

Songwriting

What makes a good song?

- Connects with the feelings of the listener
- Strong "hook" line - that people cannot help singing.
- Rhythm, energy - makes you move your body.
- Tells a story
- Has a twist that surprises/amuses.
- Simplicity.

How do you write a song?

There are lots of different ways to write songs, each person needs to find ways that suit them.

Some starting points.

Words/ideas

- coming out of how you are feeling now
- coming out of what you feel strongly about or what makes you angry, happy, worked up etc.
- coming out of what you see in the world around you.
- imagination/fantasy etc.

A "riff" - repeated snatch of music on guitar, keyboards drums, bass, a sample, or just in your head.

A chord sequence - a set of chords that hang together.

A tune - could start from choosing a particular scale or mode.

Developing a song

One of the key things that hooks us into music is the relationship between what we expect and what surprises us. A song that is all surprises would be just plain weird, but one that is all what we expect is boring. Repetition can build a sense of expectation which can then be broken. Words, rhythms and chords can all follow patterns which lead to expectation, which can then be broken and afterwards restored. Any song needs to find a balance between repetition and contrast. Dance music which needs longer structures often has gradual changes as well as sudden contrasts.

The classic pattern for a song is to have a *Verse* (usually the bit with the more complex words) and a *Chorus* (usually the more memorable, sing along bit). Jazz songs nearly always have a contrasting middle section often called the "*Middle 8*" because it was often 8 bars long. Other songs have *instrumental* sections and "*bridge*" sections taking you back to the verse or chorus. Returning to the main theme or riff at the end gives a sense of balance and completeness.

Like any "rules" - once they have been established you can have fun breaking them!

It is quite normal to have bits of a song that nearly write themselves and other bits that involve hours of wrestling to get right - don't despair keep going and then write another. *MB 29/10/2001 rev 28/06/2005*