

The Craft Of Writing A Country Song

How To Tell A Story With Words And Music
Module 1 Workbook

presented by: Steve Leslie



SONG ASSEMBLY
LEARN. CREATE. CONNECT.



Welcome

Module 1

How To Get The Most Out Of This Course

There are as many ways to take this course as there are ways to write a song. If you're the grazing type, feel free to skip around for the topics you are drawn to. We do suggest you eventually get around to all of them; there are gems waiting to be uncovered! If you are the A-Z type, starting at the beginning and working your way through to the end will be most satisfying.

Keeping the Module Workbooks close at hand while you watch the videos will help.

Each Workbook includes:

- Recap- Main Points are summarized.
- Assignment- Get the most out of this course by doing the work.
- Steve's Peeves- A repository of my own particular do's and don'ts.
- Dive Deeper- For those who are willing to risk getting in over their heads!
- Notes- A place to record, dabble, jot, and compile.

I reference song titles from time to time. It's a good idea to check these out on your favorite audio platform. There is no better learning method than critical listening.

Let's go have some fun!

Course Outline

Here's what to expect in part one of this course series:

Module 1 - Introduction

Welcome to the course! Steve talks about why he designed this course the way he did, and what you can expect to get out of it.

Module 2 - Limitation and Economy

The first principle underlying effective narrative development in songwriting is Limitation and Economy. What are some of these "self-imposed limitations" that make for good story-telling?

Module 3 - Expectation, Surprise, and Inevitability

The second principle underlying effective narrative development in songwriting is Expectation, Surprise, and Inevitability. Controlling these parameters can be very useful for focusing attention and sustaining interest.

Module 4 - Verisimilitude

The third principle underlying effective narrative development in songwriting is Verisimilitude. Our stories must seem true whether they're true or not, and probable within their own unique construct.

Module 5 - "Lonely Stuff" Performance for Analysis

Steve performs his song "Lonely Stuff" at world famous SonyTree Recording Studio in Nashville, Tennessee.

Module 6 - Working From a Title

Steve will discuss the benefits of working from a title, being an actor while you write, and the power of conjunctions.

Module 7 - Tacking Down the Lyric

A deep-dive into the craft of narrative writing with topics that include, Tacking Down the Lyric, Setting the Hook to Music, Title Placement, and Beginning With The End in Mind.

Module 8 - Harmony and Musical Elements

Steve discusses how he comes up with the chord changes for his songs, points to consider when writing a melody, and the importance of Writing the Record.

Module 9 - Ambiguity

Ambiguous titles can mean more than one thing depending on the context in which they're used. "Tacking down" these alternate meanings first can be a great (and economical) way to develop your song's narrative.

Module 10 - Details You Can Trust

"Don't let the Truth get in the way of a good song!" so use details the listener can trust whether they're true or not! Also, starting with Place or Action can jump-start your narrative, and make for a memorable first line.

Module 11 - Filling in the Empty Space

Set up an expectation and allow the listener to "fill in the empty space" thereby accessing their imagination. Now it's their story not just yours. "One-Corner Style Painting" is used as a visual representation of this principle.

Module 12 - Part 1 Recap

A recap of narrative principles introduced in Modules #1-11.

About Steve

Steve is a Founding Member and the Senior Faculty Director of Song Assembly. He has had a professional songwriting career spanning more than twenty-five years with songs recorded by Kenny Rogers, Mark Chesnutt, George Strait, Darryl Worley, Rhonda Vincent, Neal McCoy, Ricky Skaggs, Darius Rucker, and more.

A multiple BMI Award Winner, in 2004 Steve received a Grammy Certificate for the title cut to Ricky Skaggs' Best Bluegrass Album of the Year Brand New Strings.

Steve has released two CDs; In The Middle and Greater Gravity, as well as written the Music and Book for a full-length musical, Umbrella.

Steve is a Senior Faculty Member at Nashville Songwriters Association International, and a regular contributor to American Songwriter Magazine.

From 2011- 2014 Steve was Adjunct Professor of Songwriting at Belmont University, in Nashville, TN, and in 2013 was one of four internationally selected candidates considered for the Chair of the Songwriting Department, Berklee College of Music, Boston, MA.

He has taught Jazz History at Tallahassee Community College, Tallahassee, FL, Songwriting at Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, TN, and Morehead State University, Morehead, Ky.

In 2014, Steve started Nashville based publishing company SNG Music along with business partner Gary Reamey.

Steve earned his BM in Guitar/Jazz Studies from Morehead State University, Morehead, Kentucky.



