

Songsmith – Austin
February Critique Session
February 20, 2023

The Songsmith – Austin February Critique Session was held via Zoom from 7:04 to 10:02 pm on February 20, 2023. We had thirteen Zoom attendees and heard twelve outstanding works in progress. Joe talked about some lyric/melody tools (to be discussed at the end of the session).

John Stearle sent in his song “Hey Mr. Rock and Roller”, an ode to Paul McCartney with a slightly melancholy melody similar to Joni Mitchell’s “Both Sides Now”. This song was well constructed and there were quite a few comments concerning the adding possible descriptions and heartfelt images. Very nice, John - thanks!

Newcomer Alex Gaw sent in a recording of his song “Like We Used To”, a very descriptive song about confusion in a relationship that was not what it once was. Alex’s voice, guitar work and chords really added to the song’s prosody. Suggestions included a number of good considerations for the re-write. Great, Alex – welcome!

Stewart Moser sent one of his 14-songs-in-14-days works, entitled “Mirrors and Smoke”, describing the singer’s frustration with a seemingly impossible task. While the song was not specific about the task, listeners enjoyed it and provided Stewart with a number of things to consider for making the song stronger. Excellent work, SB!

Greg Livingston and Amy Guentzel (GrAmy) provided their song “A Poetry Of Light”, a spoken-word musical tune about the meeting of fictional characters Estrella and Tristan. This song is the basis for a play that they’re working on. A definitely novel approach for them and comments included a few technical suggestions. Very interesting - thanks!

Mike Harris provided his co-write with Joe Clark, entitled “Another Is Now”, a somber song about bad news repetition in the media. This song was quite thoughtful and thought-provoking which, in turn, generated a lot of discussion from the group with several lyrical suggestions to help make it stronger. Very good work, y’all – thanks!

Scott Joffe submitted his new song “Melt A Little More”, a awe-striking metaphor for one’s dealing with loneliness and life’s challenges. Everyone really liked this song and offered only a few minor lyrical suggestions to punch up the incredible impact ever more. Outstanding work, Scott – thanks for sharing it with us.

Joe Strouse sent in one of his recent FAWM songs, “Remember When” describing the singer’s disdain for a former relationship. Suggestions included a great title change few sense-bound lyrical suggestions.

Bill Joyce provided his male/female duet song “I Ain’t Gonna Cry”, composed of brief vignettes of relationships and how each singer dealt with anticipation and disappointment. Several comments were offered, including some lyrical/perspective possibilities. Very nice, Bill – thanks!

Mary Dawson sent in a song (co-written with the late Sal Anthony) entitled “Walk On Water”, in which the singer describes appreciation for the groom in upcoming nuptials. Mary said this song was played during her youngest daughter Sarah’s wedding. Suggestions were few and included a few minor lyrical tweaks. Thanks, Mary!

Scott Badger provided his song “My Turn”, a wonderfully-written description of how the singer still yearned for a former love. Scott’s voice added great feeling and depth to this song, which everyone enjoyed. Comments from the group included a few minor lyric changes. Regardless, a well-written song – thanks, Scott!

Mitch Lobrovich sent his song “Summer Rain”, containing great samba-driven guitar work, describing the singer’s desire to get back together with a former love. Mitch’s voice reminded us of Michael Franks and John Mayer and made this song enjoyable. Comments were minor and lyric-related. Cool work, Mitch!

Chris Meyer provided his song “I Still Do”(written over 20 years ago!), describing a former love and the singer’s regrets. While Chris acknowledged that the song was a bit long, the group offered a number of suggestions to help make it more concise and flow better. Really great work, Chris – we want to hear the re-write!

This month’s songwriting discussion concerned line length and melodic length. Joe discussed how we should be making sure that the lyric length matched with the melodic length. A simple tool is to use a period “.” at the end of each lyrical line and make sure that the melody fits. We’ll also review 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, March 20th, 2023 or sooner.