

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

The Songsmith – Austin Monthly Critique Session was held in the conference room of Congregation Beth Israel on Monday, January 20, 2020 from 7:04 to 9:14 pm. We had seven attendees and heard seven excellent wonderful works in progress.

We started the meeting with a brief discussion about determining if it is a song or poetry, using Elvis Costello's *Tokyo Storm Warning* as an example.

Greg Livingston started the session by playing a recording of his song "Hillbilly Blues", a great effort describing challenges using traditional verses and strong, unpredictable choruses. The group liked the distinct separation between the chorus and verses and gave great feedback for making the lyrics a bit tighter. Super, Greg!

Stewart Moser played his guitar and sang "Brazen Calumny", a lament about the politics in the United States. This song was well-written and the chorus was quite memorable. Suggestions from the listeners included relocating the title within the chorus so it would be even stronger. Nice work, Stewart!

Michael Stinson played guitar and sang his song "Ain't Love a Crazy Thing", which described how love has positively impacted the singer's life. This song had nicely concise lyrics which evoked great images. Comments were lyric-based and included suggestions for making the great chorus even stronger. You're on a roll, Michael!

John Stearle brought a recording of a song he did with Greg Livingston several years ago, entitled "Ice Cream", which had great descriptions and, of course, connected ice cream to love. The group liked the idea and offered some basic structural changes regarding the choruses and a bit of repetition. Delicious, John – thanks!

Joh Evans brought a Christian praise tune, "Don't Run Away", which was a conversation with God about faith. John's lyrics were done quite well and the listeners offered several ideas for making the call and response portions (between the singers and the congregation) even stronger. Definitely want to hear this one being performed, John – thanks!

Scott Joffe played guitar and sang his newest creation "Something", a song about new love and the careful steps we take before diving in. As always, Scott's chorus was wonderfully crafted and definitely stood out, making the title shine. Comments included some minor lyric changes but all told, another great work. Thanks, Scott!

Joe Strouse brought a recording of his most recent tune, "A Little More Time", a lament about being wrong and internalizing how to go about repairing a relationship "dust-up" (thanks, Scott!). Comments included some very small lyric changes in the verses.

If you'd like to join in on the annual FAWM (February is Album Writing Month), otherwise known as slogging through and creating 14 songs in 29 days, please let Joe know at [Strousongs@gmail.com](mailto:Strousongs@gmail.com).

And as always, the Songsmith - Austin monthly critique session meets on the third Monday of each month in the most excellent and spacious conference room at Congregation Beth Israel, 3901 Shoal Creek Blvd, Austin, TX 78756. It's located on Shoal Creek Blvd, just north of 38th

Street (near Central Market, Seton Hospital, etc...), and just west of Lamar. Our next session is Monday, February 17th. We hope you can join us!