recently-written song “Happiness”, which provided a litany of general descriptions of things that made the singer happy (and surprised). Suggestions from the group included providing more specifics, and when asked, the sometimes inscrutable Stewart smiled. Interesting work, indeed - thanks!

Greg Livingston and Amy Guentzel (GrAmy) provided their song “Light Up and Rock On”, an anthemic tune about saving the liberties we enjoy in the USA. The listeners really like the call and response choruses. There were several comments offered to give it more continuity, but a rocker, indeed. Cool work, y’all – thanks!

Mike Harris provided his song (another co-write with Joe Clark), entitled “Something In The Air”, a country tune about love in a rural setting. As usual, this song had great descriptions, use of idioms, and a strong chorus. Comments included a few minor lyrical suggestions (helping with meter). Nice work, y’all!

Joe Strouse sent in “Emily” describing the singer’s afar awe/worship of a friend’s older sister and the mystery of her eventually going “off the grid”. Suggestions included a few lyrical clarifications and minimizing wordiness.

Newcomer Bill Joyce provided part 2 of his trilogy, entitled “Silent Wrath”, which described a battered woman’s revenge on her attackers. While this song (which accompanies Bill’s literary endeavors) was not a “stand alone” work, the images and feeling were powerful, which the group appreciated. Welcome and thanks, Bill!

Mitch Lobrovich provided his song “Soar”, yet another extremely well-produced (and beautiful) song about love. Mitch’s vocalist wonderfully provided great (and appropriate) vocal range. Suggestions were very few and it was pretty obvious that everyone enjoyed this song. You’re ready for Disney! Thanks, Mitch.

Finally, Joe reviewed Sting’s song “If It’s Love” and pointed out several of the great (nay, masterful) songwriting devices that Sting used in making this song very enjoyable and thoroughly effective, including rhythm, pre-chorus lead in to chorus and vocals. And we’ll review another song for more songwriting tools next month.

Songsmith meets three out of the four Monday nights each month. As always, Songsmith has a Salado meeting (2nd Monday of each month), the 3rd Monday for the Austin meeting, and a DFW meeting (4th Monday of each month) where your songs can be heard and you can get feedback - always free – no dues or other financial obligations.

As always, we’re looking for Zoom-knowledgeable volunteer to run the audio and visual portions for the DFW meeting. If you’re interested, please contact Mary Dawson at Mary@MaryDawson.com.

We hope to see you on Monday, February 20th, 2023 or sooner.