

EPISODE 007

How to write a heartbreaking love song to get over someone?

See the show notes at www.storiesinsongs.com/007

© "Last Goodbye" by A Minute for Manny - Emmanuel Robert Gambriel

[00:00:00] Hey, and welcome back to the Stories in Songs Podcast.

This is the podcast for musicians, songwriters, and storytellers who want to change lives and create meaning through the stories they tell and the songs they sing.

I'm so stoked to have you here on my seventh episode of the Stories in Songs Podcast. And today, we talk about how to write an amazing, heartbreaking love song so that you take your audience with you back into a moment in time when they had to get over a breakup. And you will be able to give them the strength to get over someone. This will truly give your audience a reason to connect with you or even become your fan because those kinds of songs can make a life-changing impact.

We'll do that by analyzing one song of an aspiring songwriter and musician called a Minute for Manny. We'll play his song in full and talk about the lyrics of each verse and the chorus, as well as about the theme of his song, and the craft of storytelling that he used to be able to write his heartbreaking love song: "Last Goodbye".

A Minute for Manny's song will make you remember the feeling when someone you thought was your everything tore out your heart. Even though the pain was breaking every piece of you apart, you still loved that person. You just couldn't help it.

And he will take us on his emotional journey and reveal what it takes to come to terms with the new situation and to get out of one's misery.

If you get the lyrics for this kind of song right, then you give your listeners hope that it is indeed possible to move on, and you provide them with the strength for it.

They will look at you and the hardship you had to go through, and they will find someone in you who can relate to their heartache and who understands their pain.



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And this sense that there's someone else out there who had to go through a terrible breakup as well will empower them to gather their strength and start moving on, too.

Those listeners will become your fans because you've helped them through one of the saddest and most challenging moments of their lives. They will be entirely grateful to you to have given them this strength to get back on their feet.

And writing a powerful heartbreaking song that helps someone get over a failed relationship is what you'll learn in this episode. You will discover the three most important things to watch out for when writing a song like this. You will know the 10 questions you need to ask yourself about your song to find out how strong the lyrics are to truly make an impact.

So let's get on with the show.

Introducing: A Minute for Manny

[00:02:59] First, thanks so much for *A Minute for Manny* to let me feature his song "Last Goodbye" on my podcast.

If you haven't heard of *A Minute for Manny* yet, check out his Instagram. In the last three months, he has released over one hundred songs as a personal challenge to write one song a day. You'll also find his first EP called 'They Say' on Soundcloud. I provide you with the links to his music in the show notes of this episode.

If you're a musician or songwriter and want to get your song on the show, please reach out to me via email to podcast@storiesinsongs.com.

Now let's give it up for *A Minute for Manny*.

I play his song "Last Goodbye" in full now so that you get a feel for this fantastic, heartbreaking love song. Afterward, we talk about it in detail and what you can learn from this song for your own songwriting.

Just a quick note: This song has not yet been professionally produced and was recorded with a laptop microphone, so please don't mind the production quality. The singer's emotions and his words are so pure that this song proves how much potential it has.



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[00:04:15] So here's A Minute for Manny with his song "Last Goodbye"

Watch the FULL SONG

[00:08:35] As I first heard this song, I was almost crying, but his last line 'Now it's time to say hello to someone new' made me smile again.

Just look at how the song starts.

He says: "Saying goodbye is so much harder than it sounds." This first line, as well as the entire song, is about trying to say farewell to that one special person. It's the title of the song, and it all revolves around saying goodbye and letting go.

And the beautiful thing is that in the end, he came around full circle. He completed the song and gave his audience a sense of resolution. And it only took one line to change your emotion from deeply empathizing with him and feeling his pain to being relieved that he has found a way to move on. There's this glimmer of hope, and as I already said, this spark of hope was so strong that it made me smile again.

But how did A Minute for Manny accomplish writing a powerful heartbreaking love song like this? Aside from putting all his heart into his words and the melody? What's the magic formula behind it so that you can use this song for your own inspiration to give others who go through a bad breakup the same spark of hope?

