

EPISODE 010

How To Write A “Love at First Sight” Song like the Pros

See the show notes at storiesinsongs.com/podcast/episode-010

[00:00:00] Hey, welcome back, everybody. This is Melanie Naumann, and you are listening to the Stories in Songs Podcast.

In this episode, you will discover how to write a captivating "Love at First Sight" song.

If you've been having a hard time beating writer's block and you need to write a captivating love song, then this episode is exactly what you're looking for!

It helps you study the storytelling aspect of lyrics and use a song as an inspiration to write your own unique songs. And I will show you exactly what you need to include in your lyrics to create an emotional reaction in your audience.

And you'll even get an inspirational exercise at the end to help you get started!

Does that sound great?
Then let's get started.

In the last episode, I've announced that we will study the lyrics of love songs this season. But wait, this is not only going to be about the situation standing underneath a girl's window and singing *'I love you'* while playing the guitar.

We will move across the entire spectrum of love songs, which will take us from love to hate, from falling in love to falling out of love to tragic and dramatic love situations, but also to the beauty of giving words to the feeling of being in love.

The way we are going to tackle this subject is by dissecting the lyrics of popular songs that we consider masterworks.



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Because if we want to learn how to write the lyrics of a song so that

- they capture our audience's attention,
- put them in the same moment the character or characters in our song go through,
- and let them feel catharsis,

then we need to look at the songs that have already accomplished what we are trying to achieve.

Therefore, and since you are on the Stories in Songs Podcast which goal is to help you become a better songwriter and storyteller, a so to say "songteller," we will especially study the storytelling aspect in the lyrics. So this is no show about melody and music composition.

It's solely about learning to write captivating lyrics that use the craft of storytelling. Because that's the key to writing powerful & engaging lyrics so that you reach a larger audience, get skyrocketing sales, and find your unique voice.

Does that sound awesome?

Great, let's continue.

The S.O.N.G. Framework

[00:03:05] Every song we analyze will follow a specific framework that I have developed to cover all the essential storytelling aspects we need to answer when we want to find out how much a song uses the craft of storytelling to engage its listeners. And the more it does, the stronger the song gets.

I call this framework: SONG - **S-O-N-G**.

Very easy to remember, right?

It consists of 4 steps: Summary - Observer - Narration - Gist.

That means, at first, we will find out what the song is about. We will summarize it. This summary will give us a bird's eye view of the song's main content in general.

After that, we dive deeper to find out more about the person who is the central character in that song. I call him the observer because it's the person who lets the listener know what is going on.

In the third step, we analyze the narration to learn about the inner dynamics of how the songwriters applied the craft of storytelling to the song.



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Lastly, we get to the song's gist to find out the big takeaway for the listener. We will look primarily at the song's message and determine if it was a cautionary or a prescriptive tale.

Does that framework sound doable?

Perfect, because ...

Why you should learn how to tell stories in songs:

[00:04:29] ... what's even more important than just dissecting the lyrics of a song is that you can use what you've learned. That's why I will include an exercise at the end of each episode, starting with this one.

This exercise will use the song we have just studied and take out its abstract core elements. You can consider those like the inspirational impulses or building blocks to write your own song about that specific topic. And it's kind of like hacking the song. It's not about copying but getting inspired by how it was done so that you can write your own lyrics in your own unique voice.

Sound good?

So, in a nutshell of what this podcast can do for you, you will:

- **Learn how you can use the craft of telling powerful stories** or parts of a story to make your songs truly engaging and meaningful, which means you will write songs that truly resonate with your audience.
- **Learn To Write Captivating first lines:** So you can quickly pull people into your songs to make a difference in their lives or even save it.
- **Get Step-by-step Instructions For Telling Stories In Songs**, which enables you to confidently tell stories the right way in any type of song, which means you can put the power of stories to work for you in your lyrics, even if you don't consider yourself a storyteller.
- **Discover The Essential Elements That Go Into Every Successful Story:** to ensure your lyrics contain each critical element of a great story, which means your songs will sell like crazy... whether they're about falling in love, breaking up, society, ... it doesn't matter.

