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# Mark Altrogge and Steve & Vikki Cook

## **PRACTICING AND PLANNING CREATIVITY**

### **I. Inspiration, Yes! Now What?**

- A. Cultivating the creative spark
- B. Songwriters we need to develop skills
  - 1. In music, especially melody
  - 2. In language, because words used rightly are powerful
  - 3. In editing, because songwriting is mostly about rewriting
- C. Put aside time to practice

### **II. Outline Your Song**

- A. Clear song vision
  - 1. State what your Chorus is about in ONE SENTENCE
  - 2. Next, state what Verse 1 will be about. It should be a topic tied to, and pointing to the Chorus.
  - 3. Do likewise for Verse 2...a different slant than Verse 1, but still pointing to the Chorus
  - 4. Start writing the actual lyrics

### **III. Make Sure You Have Enough Ideas**

- A. Try Object Writing
  - 1. Gets the creative juices pumping
  - 2. The more you do it, the better, and faster you get at coming up with unique concepts
  - 3. GROUP OBJECT WRITING\*
- B. Build a Song Worksheet
  - 1. Start with Object Writing to come up with a focused and “little used” concept for a song
  - 2. Choose at least 10 of your best words from your Object Writing
  - 3. It’s Thesaurus time! Find at least 10 new words for each word on your “best words” list.

4. Now, it's rhyme time! Get out your Rhyming Dictionary and find as many rhyming words as possible for all your favorite, "most likely to use in this song" words on your worksheet.
5. Now you have a worksheet filled with new words that apply directly to your song concept
6. BUILDING A WORKSHEET AS A CLASS\*

C. Metaphors-the mainstay of good lyric writing, really all creative writing.

*A metaphor, in it's most basic form, is a collision of ideas that don't belong together.*

1. There are 3 different types of metaphors
  - a. Expressed Identity metaphors between two nouns
    - i. X is Y (Hope is Light)
    - ii. The Y of X (The Light of Hope)
    - iii. X's Y (Hope's Light)
  - b. Qualifying Metaphors
    - i. Adjectives qualifying nouns (lazy moon)
    - ii. Adverbs qualifying verbs (dance wildly)
  - c. Verbal Metaphors
 

Formed by a conflict between the verb and it's subject and/or object (clouds sail, frost gobbles down Summer)
2. CLASS EXERCISE TO FIND NEW EXPRESED IDENTITY METAPHORS\*

#### IV. Memorable Melodies

- A. A few things to keep in mind:
  1. The importance of repetition
    - a. Makes a song easier to remember
    - b. Gives cohesiveness and a unifying quality to a song

2. The importance of contrast
  - a. Makes the different sections of a song distinctive and interesting
  - b. Adds emotional impact
- B. Make your melodies more interesting. Start with a short melodic phrase, using the words, "Praise the Lord, for His mercy lasts forever."
  1. Try repeating the same rhythms, but change the pitches
  2. Try holding out different notes in the phrase...consider the impact of emphasizing different words.
  3. Try repeating an important word in the phrase
  4. Try giving one word multiple notes
  5. Try a melodic phrase that starts low and ascends
  6. Try a melodic phrase that starts high and descends
  7. Try your melody in a different meter
  8. Try your melody backwards
  9. Try different chords under the same melody
- C. Use nonsense lyrics to evaluate your melody
- D. Ask yourself these questions:
  1. Are there extra notes "crammed in" to make the lyric "fit"?
  2. Does it sound as though notes, or syllables, are missing?
  3. Is this the strongest melody you could have written, regardless of the lyrics
  4. Does your melody incorporate fresh, catchy rhythms?
  5. Does your melody sound as if it is following predictable chord changes, or do the chord changes support a catchy, memorable melody?
  6. Does your melody evoke an emotion all by itself?
  - 7.
- E. Many people will acquire the skills to become a good songwriter. What sets apart the good from the great...*uniqueness* of the songwriting.
  1. Find a new way to say an "old truth".
  2. Rarely will it be the first melody, or the first lyric that comes to your mind that will be the best you can write. Keep writing, and rewriting...

## V. Q & A

## VI. Recommended Resources

- A. Jason Blume, *6 Steps To Songwriting Success*, (New York, New York, Billboard Books 2004)
- B. Pat Pattison, *Writing Better Lyrics* (Cincinnati, Ohio, Writers Digest Books)
- C. Sheila Davis, *The Craft of Lyric Writing* (Cincinnati, Ohio: Writer's Digest Books, First edition, 1985)
- D. Sheila Davis, *The Songwriters Idea Book* (Cincinnati, Ohio: Writer's Digest Books, First edition, 1992)
- E. Joel Hirschhorn, *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Songwriting* (Indianapolis, IN: Alpha Books, 2001)
- F. Jimmy Webb, *Tunesmith* (New York, New York: Hyperion, 1998)
- G. [www.BrianDoerksen.com](http://www.BrianDoerksen.com)
- H. Paul Baloche, Jimmy and Carol Owens, *God Songs* (Lindale, Texas: Leadworship.com, First edition, 2004)