So let's start and break this song into its different lyrical pieces. Let's start analyzing it.

How to analyze the lyrics of a song?

[00:10:02] Now when we talk about songs that "work" in a context of songs that tell stories or part of a story - after all a song can be like a chapter taken out of a book or a scene from a movie that focuses on one part of a larger story - like A Minute for Manny's song is about the breakup in a love story - then in a working song something needs to happen to the character in the song.

Something must be on the character's mind that he is trying to accomplish or solve.



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Step 1 - Which problem does the character face in the song?

Whenever I start analyzing the lyrics of a song, I first look for the problem that the song's character faces.

Including a problem in a song that the character has to deal with is one of the most critical factors. It helps you find out if the song is telling part of a story, or if it's just a snapshot of a single moment in which nothing happens.

The song's character needs to find a solution to the conflict he faces if the song addresses a problem. That's his goal. And in every story, the main character needs to WANT something. Otherwise, the audience would not invest themselves in hoping the character reaches (or not reaches) his goal.

In "Last Goodbye" by A Minute for Manny, the character has to face the inner turmoil
and the broken pieces of his heart after his relationship ended. His WANT is to find a
way to move on. That's what he's trying to accomplish.

Here's a pro tip: Whenever you write a song, establish the problem that your character faces as soon as possible in your lyrics. This will give your audience a clear picture of what your song will be about, and also hook them and keep their interest.

After all, we love stories because we are interested to see how a character struggles to get what he wants. We stay with him and endure his hardships because we want to see how he accomplishes getting what he wants. We live for those experiences that show us ways to use for our own lives. Prescriptions of what to do to get the same outcome.

So let's look at the first line of "Last Goodbye":

"Saying Goodbye is so much harder than it sounds."

We immediately get a sense of what the character in the song is struggling with. He tries to say goodbye to a person close to him.

And this song got our attention because we want to know how the character solves this problem. We wanna know: How can we say goodbye ourselves when it is so damn hard?

"Saying goodbye
Is so much harder than it sounds
Like one word could end a lifetime



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Goodbye is not forever as long as your holding on But I can't keep holding on."

The first verse goes more in-depth into that problem, and we know this song is about love. It could have been about a long-distance relationship when a couple has to part for a certain amount of time, and that is hard, but the love remains as long as both have faith.

But the character in this song can't hold on to his love anymore. So we suspect it will be about a breakup. We keep listening to him because now we also want to know what happened to the character in the song to find out why he has to say goodbye.

So in this first verse, A Minute for Manny has not only established the kind of story the lyrics promise - a song about a breakup, but he has created two open questions:

- 1. How will the character in the song manage to say goodbye and
- 2. WHY does he need to say goodbye.

And those questions keep us engaged. They hook our attention and interest, and we continue to listen to the song to find out the answers.

If you tell stories, it's all about creating story loops - creating open questions in the audience's mind so that they stay with you to get the answers. If you lay everything on the table and explain everything, people get bored. There's just no mystery.

But remember, always close your story loops. If you want your audience to feel closure, give them a resolution - an answer to the most important issue that the character in your song had to face. Like in this song that moved from goodbye to a hello.

Step 2 - The unexpected event

[00:15:01] When we talk about songs that work, there's one factor that decides if we can say Yes or No. It's an unexpected event or the turning point. To understand this concept, here's how you can look at it:

Consider your story to move up and down on a scale.

After all, you don't hit a note over and over again to play a melody because that would only create a rhythm.



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But a rhythm does not change.

But a melody tends to change notes over time.

Whatever the problem is your character has to face, he will not face it repeatedly as if it was a rhythm continually challenging him.

Something needs to change for him.

If a story, a chapter, or a scene changes from its beginning to its ending, something happened that led to the character being better off at the end or worse off.

If you hit a note, then that's where your character might be in his life at one particular moment in time. That's his starting point. It's like the key of the song you're using.

