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Lyric Writing 101: Part 4

But I'm just a poor boy and
nobody loves me
He's just a poor boy from a
poor family
Spare him his life from this
monstrosity

This is Part four of my Lyric Writing guide. Here you will find general writing tips to apply to your lyric. Includes information on drafts, hooks and re-writing.

As I have stated in other parts of this guide, I cannot tell you word for word how to write lyrics. Everyone has their own writing style and methods that work for them. Experiment with your writing and find what works for you. What you will find in this section is some general tips that you may find helpful in the writing process. These tips can be applied to any writing style, whether you write the melody and lyric together or do each separately. By combining this guide with the Hints and Tips sections of other Parts in this series you will be well on your way to writing lyrics.

It doesn't really matter where in the lyric you start. Some start at the first verse and continue from there, others come up with a chorus or hook and work around that. There are even some people who start anywhere in the piece and work from there. Personally, I've written a couple of lyrics from the last verse back to the first and found that they work perfectly. Whatever you feel comfortable with and works for you is fine.

What is a Hook?

A hook is generally a catchy or repetitive section of a song. This can occur in both the melody and the lyric of a song. Lyrical hooks generally come into play as the chorus of a



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song but they can occur in other places of the song. Another type of lyrical hook that is not always used is the first line. It can be an opportunity to grab the listeners' attention, introduce the subject and help establish the mood of the song.

One of my favourite hooks is taken from Eminem's 'Lose Yourself' from the 8 Mile soundtrack. You notice that the hook not only applies to the song but also gives ties into the theme of the movie.

You better lose yourself in the music, the moment
You own it, you better never let it go
You only get one shot, do not miss your chance to blow
This opportunity comes once in a lifetime yo

Keep it simple. A hook doesn't have to be complex to work. Songs written by The Beatles are a perfect example of this. In Paul McCartney's song "Band on the Run" he simply sang this phrase four times in a row, and it is still a popular song today. Look towards established bands like this and take note how they make use of hooks.

Don't focus so much on the hook that other parts of your lyric suffer. A hook is basically a starting point of your song, something that ties your lyric together. Every part of the song has to be worked together to make it as strong as possible.

The Draft

How do you know when a lyric is completed? As with how to go about the writing process, there are many views on how a lyric is finished. Some believe that there is somewhat special about a first draft - that it's the purest expression of what you have in mind. Others just keep writing until they have the number of verses and choruses they need, then stop.

It may be in your best interest to write more than what is needed, and pick out the "best bits" for the final version. Don't ignore a weak verse, play around with it or completely rework it, if you just settle for second best, it will be noticeable to the listener and can draw away from the intended impact of the piece. As with any form of writing, editing plays a major part in arriving at the final draft.



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