The benefits of learning the craft of storytelling in your lyrics do not just contribute to your personal development. Still, they will also help you to confidently continue to do something you love and make money doing it while staying true to yourself.

Does this sound great?



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Okay, then let's get started with learning how to write captivating love story moments in your song's lyrics.

Recap: What is a love story

[00:06:24] Before we dissect the first song, I just want to remind you that I have already given a comprehensive overview of the love story in episodes six and seven of this podcast.

Those episodes tell you what a love story is and the unique moments that every love story needs to fulfill our expectations.

I will include the links to episode 6 and 7 in the show notes, but here's a quick reminder:

According to Shawn Coyne, the mastermind behind the Story Grid, "Love stories give us prescriptive and cautionary tales to navigate love's emotional minefield."

That means we can simply enjoy love stories or learn from them.

But more importantly, love stories speak directly to our emotions.

Shawn Coyne also said in his book "Pride and Prejudice - The Story Grid Edition": "*Love Story is the structure that instructs us on how to discover the meaning of our existence, both as individuals and as flesh-and-blood particles that bump into one another in a complex action and reaction comprising the human collective unconscious. So if we want to refresh, or even begin to acquire our storytelling craft, what better Genre is there to examine than the Love Story?*"

And the same is true for love songs.

But remember, you don't have to compress an entire love story into one song. It's better to pick one moment out of a love story and write about that one to dive into the character's emotions from that particular moment, thus creating an emotional connection with your audience.

And here's another reminder of the most expected moments of every love story. They are ...

1. the lovers meet
2. the first kiss or intimate connection
3. the confession of love
4. the breakup which consists of multiple stages in itself



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5. the proof of love
6. lovers reunite

I will talk about each of those moments in detail in further episodes and show you many examples. But if you want to know more about them right now, listen to episode six of this podcast.

Okay, you are still with me?

Let's get to the heart of the first love story moment on our list.

Moment 1 - The lovers meet

[00:09:01] For the next couple of episodes, we will study the first indispensable moment that happens in every love story. The lovers meet for the first time, or as we know it in Hollywood terms: We have the Meet Cute Scene.

You know this moment from popular romance movies, for example,

- *Notting Hill* when Hugh Grant, playing a simple ordinary guy, bumps into Anna Scott on the street, the most famous actress in the world (played by Julia Roberts) and spills his juice on her. What an embarrassing first encounter, right?
- Or who remembers *Twilight* when Bella enters the room of her biology class and Edward, the vampire, covers his nose because he has to hold back his cravings? Well, it's not a meet-cute under the common understanding, but that is what makes it even more extraordinary. But the most memorable moment of their first encounter is happening in the parking lot when a van slides towards Bella, and Edward saves her by stopping the van with his hand. Powerful and dramatic, right?
- Or in *Bridget Jones Diary*, Bridget meets Mark Darcy at a New Year's Day turkey curry buffet. She is repelled by his reindeer sweater and superficially judges him. Then her mom embarrasses her in front of Darcy as she tells the story that Bridget used to run around his lawn with no clothes on, but on top of that, she talks so much nonsense that she ultimately repels him. She made a complete fool of herself. Don't you think so, too?

This lovers' meet scene is the moment when the love story starts. This one is obvious, right? The two main characters have to meet at one point early on in the story, or there would not be a love story.



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But don't fall back on cliché. Of course, there can be sparkles and butterflies that support the dream of love at first sight. But meeting someone who will become the love of your life doesn't necessarily need to start positively.

Just think of the most popular love story of all time: *Pride and Prejudice*. In this story, Elisabeth despises Darcy for his pride, which proved how prejudiced she was. And they both have to overcome their flaws to being able to commit.

Even when we say we write about the lovers' meet scene, we can dress it in any way. You can sing about the troubles that this encounter has caused. The uproar. The rollercoaster of emotions. The inner resistance to accepting that this person – maybe someone you might not even like –can't be forgotten.

So many possibilities, right?

