

Songsmith – Austin  
February Critique Session  
February 19, 2024

The Songsmith – Austin Critique Session was held via Zoom from 7:05 to 9:42 pm on Monday, February 19, 2024, moderated by our most-excellent host, Christopher Meyer. We had 13 Zoom attendees and heard 13 great songs in various stages of creation. Joe also talked about a songwriting strategy and next month's optional challenge (see below).

Michael Wesley Stinson provided a great re-write and studio-produced version of his song "Shade Of An Elephant", where the singer doesn't need to be in the limelight. Everyone really appreciated his diligent re-write effort and there were a few production-related suggestions. Super work, Michael!

Bill Basinski's sent his protest song "Odor In The Quirk" which described the singer's dissatisfaction with the Supreme Court. Very clever and with a great chorus, the listeners provided a few very minor lyrical suggestions. Okay, Bill - we're waiting for you to busk this one on the streets of Dallas and Fort Worth!

Scott Joffe forwarded his song "Fighting To Stay Dry", a metaphor for overcoming inertia and accepting the rain. With the song's setting in Scotland, Scott's guitar picking was awesome and the group really liked it (especially his excellent rhymes in the chorus) and suggested a few very minor lyric/phrasing changes. Great work, Scott!

Bill Joyce sent a studio version of his song "Is There Love", the third (and final) part of his EP about revenge that he's been working on for some time. The production was outstanding (great vocals and music) and the listeners provided only a few very minor lyric suggestions. Great work, as usual, Bill - thanks!

John Stearle submitted his song "Oops - I Pooped My Pants", one of his 14 FAWM songs. As we have come to accept, John's scatological exploration continues. Very funny and with a load of great rhymes, the listeners really appreciated John's multitude of voices (along with help from Greg Livingston's solo)!

Stewart Moser sent his song "Same Wavelength", a love song about finally finding the right person. With great chords and melody, Stewart's story was developed nicely. Suggestions included considering some rephrasing of the second half of the chorus but all in all, very good work - thanks, Stewart!

GrAmy provided a spoken-word chapter "Journey" for their upcoming play about mythological characters. Everyone especially liked Amy's vocals (singing and spoken word) and while this submittal was about seven minutes long, it filled in a number of blank spots between previous songs we've heard - thanks, y'all!

Joe Strouse sent “Wind In The Trees”, his #10 FAWM song about a long-time friend’s recent decline due to dementia and depression. There were many suggestions to make it more poignant, which included changing the point of view from first to second person.

Mitch Lobrovich provided his song “Coming Home”, a short song accompanying a video relating to the efforts to save a sea turtle and it finally being released into its habitat. This fun song was well written in its simplicity and aided the video quite well. Comments included a few minor lyrical possibilities. Cool work, Mitch - thanks!

Temple’s very own Mike Couch sent in “Away From Me”, a jazzy song about the singer doing his best not to lose the woman he loves. With great internal rhymes, super production and feeling, the group liked the vibe of this song and only a very few lyrical comments were offered. Nice work again, Mike!

Kevin Mallory provided his thrash metal/gothic song, “Sun Shadow” in which the singer described efforts to get away from the craziness in life. Including great prosody, Kevin’s choruses were stellar and the listeners provided several excellent suggestions to make them even stronger. Great work, Kevin!

Mary Dawson sent in her previously-recorded song “The First Step To Freedom” - a 1990s-sounding gospel—based song about the first step in AA. Jessy Dixon sang this song beautifully and the choir really brought this song about acceptance together quite well. Comments were few and we really enjoyed this one - thanks, Mary!

Chris Meyer provided his song “Leftovers”, one of his FAWM songs, describing the ennui which occurs in marriages over a long time. Descriptions were strong and the group provided a few suggestions to help tie in Chris’ final verse. Really good work for a guy who wrote and recorded this song in two hours! Thanks, Chris!

Joe talked a bit about creating the chorus first when working on a new song and how the verses can be developed later to provide support for the chorus. In addition, he challenged everyone to write a song, chorus-first, for the March session.

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

As always, we’re looking for Zoom-knowledgeable maven to run the audio and visual portions for the DFW and Salado meetings. If you’re interested, please contact Mary Dawson at [Mary@MaryDawson.com](mailto:Mary@MaryDawson.com).

We hope to see you on Monday, March 18th, 2024 or sooner!