

Songsmith – Austin  
January Critique Session  
January 15, 2024

The year's first Songsmith – Austin Critique Session was held via Zoom from 7:04 to 8:29 pm on January 15, 2024, moderated by the always-prepared host (even in the -26 degree Wheaton, IL weather), Christopher Meyer. We had 10 Zoom attendees and heard seven cool songs in various stages of creation. Joe also talked about the use of alliteration in songwriting and the upcoming annual FAWM songwriting challenge (see below).

Joe Strouse started the session with a draft of his song “Silly Monkey”, a title from last month's optional title-writing challenge. This song centered on a child's sock monkey and comments included some lyric changes to clarify the characters.

Bill Joyce sent a studio version of his song “Silent Wrath”, rewritten and produced since January 2023. This song is part of an EP about revenge that Bill has been working on. The production was outstanding (great vocals and music) and the listeners really appreciated what Bill had accomplished. Great, Bill - thanks!

Bill Basinski's song “Reality Isn't Quite Real” was played next. This song was a diverse series of five highly-rhymed (and descriptive) verses in the form of a protest song. Suggestions were many, including the possibility of having five new songs (!) To work on. Very good start, Wile Bill - thanks!

Stewart Moser sent his song “Trapped Like A Rat In A Maze”, an upbeat song about the singer facing being caught in a trap. This was one of Stewart's titles from last month and had a great hooky chorus and great chords. Comments were few but included call-and-response possibilities in the chorus. Great work, Stewart!

Michael Wesley Stinson provided his song “Still Need To Hold You”, a very sweet relationship song about the singer's and spouse's life journey. There were several suggestions from the attendees about some lyrical possibilities (including slight changes to the title), but regardless, very cool work, Michael - thanks!

Newcomer Mike Couch (from Temple, TX) provided his R&B/Country ode to Texas entitled “Twilight In Texas” which was very descriptive and nicely produced. The group liked this song and only a very few structural and comments were offered. Nic work, Mike - and welcome! Great to have you with us!

Mary Dawson sent in her previously-recorded song “Let It Begin With Me” - a 1990s-sounding gospel-based song about the Fourth Step in AA. Mary's request was for the group to decide on whether this song could stand alone, which provided for a good discussion among the listeners. Yes. Yes it can with some fixes. Thanks, Mary!

Joe talked a bit about alliteration - the wonderfully sneaky way of boosting a mood/ injecting a pulse for any song and provided several examples, including CSNY's "Helplessly Hoping", Warren Jevon's "Werewolves Of London", the Beatles "Mean Mister Mustard", and from tonight's session Mike Couch's "Twilight In Texas", and Bill Basinski's "Reality Isn't Quite Real".

Finally, Joe offered the annual Songsmith-FAWM songwriting challenge of creating 14 songs in 28 days, using a private Facebook group. Since **F**ebruary is **A**lbum **W**riting **M**onth, (see [FAWM.org](http://FAWM.org)), Songsmith members have been writing and posting these songs (and helping with constructive comments) since at least 2018. Please let Joe know if you'd like to be part of this year's challenge.

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, February 19th, 2024 or sooner!