Let's start with a great example showing us how the meet-cute scene can work in a song.

Are you excited?

Yes! So am I!

"Sold (The Grundy County Auction Incident)" by John Michael Montgomery

[00:12:12] Just a reminder: In the next episodes, we will also look at songs that show that meeting that one person that challenges you can also end in confusion, trouble, and hardships, but today we start with a captivating meet-cute scene that is set in a typical southern American atmosphere when American country music artist John Michael Montgomery tells us about "*The Grundy County Auction Incident*" in his song "*Sold*."

This song was released in May 1995 as the second single from his self-titled album. It hit number-one on the country charts in the United States and Canada, and it is one of Montgomery's best-known songs and was named Billboard Hot Country Singles & Tracks' number-one single for 1995.

Since I'm not allowed to play the song on the podcast due to copyright issues, and as you know, I'm not a singer, I'll read the lyrics to you so that you know what the song is about.

But make sure to check out that uptempo song by John Michael Montgomery. It is entirely entertaining, especially the video and especially when you are not from the States. I loved it.



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So let's get started with the lyrics that were written by Richard Fagan and Robb Royer.

[[Video]]

https://www.youtube-nocookie.com/embed/U_VbwZsYPwY

Sold (The Grundy County Auction Incident) lyrics © Broadminded Music, Robroy West Music, Of Music, Robroy Music, Criterion Music Corp. Obo Of Music

*Well, I went down to the Grundy County auction
Where I saw something I just had to have
My mind told me I should proceed with caution
But my heart said, "go ahead an' make a bid on that!"*

*An' I said, hey, pretty lady, won'cha gi'me a sign
I'd give anything to make you mine all mine
I'll do your biddin' an' be at your beckon call
Yeah, I never seen anyone lookin' so fine
Man, I gotta have her, she's a one-of-a-kind
I'm goin' once, goin' twice,
I'm sold! on the lady in the second row
She's an eight, she's a nine, she's a ten, I know
She's got ruby red lips, blond hair, blue eyes
An' I'm about to bid my heart good-bye!*

*Well, the auctioneer was goin' about a mile a minute
He was takin' bids an' callin' them out loud
An' I guess I was really gettin' in it
'Cause I just shouted out above the crowd!*

*An' I said, hey, pretty lady, won'cha gi'me a sign
I'd give anything to make you mine all mine
I'll do your biddin' an' be at your beckon call
Yeah, I never seen anyone lookin' so fine
Man, I gotta have her, she's a one-of-a-kind
I'm goin' once, goin' twice,
I'm sold! on the lady in the long black dress
Well she won my heart it was no contest
With her ruby red lips, blond hair, blue eyes
Well I'm about to bid my heart good-bye!*

*Yeah, we found love on the auction block
An' I hauled her heart away*



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*Now we still love to laugh about
The way we met that day*

*When I said, hey, pretty lady, won'cha gi'me a sign
I'd give anything to make you mine all mine
I'll do your biddin' an' be at your beckon call
Yeah, I never seen anyone lookin' so fine
Man, I gotta have her, she's a one-of-a-kind
I'm goin' once, goin' twice,
I'm sold! on the lady in the second row
She's an eight, she's a nine, she's a ten, I know
Shes's got ruby red lips, blond hair blue eyes
An' I'm about to bid my heart good-bye!*

Now that we have read through the lyrics let's start dissecting them to study this song's storytelling craft.

Just a reminder: You might feel overwhelmed when we go through the four-step framework. And that is totally okay. It's a lot to cover, but I promise you, the more often you analyze a song this way, the more it will come naturally to you. Feeling overwhelmed just means that you are learning some new stuff, and that is awesome. So embrace that feeling knowing that this is the beginning of another level of your songwriting.

Are you excited? I am!

1. Summary (About)

[00:16:22] Since we use my S.O.N.G. Framework, we start with the first step to analyze the lyrics.

The first step is called: Summary. So we answer questions that give us a bird's eye view of the song. Is that cool?