Now something unexpected happens to him, that either turns his world for the better, and he's going up on the scale to something positive, or he falls down the scale, and life gets darker for him.

This unexpected event is the most important indicator of whether your story or part of your story turned. In storytelling terms, we call this a turning point.

A turning point is like a crossroad moment.

Either new information comes to the forth that throws the character off his set path to reach his goal, or someone else does something completely unexpected - like breaking up with him.

This unexpected moment is the reason why something changes. And change is what makes a story work. The beginning of a story needs to be different than its ending. And there needs to be a cause for this change. If everything stayed the same, there would be no story.

So when we look at this song or whenever we analyze a song, here are the questions you need to ask yourself to find out if the story progressed from one point to another.

1. What was life before the unexpected event?

We get a sense of the character's relationship in the second verse. He's singing:

"We spent years cultivating memories That made me who I am today"



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So we know they were in a long time relationship that clearly shaped the character in the song. That's the key - the status quo - the starting point.

2. What was the unexpected event that turned the tables? He's singing:

"I cherish every moment I spent with you. Even if I never get any more."

So those lines tell us that they broke up. This break up was the unexpected moment that threw the character completely off his path. If we compare it to the scale of a melody, then life got darker for the character.

His WANT used to be being with that person. But now he has to change what he wanted to adjust to the new situation. And so this unexpected event presents two options for the character.

3. So you gotta ask yourself, what is the dilemma that the character has to face now? What are his options now?

For the character in this song, he can either stay in his misery and break apart by continuing to feel this enormous pain of his loss, which is the easy way out. Still, he will keep falling down, OR he can take the hard way and try to accept the breakup and lose that person's love to find his way back to who he once was.

And even though those two options are not explicitly mentioned, we still get a sense of the dilemma the character is in: He's singing:

"To throw it all away is to lose who I've become. But I don't see any other way."

as well as

"Goodbye to you Is goodbye to everything."

So you clearly see what's at stake for him.

4. And lastly, we need to find out what life is like after the character made his decision?



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The character in the song comes to the realization that he needs to move on. So he's saying to her:

"I cherish every moment I spent with you Even if I never get any more I wish you all the best in everything you do I say goodbye here and shut the door."

So we know the decision of the character, and by now, we know exactly why saying goodbye to this person is so hard for him. He loved her with all his heart, but to save himself from all this pain, he needs to move on. And he understands this.

And I need to point this out because it is imperative for every great story you tell or every captivating song you want to write.

A story does not only change from its beginning to its ending, but more importantly, the story changes because the character of the story grows as a person. He has to change too.

The character in "Last Goodbye" had clearly lost all his meaning in life by having lost her. But the beauty is that he discovers a way not only to find his reason for living again but also to embrace the belief that he can mean a lot to someone else. He just needs to say hello to them and open his heart.

So we see, in this song, we had a sympathetic protagonist with a naive outlook, who experienced a challenge that enlightened him to a broader understanding so that he found new meaning in his existing actions.

This is another factor that makes this song so wonderful. We can see how the character changes and becomes a stronger person.

That's also why A Minute for Manny managed to lighten up the spark of hope. Because, if the character in the song got over such a heartbreaking breakup, then the listener suffering the same pain might do so as well.





Step 3 - The lyrics in detail

[00:22:31] After finding the answers to those questions, we now have a general understanding of the song's theme.

Stages of getting over someone

In the last episode, we talked about the six moments that belong to a full love story.

One of those most-wanted moments is when the lovers break up or when they are forced to separate.

And there are actually eight different stages to go through in order to get over someone and accept the new situation. This concept is based on the Kübler-Ross Change Curve. It's a curve that shows how people deal with grief.

And a relationship breakup is also about losing a person. That's why we can use those stages to write songs about the different moments of getting through a breakup.

But at what stage of a breakup is A Minute for Manny's song?

I talk about those stages explicitly in episode 6, providing you with song examples to each stage, but let's go through them and find out the stages for "Last Goodbye".

