



# STEVE SESKIN

## Songwriting Course Descriptions

### **Writing/Rewriting, There is a Difference -**

Writing can more easily come from that dreamy/stream of consciousness place. Rewriting involves considering what you've already written and in many ways is a lot more tedious. In this seminar we examine all types of rewriting. Are you rewriting because the content is not serving the moment in the song, or is the problem the tone of how you put forth your idea? We'll also look at how to know when a song is done and the wisdom of sticking to the task versus putting a song away for a while and giving it a rest. Many times I write more than I need just to give myself choices.

### **Intro to Lyric Writing: What elements make up the most potent and engaging lyrics? -**

In this workshop we take a look at lyrics that have that magical combination of imagery and emotion and how those two factors contribute greatly to drawing in the listener. I always say "show me, don't tell me." We need to paint pictures with our lyrics. We'll talk about some of the tools every songwriter needs to be a better lyric writer.

**Rhyming and Metaphor -** Rhyming is our best friend but it's also our worst enemy since it constricts us and makes it harder to say what we want to say in a song. We'll look at inventive ways to use rhyme that sound natural, not drawing too much attention to the rhyme and letting the listener concentrate on the content of the lyric. We'll also look at metaphor and figurative language and how they can deepen the emotional experience of a song.

**Point of View -** In this seminar we explore eight different perspectives to choose from when deciding how your characters can best tell their story. We will look into figuring out how to find the most powerful way to tell any given story. We'll talk about 1st, 2nd, 3rd person and various combinations as well. We will then look into more complex ways to use perspective to bring out the most emotion in all your lyrics. I believe this is one of the most important lessons on the road to writing great songs.

**Music Business -** In this course I try to give a songwriter's point of view on publishing deals, pitching songs, demoing songs, etc. I also spend some time defining how songwriters earn money, explaining mechanical license income, performance license income and the difference. I relate my experiences in Nashville and LA and try to give other writers a heads up on what to expect and what to look out for as they pursue a career in songwriting.

### **Inspiration: Where do songs come from? -**

This workshop explores ways to "jump start" your creativity with morning pages, object writing, etc. I will try to empower you to write about more than just your own life and to use emotional moments as catalysts to inspire you. We'll also delve into the power of fiction and examine what's really important in songs—emotional truth. My friend Allen Shamblin always says "A great writer never lets the facts get in the way of the truth."

**Collaboration -** I have written songs with over 150 different co-writers. Many people I've only written one song with. It doesn't always work. For some people it's not an option at all. In this workshop, I talk about the different aspects of co-writing; how to pick a co-writer that might be good for you, what to expect if you never tried it before, and the protocol involved in approaching someone about co-writing. I also cover how to make yourself and your co-writer feel comfortable so both of you can do your best work. Legal issues and royalty splits are also discussed in this workshop.

**Melody -** In focusing on melody writing, I teach from a place of writing melodies for lyrics. Prosody is the marriage of music and lyric. We explore ways to determine if the overall vibe of the music feels right, and look at specific parts of songs in terms of choosing an appropriate melody that milks the emotion that the writer would like the listener to feel from the lyric. I also talk about phrasing and accents. There is an important word in every sentence. We look at choosing accent places that stress the right syllables and help drive home your point. Music can actually change the meaning of a lyric when used to its fullest potential. We also discuss rhythm and range and how to use them effectively in songs.

**The Curse of the 2nd Verse -** The place where most writers seem to get stuck. We will discuss strategies that can make your 2nd verse even stronger than your first.

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