



The Songwriting Labyrinth: Practical Tools to Decode the Mysterious Craft

Mr Clive M Harrison

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A little over two years ago, as an adjunct to the tertiary songwriting lectures I deliver, I began writing a weekly blog for my students about my 40 year career as a songwriter/musician. Student response was unexpected, immediate and overwhelming: it was clear that the blogs addressed a type of learning and information not covered in the lectures and other music study undertaken at the college, and the students clamoured for more of this informal, anecdotal context. Looking back on a life as a songwriter, one makes a myriad of choices and decisions during the act of creating songs. My life and career in music is peppered liberally with wonderful, informative experiences, and as a result of past failures, victories, fortune and misfortune, I have compiled the cultural capital, or habitus, necessary to succeed. This book is not a quest for the formula for writing a hit song, for that would be nonsensical. It is an endeavour to observe and codify patterns of professional practice that have been recognised as successful by audiences and experts in the field, and to organise those observations into generalizable theories that may be applied so as to create more successful song outcomes. Once identified, such theories need to be explained in a manner clear enough for a reliable transfer of knowledge to occur, so that the individual songwriter has all the necessary tools to create their own, idiosyncratic expressions in song, not to pretend that some contrived notion of a perfect, repeatable song method exists. In order to answer the question, “How do creative songwriters do what they do when they do it”, I have attempted to;

- o Simplify: Cite, reference and cherry pick what’s important for knowledge transfer
- o Synthesise: ideas, approaches, perspectives and teaching approaches
- o Hypothesise: my own contributions, comments, evaluations and preferences
- o Integrate: the theory of Multiple Intelligences described by Gardner, implying multiple ways to learn
- o Provide: notated music examples as references of our (inadequate) Western musical symbol system, as well as tables, diagrams and visual images whenever possible.
- o Clarify: highlight and explain concisely, translate concepts into plain English
- o Contextualise: include one or more blog, anecdote or both in each small section

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