- 1. The first stage is shock. This is when you are surprised or shocked about the breakup because you didn't see it coming. *No, that's not the song.*
- 2. The second stage is denial. The character is looking for reasons why the break up can't be true. *Nope, the character has moved passed this stage already.*
- 3. After denial, frustration hits. It's when you slowly realize that things have changed. *I* don't consider the character to be frustrated or angry. Quite the opposite.
- 4. After the frustration stage, there's the phase of negotiating. That's when we try to convince the other one to come back. *Also not happening in this song.*
- 5. When the character is at his lowest low, he hits Depression. That's when he starts to accept the breakup. Yes, that's true for this song. He starts to accept it.
- 6. In the sixth stage, the character is in the experimental phase. That means they're slowly coming to terms with the new situation. Yes, he does so in "Last Goodbye".
- 7. The 7th stage is the decision. It's when you're accepting the new situation and make the best of it. Oh yes, the character is definitely making the decision to move on.

"I wish you all the best in everything you do



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I say goodbye here and shut the door"

8. The last stage is integration and refers to being ready for something new. And basically, this is every song that shows the protagonist falling in love again. We're not quite there yet, but the song hints at it.

"This is the "Last Goodbye"
I'm sorry it had to be you
But now it's time
To say hello to someone new"

A Minute for Manny's song shows the stages the character went through, and again, that's its beauty because we see the progression of the story and that things are changing.

So there's a clear message to this song.

It could be something like this:

Love triumphs if a person realizes that it's not only someone else that gave them a purpose to live, but they understand that to love and be loved, meaning goes both ways for the persons in the 1 plus 1 equation.

So that's what the listener takes away from this song.

That's the spark of hope. We understand life is still meaningful if we are willing to put ourselves out there.

[00:26:52] But there are a couple more questions you can answer about the song that will help you determine how strong the lyrics of the song genuinely are.

Knowing the problem the character has to face as well as the general shift in the character's life, and its cause already paints a compelling picture.

But to exceed your audience expectation, you can pay attention to some more tropes you can use for writing a captivating song.

So here's a list of 10 things you need to watch out for:

1. The problem that the character faces in the song has been resolved.

An answer to the issue that the song deals with offers a resolution/closure for the listener, and it completes the song.



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WHY? So the listener won't feel like he's left hanging in the ropes, wondering how it all turned out.

Check for "Last Goodbye", because the character managed to find a way to move on.

2. The answer to the problem in the song is helpful for the listener.

People prefer stories that end on a positive note rather than with a bad outcome for the character.

Especially when you want to write captivating love stories, you want to tell prescriptive tales so that your listeners can apply what they've learned to their own lives and hope for a positive outcome.

WHY? So that you know if your listeners want you to act as their guide/mentor/inspiration to help them achieve what they want, or if they look to you to know what they shouldn't do.

And yes again, we can consider "Last Goodbye" to provide a helpful answer.

3. The character is at a positive stage of what he deals with externally.

When I say externally, I refer to the love story.

No matter what the root of the problem is your character has to face, we have to track if he's already at a positive level of what he WANTS in his life, or if he starts with not being loved or in a relationship.

WHY? This will provide a clue to how much your audience wants the character in your song to suffer, face challenges, or (in some cases) even get to an even better place.

And in "Last Goodbye", the character was in a relationship. We don't get a clear sense of how they parted. We don't know if the other person just didn't love the character in the song anymore, or if there's repulsion or hate. But since the character in the song still wants to send "every shred of love" to her, we get the sense that they used to be in a committed relationship - as well as considering that they were together for years. So yes, the character was at a positive stage of his love life.

4. The song includes a well-known moment that represents what the character deals with externally.



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The song is about love.

And every love story has certain moments that the audience just expects to enjoy a complete love story. I talked about those moments in episode 6 of the Stories in Songs podcast, but here they are in short:

- Lovers meet
- First Kiss or Intimate Connection
- Confession of love
- Lovers break up
- Proof of love
- Lovers reunite

Those are the most wanted moments of every love story. And they help listeners know at what stage of a love story the song refers to.

