

Songsmith – Austin
August Critique Session
August 21, 2023

The Songsmith – Austin June Critique Session was held via Zoom from 7:08 to 9:23 pm on August 21, 2023. We had 11 Zoom attendees and heard nine great songs in various stages of creation. Of course, the session was expertly moderated by Wheaton, IL's very own Chris Meyer. The optional songwriting challenge was to use at least three of five elements of lyric structure for helping a song gain momentum.

GrAmy (Greg Livingston/Amy Guentzel) started the session with a spoken word (and cool acoustic guitar part of their play, along with "Light On The Moon", a stand-alone love song. Greg said that the play was complete and that they had some re-writing to do. The group enjoyed the work and gave great feedback concerning the song. Thanks!

John Stearle brought an older song (sung by Noelle Link) entitled "Burning Love", a plea from a scorned lover. This song was very well written and performed - the listeners made several suggestions for making the lyrics stronger, but overall, very good work - thanks, John!

Alex Gax provided his song "Tisha B'av" (and an alternative version) which beautifully described mourning for tragedy, based on a traditional Jewish observance. Several comments were offered, including some lyrical changes to make the song's impact even stronger. Very thoughtful work, Alex - thanks!

Michael Wesley Stinson sent in his heartfelt song "You're Growing Wings To Fly" which described the singer's relationship with his son and gentle encouragement. There were several structure questions, as well as a few lyrical suggestions and Micheal successfully met this month's challenge. Super work, Michael!

Scott Joffe sent in his song "Broken Arm", which described the singer's self-frustration about internal struggles and how others might have more understanding if the singer had a broken arm. Wow. Great writing which several listeners provided a few comments to bring out the emotion even more. Challenge also met! Outstanding, Scott- thanks!

Mitch Lobrovich provided his song "Dirty Secrets" which described (from a female perspective) evil doings going on in her line of work. Suggestions were mostly lyrical in order to clarify a few point of this story. Overall, the tenor and mood were very effective in painting the creep factor. Another challenge met! Great work, Mitch!

Stewart Moser sent his song “We Found Each Other” - a very sweet love song about the long journey to finding the right one. There were very few lyrical suggestions, as the group really enjoyed this work from Stewart. One suggestion included modifying the chorus a bit. And he met the challenge! Regardless, nice work!

Joe Strouse sent in a co-write with Brent Allen entitled “Unhappy Hour”, describing the goings-on from the eyes/mind of a bartender. While meeting the challenge, great lyrical suggestions were offered to provide story focus and continuity.

Mary Dawson emailed her beautifully-produced song “Broken”, describing how people should accept imperfections and how God embraces imperfect people. There were several questions concerning the lyrics and bridge and a few minor lyrical suggestions were offered. Beautiful work, Mary!

Finally, Joe challenged everyone to create a song for next month that follows the form of a movie - specifically, a song that unfolds as the movie does - in less than 4 minutes. Among the more difficult format would be such as “Pulp Fiction”, “Momento”, “The Godfather 1, 2, and 3” and others, while a simpler story-telling format like “Big”, “Animal House”, and “Barbie” (quite a discussion about that one). Let’s see who can do it!

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 and Salado meetings. If you’re interested, please contact Mary Dawson at Mary@MaryDawson.com.

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