

Songsmith – Austin
April Critique Session
April 15, 2024

The Songsmith – Austin Critique Session was held via Zoom from 7:01 to 8:55 pm on Monday, April 15, 2024, moderated by the really wonderful Christopher Meyer. We had nine Zoom attendees and heard eight great songs in various stages of creation. Joe also talked album hit songs and Chris showed us a few AI-generated songs through an interesting on-line service (see below).

Bill Basinski started the session with his 2013 hit “Sputterbutt”, and ode to a homemade outhouse on his deer-hunting property, located in a very rural part of Texas. Bill used an interesting rhyme scheme and kept the listener’s attention with unusual rhymes. Comments included a potential minor change to the chorus. Thanks, Bill!

Joe Strouse sent his refrain-style song “Being There” a re-write of his 1985 song about an older couple trying to recall details concerning a long-ago (and frigid) vacation in Maine. Suggestions included several changes to the bridge.

Scott Joffe provided “Love Me Or I’ll Die”, a simple and vulnerable song about the singer taking a chance to be the first one in a budding relationship to profess love. Wonderfully picked on guitar, the listeners really liked this one. Possible improvements included a slight modification to the verse structure. Great work (as always), Scott!

Mary Dawson provided “Fortress Of My Life”, a co-write with Bruce Greer that generally went unnoticed until The Gary Bonner Singers included it in their album. This spiritual song really came to life with great production (including an immense orchestral and choir addition). Everyone was awed - thanks, Mary!

Chris Meyer played an mp3 of his 2024 FAWM song “Silence”, which he wrote in 47 minutes. This beautiful song described the pain of neglect and the chorus melody was Art Garfunkel perfect - wow! Comments included possibly shortening the bridge to keep it simple and the length under three and one half minutes. Outstanding work, Chris!

Stewart Moser kept the momentum going with his song “Stubbed” a rocking tune about the singer stubbing a toe on furniture and the ensuing torture. Everyone enjoyed (and commiserated with) this ditty, filled with great chords. There was agreement that this song didn’t need a bridge because the flow was excellent. Thanks, Stewart!

John Stearle provided a quasi-love song entitled “Shut The Fuck Up”, in which the singer is trying to express love for a traveling companion but can’t get a word in edge-wise. Of course, the saving grace is the love-interest’s response at the end of the song. The group enjoyed this tune and provided minor lyrical suggestions. Thanks, John!

GrAmy sent “Stuck In Lovestruckville”, another addition to their upcoming epic play/movie about interplay between mythological characters. This song included the characters Leonis, Sadal, and Adaka with each character holding their own during verbal jousting. Comments were few and the listeners enjoyed it. Thanks, y’all!

Joe talked a bit about the history of albums being the basis for promoting hit songs and filler songs (with some exceptions). He also talked specifically about the successful elements in a hit song, including the song being memorable and singable.

Finally, Chris provided a link to Suno AI and gave a couple of demonstrations of different style songs successfully generated by this program - one of which was a metal song using Bill Basinski’s title “Sputterbutt”. While the AI results were less than stellar, the results were, in fact, very impressive and provided what could be an interesting tool for a songwriter trying to get musical/lyrical ideas.

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, 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.

We hope to see (and not tax) you on Monday, May 20th, 2024 or sooner!