And when we write love stories, we know what's at stake for the character. We will know what he can win and what can he lose.

In "Last Goodbye", it's all about letting go to find love again.

5. The character is at a positive stage of what he deals with internally.

Internally can either be about a character's worldview, morality, or social standing? It's every category of what a character might NEED on an internal level. This is not external, which was about what a character WANTS - the apparent goal. This refers to his internal level. What does he truly need to be happy?

People can be naive, selfish, or have sold out for what they want.

But there are also those steadfast characters who are mature, selfless and hold on to what they think is right without selling out.

Depending on the band/musician, they might either focus on troubled characters or on the ones who act noble or have already found wisdom or meaning in their lives and act as mentors.

WHY? If you know what your character NEEDS, you can make him win on an internal level even if he doesn't get what he WANTS externally (or vice versa). Furthermore, if you know what kind of person your character is and what he NEEDS internally, you know how he will face his external challenge to get what he WANTS. Will he be weak? Naive? Or wise enough to see the consequences of his actions?



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And in "Last Goodbye", we got to know a character who was disillusioned because his happily ever after failed. But he is so strong that he takes on a new worldview that enables him to find meaning in his life again. He's become mature, sophisticated, just strong - so that he is a person we can trust. And that's very important if you want to write a song that is like a prescription. If the listener doesn't like the character in your song, because he's whiny or weak or completely naive, sold out, or continues to do what's immoral, the listeners won't take what you gotta say as advice for their own lives.

6. The song includes a well-known moment that represents what he deals with internally.

Like with the moments of a love story, some moments define the personal development of a person considering his morality, his status choices, or his worldview.

We look for a moment like this to find out more about the inner turmoil of your character. And you will know how he might change as a person - for better or worse. And you can use that in your lyrics to show how he changes.

In A Minute for Manny's song, there are actually two moments that define the shift in his worldview.

The first one is that he's clearly hit an All Is Lost moment - his lowest low. But he realizes he must change his black/white view of the world to allow for life's irony. Which is understanding to get out there again, even if that means to continue to be vulnerable and might get hurt?

And the other moment is the action moment when the character's loss of innocence is rewarded with a deeper understanding of the universe.

He's singing:

"This is the "Last Goodbye"
I'm sorry it had to be you.
But now it's time
To say hello to someone new"

The last line is the reward for this adorable and strong character. He has shown no anger or ever talked badly about this one person who broke up with him. He is even sorry that he has to say goodbye to her. His empathy is his gift. And for being this strong, he is rewarded with the hope that there will be someone new for him.

7. There's a story, or scene/chapter of a possibly larger story told in the song.



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We've already talked about this one, but I think it is so important that I want to mention it again.

So in every great story, something unexpected happens, and the character's first strategy to reach his goal (his WANT) fails.

An unexpected event is the one criterion that decides whether the song tells a story (or part of it).

WHY? If the story/scene/chapter you tell in your song about your character has (or at least hints at) an unexpected event that pushes your character into a dilemma or at a crossroads, the situation changes for your character. And we need change to move from the beginning to the ending. Otherwise, everything would stay the same, and we wouldn't have a story - just a snapshot of a singular moment in time.

But as we already talked about in great detail, we see a change in the external love story and the internal level because the character changes too so that he can move on.

8. The situation changes for the better externally.

No matter if the problem is solved, there will be an emotional reaction in the listener at the end of the song.

It could be excitement, intrigue, a faster beating heart, romance admiration, relief, triumph, rebelliousness, anguish, loss, or even pity.

It all depends on how the character faced his/her problem, chose in a dilemma (after the unexpected moment that put him at a crossroads), and what the outcome of his/her choices is.

WHY? To understand if a story serves as a cautionary tale (negative outcome) or a prescriptive tale (positive result) for the listener, we need to know how the situation has changed externally and internally for the character in the song.

