

CreativeSongwriter.com

Nurture Your Art and Master Your Craft with Alex Forbes, "The Song Coach"



WRITE SONGS THE MUSIC INDUSTRY WANTS TO HEAR!



Sure, "art for art's sake" is cool... but what if you're pursuing a career as a songwriter? Here are some ways you can tailor your songs to suit the requirements of music business professionals.

Many of us bemoan the state of commercial music today, but what are you doing to improve things in your own microcosmic corner of the universe? Are you working to create the next wave of great material — songs that have a lifespan of more than a few weeks or months? How can you use your talents to actually make a powerful contribution... and make a living while you're at it?

The first step is to take a good look inside and explore what you as a unique individual have to say, lyrically and musically. What do you think about, believe in, stand for? What makes you tick? These precious truths that bubble up from the soul provide the driving force behind great songwriting. These sparks of inspiration, these "aha! moments," are what listeners crave when they play a song. They're also what People Behind Desks are desperate to find. Do you have the courage to lay bare your personal truth in public? I firmly believe that's what it takes to achieve success with your songs.

The cynical among us will say, "no, you just need the right equipment, a catchy hook and a whole lot of money behind you." Sure, those things help, but if you're trying to break into the business your song has to simultaneously grab people by the guts, tickle their ears, and slam them over the head like a 2-by-4. Strive to write songs that take risks, tap into the universal via the personal, and motivate people to laugh, cry, feel, dance or take action.

Make an effort to innovate, not imitate what's already out there. In other words, write your passion. Songs miraculously translate to listeners the exact emotion you felt while you were writing them. Do your best to work that magic!

Another quality that professionals look for in a song is strong dynamic flow. Skillful use of the many conventions of songwriting can manipulate listeners in the most enjoyable way. Don't be afraid to push those emotional buttons! Here are some ways to go about it:

- **Suck listeners in with lyrical, melodic and chordal tension.**
- **Create a question in their minds: how will this turn out in the end?**
- **Throw their bodies off balance with chords or melodies that are unexpected or quirky.**
- **Take a strong point of view that's boldly provocative.**
- **Paint a vivid picture in the mind's eye.**
- **Set a palpable mood.**
- **Construct an entire sonic and/or lyrical environment.**

Once you have piqued people's interest, crank up their involvement using all the techniques in your lyrical toolbox,

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i.e. rhyme, meter, imagery, metaphor, alliteration... you name it. Avoid clichés like the plague, or turn them on their heads somehow. Experiment until you find the melody lines that best show off your lyrics, and vice versa. Salt your song with enough repetition to make it memorable, but not so much that it becomes predictable. Use chord progressions that are fresh, stimulating the ear rather than lulling it into complacency.

When it comes time for the ultimate payoff, your Hook, don't settle! This is your Money Shot, and most music biz pros will hit the "eject" button if they don't hear a strong hook in one listen. One listen! Here are a few ways to enhance your hook:

- **Construct your song so that all roads, lyrically and melodically, lead to your hook.**
- **"Don't bore us, get to the chorus!"**
- **More hooks is merrier! Instrumental riffs, backups, rhythmical chord movement, and verse melodies can provide secondary hooks.**
- **Fear not repetition (up to a point, of course).**
- **Throw in memorable "monkey wrench" words that stand out.**

- **Make sure the world can sing along.**
- **Play with the language: use slang, twists of phrase, even invent a new word!**

Finally, People Behind Desks really appreciate it if you know your marketplace. Don't bring them a country ballad when their artist is a heavy metal guitar-shredder. And if you're the performer, make sure you have at least 3 crowd-pleasing, radio-ready songs in hand. Make a detailed study of the hits in your chosen genres, and incorporate those lessons into your work. The Internet has made it incredibly easy to educate yourself about what's selling these days, so there's no excuse for ignorance.

Look at the world for a moment from the perspective of a music industry pro: They'll respond positively if they think your song will save their job. By bringing them dynamic, single-worthy, heartfelt material you'll be well on your way to doing just that, and creating a career for yourself as well. Happy songwriting!

Hit songwriter Alex Forbes helps aspiring songwriters find their muse. To unleash the full potential of your creativity through the powerful medium of song, and receive other free articles, visit www.CreativeSongwriter.com

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