The first question is:

1. What is the song generally about?



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The singer is telling us about a woman he saw at the Grundy County Auction, and we are witness to how he is courting that woman in the style of an auction chant. Sounds about right?

2. Is it hard to figure out what the song is about, or is it easy to understand?

Some songs are more challenging than others to get to the core of what it is generally about, but this song clearly paints a vivid picture of what's going on.

3. Do the first lines of the song set the expectations of what the song will be about? Is it a promise to what kind of story moment the audience can expect?

The first line of the song is:

*Well, I went down to the Grundy County Auction
Where I saw something I just had to have*

Since the narrator is attending an auction, the first line of the song establishes the setting. We immediately know where we are: In the Grundy County Auction, probably the one in Tennessee.

And the great thing about the first two lines is that the narrator creates mystery right in the second line. He knows more than we do, and we start wondering: What is the thing that he just had to have? So we are super hooked to find out the answer to that question. Were you too?

4. If the song was a scene taken out of a movie, under what genre would you promote the film? What is the story's genre?

I can imagine pretty well the start of a movie where we get to know the narrator in the first few scenes, and then he gets invited or tasked to attend the auction. And that's where the magic happens: The lovers meet. So it is a typical romance story. A love story, because love is clearly at stake for this guy.

5. Is the song referencing a specific moment that we expect to see in the above-determined genre?

As we know, every genre of story has specific, must-have moments. Since the song tells us about how two people first met and the love they still share, this song's main love story moment is the retelling of the lovers' first meet scene.

6. Does the song use conventions of that particular story genre?

Every love story has a set of different conventions that uniquely identify the characters' roles in that particular story or the way the story moves forward.

In a movie or novel, we expect to find all the conventions, but it's great if at least one of the conventions is met in a song.



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To shortly recap what those conventions are, I'll name them and give you an explanation as to what they are about. Does that sound okay to you?

- There must be a triangle of relationships that includes a rival.
- There are secondary characters representing helpers and harmers. There must be characters in favor of and against the relationship. Those in favor of help unite the lovers, and those opposed to it will do everything to destroy it.
- There must be an external need, something outside the romance that drives the actions of the main characters. Maybe they have to work together, solve a crime, save a life, win a match, keep a secret, or discover a cure.
- We have opposing forces' convention, which means forces are opposing the lovers' relationship, often outside the lovers' control. Explore other genres for ideas. Is it Society? A War? Are they on opposing teams? Are they separated by land or time? Familial obligations? Can you represent these forces with "harmer" characters?
- There are secrets. Either the couple keeps secrets from society like hiding their relationship from friends and family. Or the couple keeps secrets from one another (for example, a rival, past or present sins, shameful experiences). And there are secrets one of the lovers keeps from themselves. That refers to a character flaw that prevents intimacy, such as narcissism, racism, or the belief that they are unloveable. Also, there might be secrets society keeps from the couple. For example, they discover they're related, or one lover's sacrifice is concealed from the other lover by harmers.
- The lovers develop rituals of intimacy such as shared traditions, secret language, and inside jokes.
- Love stories have moral weight. They suggest those who cannot love have a moral failing. To live happily ever after, they must get over the moral failing by the story's end or suffer the consequences.

In this song by John Michael Montgomery, we clearly see that the lovers have established a ritual by remembering how they first met. The narrator sings in the third verse:

*Now we still love to laugh about
The way we met that day*

Did you figure out that one too?

Another question we have to ask when studying what a song is generally about is:

7. Is the song's character talking about the distant past, their current state of mind, or an imagined future?

The song starts with an action of the character. He is going down to the auction house, which puts us into the present moment. As I will mention later again, the song builds a bridge



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from the present to the future by letting us know how that bold move turned out for the narrator. He got the girl, right?

And the last question is:

8. Are we hearing someone's inner monologue, someone narrating a story, or a conversation between two or more people?

The singer is narrating a story, but he lets us know what he is thinking to establish a deeper connection with the listener. We get many insights into how he feels and what's going on in his heart and mind. He sings:

*My mind told me I should proceed with caution
But my heart said, "go ahead an' make a bid on that!"*

Being able to feel that connection to the narrator doesn't only put us into the narrator's shoes, but it also creates a sense of intimacy to being witness to this particular moment. Did you feel it as well?

