**Some Thoughts on Songwriting**

By Ashley Sonlin

Songwriting is an intensely personal experience. There are as many ways to write a song as there are people. Sometimes a song just comes flowing out. Other times there is a song waiting to burst forth but the words are behind a wall and can’t be reached. When you are stuck, there are several techniques to use to get the words and music moving. Soul is where a song begins, and craft is where it comes to life.

Start with a title. Even if you feel uninspired, try to bring forth a little bit of the essence of that song in your head and figure out a title. It will give you something to work with, even if you change your mind about it later.

Think about the song’s structure. A common song structure is verse-chorus-verse-chorus-bridge-chorus. The verses will have different lyrics to the same melody. The chorus is the same throughout, and the lyrics usually contain the basic theme of the song. The bridge will be a break from the verse and the chorus and may offer a different emotional insight.

Now come the lyrics themselves. Work around your title. Brainstorm. Think of the feelings that the title evokes and come up with word play around that theme.

Experiment with different chord progressions and find something that fits the feel and rhythm of your lyrics. This is a time to be playful and let the music take you wherever it wants to go.

The craft of songwriting is hard to master. Following a formula is a good way to start out when you are stuck, even if you will want to move beyond the formula later.