

DEREK'S BLOG: WHAT DO YOU DO FOR FEEDBACK ON A NEW SONG YOU'RE WRITING?

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Heather Pahl wrote on February 27th, 2009 www.HeatherSong.com

Balance between practicality and receptivity. If you followed up on everyone's advice you'd never finish a song. Ask for criticism and you'll get it. I've been told many times and directly by the truly accomplished: opinions are like assholes — everyone's got one! Not to be disrespectful, and a little crass. But you must respect YOURSELF as well — your GIFT and INSPIRATION — so as not to eternally expose yourself to overwhelming and meaningless feedback. Just time lost.

People are different. Their hearts, brains and experiences are different. We process thought, imagery and emotions differently — and use language accordingly. Your song is SURELY not for everybody! Impossible. Your drive will tell you whether you have something to say. Then you must nurture the skills that take you to the core of things. After all, you probably still want to hit “universals” that have a chance at touching many. And maybe earning some food for your table?

I'm good with language and lean verbose. So I've had to practice for years at grabbing that kernel of thought. I like the song form for that reason. It's limited by nature and its focus has spared me from novel-writing. I'm grateful. I can learn to say great things succinctly. Thank God! There is hope . . .

For years I took songwriting classes and willingly “subjected” myself to mass-scrutiny. It was good. I learned much and was well-received. I'm a good writer. I did NOT begrudge the lessons and am better today for it. But I'm not young now, and I'm driven and prolific as ever. This is my life's greatest gift and I intend to make good. I'm at the top of my game just about now. I no longer run around asking for opinions. I'd certainly still reflect on serious comments from a respected mentor. I have “become one” with that Great Editor and am completely amazed at this LIVING PROCESS each time I work in my studio. I write/sing/produce my original material now — slowly, meticulously — and the rewrites and finessing come magically with the marriage of the music, etc. I literally never know in advance exactly how my production will evolve! It's exciting. And I certainly don't lack structure or creativity. I ooze it. Yet THE PROCESS is certainly beyond who I am and I am privileged to step beyond myself for this interaction. Years of study improve my natural expression and I am left with awe at this process. It is indeed mystical, and we cooperate. Of course, I speak for myself. And mine is a strong observation.

So be honest. Have you done your homework? Have you embraced your own arrogance just to comfort-zone? We used to call it GETTING YOUR ROCKS OFF in Los Angeles songwriting classes. Just how serious an artist are you? Do you want to hone your skills, or do you just like attention? Know yourself. YOU decide how far you want to go with this. At least in dedication. Then there's exposure. Then THE PUBLIC decides, I guess. I'm still workin' on that . . . ENJOY your GIFT, and GOOD LUCK!!!

Hi Heather -
Thanks for your comment on <http://sivers.org/songfeedback>
Very interesting discussion there. Not at all what I expected!
Derek Sivers <http://sivers.org>

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