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Common Songwriter Mistakes



Ok you've finished your latest song, but you can tell something's just not working. You look at each element carefully, but as far as you can tell, the lyrics are fine, the melody doesn't show any obvious problems, and the chords are doing what chords are supposed to do.

Why is it so difficult to critique your music and find the weaknesses? The answer has to do with the way we write songs.

Most of the time, good songs come together quickly, the result of flashes of ideas all surfacing at the same time. Analyzing problems requires you to slow everything down, take everything apart, and judge each component on its own terms. It can feel very unnatural.

Here at **Backwoods Recording Studio** we have been helping songwriters analyze songs for years now, and I tend to see the same batch of problems arising time and time again. The following list of common songwriting mistakes we see all the time, errors that are among the most regularly occurring blunders in the music of developing songwriters. It can serve as a kind of checklist for you to diagnose problems in your songs.

1. Problem: There's no real difference between your verse and chorus lyrics.

Verse lyrics need to describe situations, people, and circumstances. Chorus lyrics need to describe emotions and reactions. So, if you start your song with intense emotional outpourings, you've got nowhere to go but to emote further in the chorus. That means your song winds up sounding like a 4-minute complain-a-thon. Balance your lyrics by saving strong emotions for the chorus.

2. Problem: Your chord progressions has no sense of harmonic goal.

Your chord progressions, even the complex ones, need to give a sense of direction, a sense that they're moving away from a tonic chord, and then back to it. Randomly picking chords out of thin air can make music sound confusing and boring.

3. Problem: Your melodies are all around the same 4 or 5 notes and lack a unique shape.

Chorus melodies need to sit higher in pitch than verse melodies. If you construct your verse and chorus melodies from the same set of 4 or 5 notes, it's too much of the same thing, and your melodies will sound boring.

4. Problem: Your song's instrumentation is uninteresting or dated.

Sometimes all a song needs is a Guitar or Piano played simply.

5. Problem: The form of your song is confusing or lacking.

An audience uses the structure of a song to help them make sense of your music. It's why verse-chorus-bridge songs are so common. If your music comes across as having been structured to the extent that it's hard to know where it's going next, listeners get bored. Repetition sometimes is not good!

6. Problem: Your newest song sounds like your previous one.

If you start your songs the same way, or create them all using the same instrument, they're all bound to have an annoying similarity about them. So, use different instruments, and definitely don't keep using the same songwriting formula.

7. Problem: Your song is missing a climactic moment.

We talk about moments often when we discuss melodic shape, but it can apply to any aspect of your music. And when it is all said and done, your song should have a moment that stands out as different from the others. It can happen just before the last chorus, during the last chorus, or any other spot that's usually in the last 1/3 of the song.

Note: Sometimes your vision of the song may not be the right one as far as production is concerned If you are wanting the song to get cut by a major artist!

Depends on the intent of the song use. Keep learning and writing!

Hope this helps!

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