

Songsmith – Austin Monthly Critique Session
Monday, July 20, 2020

The Songsmith – Austin Monthly Critique Session was held via Zoom (moderated by Mississippi's most-excellent Tara Heflin) from 7:00 pm to 9:41 pm. We had 15 Zoom attendees and heard 12 excellent works in progress. Among our attendees was our Critique Session stalwart, Polk Shelton!

Joe Strouse submitted his version of "Covid Hair" (this month's optional writing assignment) which described, of course, the need for a haircut. Comments included a few minor lyric and melody changes.

Mary Dawson submitted lyrics for her version of "Covid Hair", definitely describing her concern, from a female point of view. Comments from the group included some small lyric suggestions – and now we're all ready to hear the melody and music side of this tune, Mary! Thanks!

Bill Basinski (from the DFW Metroplex) also submitted his version of "Covid Hair" and sang the lyrics a cappella, which was based on an old blues tune. However, Bill's audio was not working quite right, so most of the song was garbled. Suggestions from the listeners included more title repetition. Welcome back, Wile Bill!

Michael Stinson sent an mp3 and lyrics for his song, "Ghost of Yesterday", a bittersweet song about a past love. Michael's images and mood for this song were excellent, as usual. The group generally felt that the verses and chorus were too similar, along with a few other suggested lyric changes. Great start, Michael!

Stewart Moser sent lyrics and an mp3 of his song "Rick Rose", a song about the now-deceased Corona virus denier. Stewart did a good job of quoting Mr. Rose and suggestions including some lyric changes to make it less wordy as well as a few chord changes in the chorus. Cool, Stewart!

Aaron Clift send his lyrics and an mp3 of part 1 of his song "Rise", which sounded lush and gorgeous with unpredictable chord changes and great melody lines. Comments from the group were generally lyric-based, asking for a bit more clarification in the lyrics. Looking forward to hearing the second part of this song, Aaron!

John Stearle totally changed the session's direction with his video of "When Donny Campaigns Again", a parody of the famous marching song and a commentary of the President's re-election efforts. Several suggestions were offered regarding the lyrics. Another zany work with a LOT of footage – thanks, John!

Mary Dawson also brought a co-write with Eulalia King, entitled "This Wasted Time", which was well-produced by Peter Moon and was carried well with great emotion. Comments included some possible lyric changes, but all told, it was very well received by the group – thanks, Mary and Eulalia!

Brenda Merz provided lyrics and again played piano live on her song “Covid Hair”, loosely based on the song “Poison Ivy”. Brenda’s descriptions were on target (like Mary’s) and the frustration-based humor was evident. Listeners provided a few suggestions including adding a third verse. Great job, Brenda!

Greg Livingston sent an mp3 of his great song “Wild Wind”, which gave optimism for a loved one during difficult times. Greg’s excellent vocals and flamenco-inspired guitar playing provided great prosody for this tune. Comments were generally few and included adding another verse and a few other structural changes – wow, Greg – great!

New Mexico’s Michael R. J. Roth sent lyrics and an mp3 of his song “Just To Keep Breathing” – an ode to a poor woman dealing with many of life’s challenges. Michael’s images were breathtaking, with great song prosody. The listeners included a few lyric suggestions relating to verse location and a few lyric changes. Welcome back!

Debra Redmond recited her song “Covid Hair”, yet another follower of this month’s optional songwriting assignment, again from the female perspective. Debra’s lyrics had great rhymes and well done. The group had only a few lyric suggestions for making it stronger. Great work, Debra!

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 August 17, 2020. If you’d like to be included please contact Tara Heflin (tara.incognito@gmail.com) and she’ll help get your song and lyrics 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, August 17th!