Songsmith – Austin
November 16, 2026 Critique Session

The Songsmith – Austin Critique Session was held via Zoom from 7:04 to 9:07 pm on Monday, November 16, 2026, moderated by the fantastic MBA-in-training, Christopher Meyer. We had eleven attendees and heard nine wonderful songs in various stages of creation.

Joe began the meeting with the sad news that fellow songwriter and dear friend (of us all) Polk Shelton had died recently. While we reminisced a bit, details for his memorial service were pending.

Stewart Moser started the evening critique with his song "The Big Lonely", a deceptively simple song about being alone when a loved one is away. This song had a nice twist and the group really enjoyed the story, melody, chords, and, of course, the overall prosody. Great work, Stewart!

Joe Strouse sent his song "More Turkey!", a Thanksgiving ditty about the excesses we take for granted and enjoy annually. This song was in response to a previous comment by Mary Dawson about a dearth of Thanksgiving songs.

GrAmy provided their song "Angel's Wings", a wonderfully-sung blues-style song which described forces of good versus evil temptations in life. Everyone enjoyed the vocals and guitar work, which made this song soar. There were a few minor lyric and tempo suggestions, but overall, cool work!

John Stearle sent in his Suno-assisted AI Thanksgiving song "Turds Dunkin' After Turdunken", in which the title tells it all. This raucous country rocker was understandably very descriptive (as only John can do). With a few minor lyric comments, the group laughed heartily. Thanks, John!

Phil Fielder sent "Face To The Sun", a Suno-assisted AI country song about driving distances and enjoying the open road. There were several lyrical possibilities mentioned (including making the title stronger through strategic repetition). Sounds great, Phil - thank you!

Mitch Lobrovich sent a Suno-AI-assisted rewrite of his Thanksgiving song “Friends”. It was clearly evident that Mitch really worked on this one as it was skillfully done and the lyrics were spot on. Several attendees provided lyrical suggestions to help make it stronger. Outstanding work, Mitch!

Long-absent Richard Paul Thomas provided a re-write of his excellently-produced duet “When She Cried”, beautifully sung by Richard and the incredible Sarah Pierce. This song described a drive with a hitchhiker to New Orleans. The group had several story-related questions. Welcome back, Richard - thanks!

Kevin Mallory provided “Moonshine”, a song with a metaphor about noticing changes in one’s life. The melodic change between the verses and choruses was great, especially with the call and response in the chorus. Very effective and listeners had several interpretations and comments. Super work, Kevin - thanks!

Bill Basinski sent his song “Shaggy Dad - Covid Hair”, which borrowed a Lightnin’ Hopkins song (“Shaggy Dad”), revised with new lyrics to describe how it was to survive Covid a few years ago. Bill did a good job staying with the original and suggestions for lyric changes were few. Thanks, Bill!

Finally we got to watch Phil Fielder’s AI-assisted video (and song) “The Littlest Christmas Tree”, which was produce in the DFW area.

Joe mentioned Kevin Mallory’s challenge for the DFW Songsmith meeting (11/23) was to create a song entitled “For The Birds”. Are you up for it? He also got on his soapbox reminding songwriters to become diligent in manipulating AI-assisted song programs to create a final product as intended.

Finally, the *nineteenth-ever-annual-holiday pot-luck snack-and-critique session* (NEAHPLACS) will take place on Monday, December 14th - bring any song and your favorite seasonal snack(s).

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, spam, or other obligations.

As always, we're looking for Zoom-knowledgeable persons to moderate the DFW and Salado meetings. If you're interested, please contact Mary Dawson at Mary@MaryDawson.com.

We hope to see you on Monday, December 14, 2026 or sooner!