

Lyricism 101

Considerations to crafting lyrics

The only way to measure the quality of lyrics is how effectively they are able to communicate their message or point. In other words, what you write, speak & “spit” is judged by how well you are able to express your ideas and “make clear in someone else’s mind what is in yours”.

PREPARATION (CONSIDERATIONS)

“Tell them what YOU WANT to say in the way THEY NEED to hear it.”

Here are some strategies (or things to think about or consider) to help you more clearly and thus effectively express your ideas and ***“say what you WANT TO SAY in the way that your AUDIENCE NEEDS TO HEAR it.”****:

5W’s

“Have a line or two but not sure what to write next?”

Ask one of the 5W’s [Who? What? Where? When? Why? And yes, How?]

The answer will give you a related, logically progressing, next line/bar.

Example:

Examples/Listing

All lyrics are making an argument, proving a point and all good arguments need evidence.

Give an example – or list a number of different examples (usually 3 examples) – of what you’re trying to say.

The example(s) will show & prove exactly what your bars [argument] is “trying to say/prove”.

Example:

Opposites

Another easy way to generate a next line/bar is to write the opposite.

If you write about something being or happening in one way then next write about it being the opposite or the opposite happening.

The opposite will not only give you a next line but also very clearly show that what you’re saying is true, not just in that ONE WAY but in BOTH ways.

Example:

Description/Detail/Specificity

As is the case in ALL types of writing the use of descriptive, detailing words and language as well as being specific helps “paint a clearer, fuller picture” of what you’re trying to say.

Use adjectives and adverbs – as well as being specific – when writing.

The specificity and description will allow your audience to get a better look at or sense of what you're saying.

Example:

The Hook, Chorus or Refrain

Many really good songs (and yes, even poetry/spoken word) have a hook or chorus; a few lines (usually 4-8 bars in traditional lyric composition) that sum up the point, message, theme or topic of the piece... and it generally repeats throughout the piece.

Create a hook or chorus for your piece.

A hook, chorus or refrain will ensure that your audience know what the piece is about and thus allows them to better appreciate your writing/skill.

Example:

ACTIVITY (BRIEF)

"If you don't have a point, then what's the point?!"

If you are clear on what exactly you're writing about – and it falls within the FR guidelines - then do that. IF, however, you don't, here are some topics or themes you can write about:

- **If I Had Ten Million Pounds (And Didn't Have to Hustle Anymore), What Would I Do... and for Whom?...**
OR
I Know, I Wish, I Will...
- **A Letter Home/From Home**
OR
To My Younger (Self?) OR A Loved One
- **Freedom...**
- **Music**
OR
My Music...
- **Power...**

REFLECTION (MOVING FORWARD)

Once you've crafted the first draft of your piece you will need to do some – if not a lot of - editing. The editing process mainly involves improving (see Preparation... Writing Strategies, above).

Finally, rehearse your piece! REHEARSE, REHEARSE, REHEARSE!! The better you know your piece the better you will be able to deliver it.

DO REMEMBER

All lyrics, in one way or another, tell a story and all stories have a beginning, middle and end. Give your piece of writing a start and an ending. The two should be almost the same but different.

Write in the present tense. Things happening **right now** – and thus the audience feeling like they're an active participant in that moment with you -are far more interesting than things that have already happened (leaving your audience feeling like they're simple passive listeners)

SEEK OUT AND TAKE CRITICISM! If you take on the criticism it will ONLY MAKE YOUR PIECE BETTER for then you are truly able to ***“say what you WANT TO SAY in the way that your AUDIENCE NEEDS TO HEAR it.”***