

Songsmith – Austin Monthly Critique Session
Monday, December 21, 2020

The Songsmith – Austin Monthly Critique Session was held via Zoom (moderated by the most excellent Aaron Clift) from 7:10 pm to 10:04 pm. We had 13 Zoom attendees and heard 12 excellent works in progress. Due to the pandemic, our Thirteenth Ever Annual Holiday Pot Luck Snack and Critique Session (TEAHPLSACS) was held remotely (yes, full compliance with distance management by each attendee bringing their own snack at home).

Highland Village's very own Bill Basinski started the session with an a cappella version of his song "Trickle Down", describing the singer's frustration with the 1980s trickle down theory relating to life. Bill's descriptions were vivid and comments included some possible lyric changes as well as possibly including a bridge. Great work, Bill!

Michael Wesley Stinson continued the session with his newest song entitled "Alone", which described the singer's lengthy road in life. Michael included wonderful images and a Tom Petty-inspired chorus. The listeners offered a few lyric and musical comments for making this well-written song even stronger. Thanks, Michael!

John Stearle teamed up with Mike Dooley in writing and (making another) video for their song "Uncle Nasty". Mike's instrumentation and John's vocals, video, and lyrics were very well done. The group (as always) enjoyed this and a few potential lyric changes were offered. Nice collaboration, Mike and John!

Mike Dooley sent in his song "Don't Give Up", an upbeat tune reminiscent of 60s/70s pop. Mike's lyrics were a little puzzling, and of course, there were numerous questions from the listeners, followed by a wealth of potential changes to solidify the song even further. Very nice start, Mike!

Joe Strouse sent his song "Singing the Title and Other Songwriting Tips", generally describing songwriting basics in verse chorus bridge form. Suggestions were generous and included some minor lyric and production changes.

Stewart Moser sent Aaron his song, "A-A-Ah" – a peppy, upbeat description of the singer's receiving unwanted direction from someone else – especially when contemplating an action. Stewart's work was well done and comments included eliminating a couple of verses. Regardless, outstanding work, Stewart!

Marble Falls musician Greg Livingston sent his song "Angel's Wings", a wonderfully guitar-oriented song about the singer's reassurances of his character to a loved one. Great descriptions in this song - suggestions included possibilities for making the song more rhythmic and the chorus more compact. Super, Greg!

Dallas' very own Rick Ritz submitted his upbeat song "Turn This World Around", which described the singer's frustration (and optimistic outlook) relating to Covid-19 and

staying home. There were a number of spot-on (and minor) changes offered by the listeners that could make this song even stronger – thanks, Rick!

David Stewart brought a first-draft version of his song “Oscar the Grouch”, which vividly described what we all have generally been doing since the pandemic started. David’s great humor, rhymes, and universal references which worked well. Comments were many (and minor) but gave several possible re-write possibilities. What a start, David!

Scott Joffe provided a guitar vocal demo of his song “Closer to the Sky”, which nicely described the relief of a road trip by leaving central Texas for the Rocky Mountains. The attendees really liked this song and offered a number of possible lyric clarifications for this well-crafted song. You’re on a roll, Scott!

Songsmith Founder Mary Dawson sent her song “Only Those” a 2000s co-write with Bruce Greer. Mary recently lost her wonderful husband Dave to Covid-19, and this song was inspired by Jupiter/Saturn in our southwest sky and the firm belief in faith. The song’s choruses were stellar (!) and comments were minor. We’re all with you, Mary!

Aaron Clift closed out the session with a two-line song entitled “The Color of Flight”. This song was quite reminiscent of Phillip Glass, Steve Reich, and King Crimson. Regardless of the lyric repetition, Aaron’s slight changes for each chorus kept the song moving forward and interesting. A few minor lyric suggestions - great work, Aaron!

If you’ve read this far, January’s optional songwriting challenge is to bring a song where the chorus was written first...

If you’d like to be included next month, please contact Tara Heflin (tara.incognito@gmail.com) and send her your lyrics (Word format, please) and if you’d prefer that we hear a recording, please also send an mp3 of your song before 4 pm (Central time) on Monday, January 18th.

See you on Monday, January 18, 2021!