The Gift of Songwriting

Songwriting Workshop

Series 1, Sessions 4-5

By Andy Park

At its best moments, songwriting is a great joy, and it's **like receiving a gift**. A story to illustrate that is **Paul McCartney's song, *Yesterday*.** Songwriting is also a **craft requiring hard work.** This will be illustrated later in this series.

This song came to him in a dream
McCartney explained in 1980: "I woke up with a lovely tune in my head. I thought, 'That's great, I wonder what that is?' I liked the melody a lot but because I'd dreamed it I couldn't believe I'd written it. I thought, 'No, I've never written like this before.'"

Songwriters from all kinds of backgrounds and philosophies sometimes recognize they are a **"recipient" of a song**:

Carole King tells the story behind the song, **"You've Got a Friend:"**

"That song was as close to **pure inspiration** as I've ever experienced. The song wrote itself. It was written by something outside of myself through me… It happens from time to time in part. That song is one of the examples of that process where it was **almost completely written by inspiration** and very little if any perspiration."

As in many songwriting stories, **the song *Yesterday* came to Paul in stages**. In the magical dream, only the melody of the song was given to him.

So, he wrote some **temporary lyrics** to help him remember the song. The first phrase of that temporary lyric was: "scrambled eggs." This **process of re-writing is common to all serious songwriters.**

Several months after receiving the melody in a dream, during a 180-mile drive through Portugal, Paul "received" the lyrics.

John Lennon describes it: "Then, one morning, Paul woke up, and the song and the title were both there. Completed! I know it sounds like a fairy tale, but it is the plain truth."

Between the initial dream and the completion of the song, many months passed. The band worked hard at coming up with a suitable lyric. This is typical of the process of songwriting. There is **a lot of struggle, patience and work**.

Why is this such a great song? A brief look at each aspect of the song:

Story The song tells a **very sad story**, paints a **very moving picture** about a guy's reaction to his girl leaving him. Makes you want to weep!

Prosody Prosody is *the fitting together of melody and lyrics so that they naturally flow, and mutually enhance one another.*
"all my troubles seemed…." (melody soars up high, like he is crying out his pain. Mournful, almost wailing.
Same with 1st line of verse 2 and 1st line of bridge)

Rhyme The end of all 3 lines in verse 1 rhyme and same in verse 2

Melody 1st line – a large climb up to "far away." The big range is dramatic.
(contrast: a small range of melody can be boring)
(a **melodic motif** is a series of notes that repeats in 2 or more lines, making the song easier to remember)

The same note values are in each of the first two lines, but the melody goes up on the 1st line, down on the 2nd.

Chord progression An unusual and very beautiful chord progression using the 3-major chord (E)

Yesterday
C Esus/B E Am G F
Yesterday, All my troubles seemed so far away,
G C
Now it looks as though they're here to stay,
G/B Am D F C
Oh, I believe in yesterday.

Song Form **AABA**