The Anatomy of a Song Review

Songwriting Workshop

Series 1, Sessions 14-16

By Andy Park

With special guest Travis Thuro

Song Review or the **Song Critique** is an important part of the songwriting process. We can't expect songs to come like "golden tablets from heaven" (though once in awhile it's almost like that). So, we need feedback from others to help us improve our songs.

These three videos illustrate the dynamics of one person giving feedback to another on their song. In this case, Andy and Travis have an established relationship of trust and appreciation, so there's more freedom to be blunt and joke around than in other situations.

Key points:

- This is the 4th chorus Travis has written for this song. He's still trying to find the right chorus. Illustrates the hard work that goes into writing.
- Andy has a high opinion of the verses - strong lyrics and melody and rhythmic groove and chord progression. Affirmation is important.
- Andy affirms the strong points of the song, including the **feeling** evoked by the song
- All **pre-publication input** is good input because you can learn from it.
- **A common pitfall -** there is often a discrepancy between what the writer is *trying to say* and what the audience *actually hears*. In a song review, these gaps in communication come to light. (In this case, the chorus was the weak link).
- **In video session 2, Travis accepted the critique of the chorus very well!** He said he knew the chorus was the weakest part of the song, and that he was going to get input from other people as well. GOOD!!! *Lack of receptivity* to hearing a critique of your song will kill the process. If you want to learn and grow, you have to be open-minded.

Relevant quotes from industry experts:

Bono was interviewed about songwriting, and said:

"Feelings are stronger than ideas or words in a song…You can have 1,000 ideas, but unless you capture an emotion, it's an essay… Music is the language of the spirit."

Jason Blume, successful songwriter and mentor to many other songwriters**:**

"It's been said that great songs are rarely written—they are rewritten. "Sometimes magic happens and we get a "gift"—a first draft of a song that truly needs no polishing. But more often, successful songwriters have to dig to find those gems." Lyric and melody writing are, to some degree, Skills you can acquire and improve through practice, repetition.

We can't know what is our "best" until we explore multiple possibilities. Don't hamper the initial rush of creativity or censor your instincts when the song starts coming through you.

But after that original burst, challenge yourself to rework every line of lyric until it is fresh, original, and exceptional, and every melodic phrase until it is both unique and memorable."