And even though the situation got worse for the character in the song because he distances himself from her, there's also the hope that his situation will turn for the better again.

9. The situation changes for the better internally.

This refers back to character development. We want to see if there was a positive change in a person's personal growth that makes them wiser or mentally stronger.



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And in the song, we got a character who has clearly moved from meaninglessness and losing himself to a guy who takes the risk to feel vulnerable again to be able to find meaning again.

10. And lastly, the message in the song should be clear.

If a song has a message, it makes the listener feel like there's someone out there who understands them.

And that's the whole point of including something meaningful, something worth communicating.

Because you can help someone by listening to your songs.

You can provide guidance, self-help, joy, or even tell them what not to do to avoid inevitable harmful consequences.

WHY? This goes all back into looking at how the situation has changed for the character in the song (externally and internally), and state the reason for that change. This creates the takeaway for the listener. If we know what has caused the outcome, we can make better decisions for our own lives.

And "Last Goodbye" provides hope. And it does so by including a strong and clear message: It is possible to get over someone even though it might feel like you lose everything.

What do all those answers tell us?

[00:40:36] The more your song corresponds with this criteria - at least when you write a song that can be considered as advice, hope, or like a prescription - the more your song will be engaging, the more a listener will find it helpful and believable, the more you touch their hearts. The more you will hook them to keep listening and be engaged in your song.

And they will more likely remember this song because it has given them something more than just some great music to enjoy. Still, it expressed what they couldn't find the words for themselves or made them realize that they might be in the same kind of situation, and how they can get out of it.



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Considering a song to be a chapter taken out of a novel or a scene from a movie will empower your songwriting.

So always ask yourself:

- What is the problem the character faces in your song
- And what unexpected event or incident threw him entirely off his path and into a crisis, a dilemma a situation that forces him to make a decision.
- And go through your lyrics in detail, answering the 10 questions we've talked about to really nail the lyrics of your song so that they resonate with your listeners.

So if you want to write a heartbreaking love song in which the character in the song gets over someone, include the problem of the breakup that is still on the character's mind. After all, he's still dealing with that situation.

And to give him the strength to get over her or him, he needs to grow as a person. Think about the eight stages of the breakup and put your character in one of the last four stages - beginning with accepting the new situation.

Show your character how he gains new meaning for his life or starts to see the world not in black and white anymore, but in all its shades of grey.

And whatever you do, if you want to make sure your song will be unforgettable, make your character is likable and his actions are the best decision someone could do in this situation, even if that means to say goodbye and shut the door. Only then your listeners will take the message of your song and use if for their own lives.

Use the craft of storytelling to write songs that will be truly meaningful to your audience and that have the power to make a difference.

A Minute for Manny's song "Last Goodbye" certainly is that kind of song that sparks hope and gives its listeners something to connect with, something to feel and touch their hearts.

And I'm very grateful that A Minute for Manny let me use his song to tell you, my listeners, about how valuable the lyrics of a song can be.

So if you want to support A Minute for Manny, check out his Instagram and follow him.

Links to his profiles are in the show notes.



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And I'm so happy to announce that he will be on my show in the next episode. We will talk about his songwriting process, how he managed to write one song a day for over 100 days, even though he was ill in between, and we will talk about stories.

Please subscribe to my podcast, if you haven't done so already so that you can change lives through your songs. Create Meaning. And write powerful Songs.

And if you're a musician or songwriter and you want to get your song featured on the show, please reach out to me via email to podcast@storiesinsongs.com.

Thank you, and see you next time with my special guest: A Minute for Manny.

Links

MannyG (A Minute for Manny) on Soundcloud: https://soundcloud.com/emmanuel-robert-gambriel/they-say-mannyg

A Minute for Manny on Spotify: https://open.spotify.com/artist/5cgksyAFhxx5jvIC8HChbw

A Minute for Manny on Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/aminuteformanny/?hl=de