[00:23:21] Since we have a good understanding of what the song is about, let's move on to the framework's second step. The observer means we look closely at the song's main character to get to know him better.

2. Observer

1. What is the role the singer takes on in the song?

He is the main character of the story and the narrator at the same time.

2. Is the singer showing his feelings and thoughts? Or is he talking about those of someone else?

The narrator is talking about his own feelings and thoughts.

3. Is the character in the song using the song to tell their own story or someone else's?

And tells his own story about meeting that one special person.

4. Is there another person, the singer refers to?



Yes, there is a girl with “ruby red lips, blond hair, blue eyes” who takes on the part of being the love interest. And there is also the auctioneer who serves more as a secondary character to establish the setting of the auction further.

5. What does the main character in the song consciously WANT? What is his goal?

The narrator wants to get the attention of that girl because he ultimately wants her. It’s essential to include something the main character in your story wants. That’s how the audience can identify with your main character and root for him to get what he wants. Or we might be hoping that he does not get what he wants because we question the morality or the motives of that character. Either way, we are invested in the song.

We are, right?

6. What does the main character in the song unconsciously NEED? What is his internal desire?

In love stories, the characters mostly have to evolve in the way they look at the world to fully embrace, commit to, and value the love they’ve found. There needs to be a form of maturation.

This love song does not reveal the main character’s unconscious need because we don’t know what he is struggling with or what else is on his mind. We don’t know his backstory. We don’t know who he was before he went down to that auction house.

We only know that he is in that auction house among a crowd of other people. And he literally has to make a fool of himself and risk being laughed at to get the attention of that girl. So in a way, he is risking his social standing, but he is mature enough to recognize when status doesn’t matter because there are things more important than how others see you.

Does that make sense to you?

7. Do we like the main character of the song? Does he have positive character traits? Or is it someone we despise and can’t consider a role model?

I love the character in the song. He is clearly very outgoing, and he makes a bold move. But his motives are reasonable, and he follows his heart in calling out to her.

As already said, he is risking to be made a fool of, but he knows for whom and what he is risking it for. That makes him very sympathetic, right?

8. What is the point of view?

For point of view, I refer to the book “Great Songwriting Techniques” by Jack Perricone because they differ from the point of view options for books.

So for this song, we have a First-Person (Narrative) because he uses the pronouns “I” and “we.”



Okay, now we have an even better understanding of what the song is about and who its main character is. It's time to dive deep and look at the essential elements for telling a working story or story moment in your song.

3. Narration

[00:27:32] Therefore we move forward to the third step of the S.O.N.G. framework and look at the Narration. This is by far the most comprehensive and detailed look into the storytelling of the lyrics. So are you ready to roll up your sleeves and answer some more questions?

Let's start.

The first question is pretty straightforward:

1. What are the characters literally doing?

Easy, right?

The auctioneer was taking bids and calling them out loud.

The narrator shouts out above the crowd and makes a move on a girl.

Now that we know what is going on, we can now try to read between the lines. So we ask the question:

**2. What is the essential action of what the characters are doing in the scene?
What is on their secret agenda? What are they trying to achieve?**

The auctioneer wants to do business and keep everyone excited that they continue bidding.

And the narrator wants to get the attention of the girl because he wants her.

And let's just take a look at those two characters. There's a conflict of interest right there, right? Even though the narrator never talks about interrupting the auctioneer, we still get a sense that interrupting the normal flow of an auction can cause disturbances.

Keeping this in mind, we move on to the third question:

3. Is there a problem the character is facing? Does something challenge him? Or is there some kind of conflict that he has to solve? If so, what is the central conflict the main character in the song has to deal with?

Yeah, the narrator is facing a challenge. How can he get the attention of that girl when



*the auctioneer was goin' about a mile a minute
He was takin' bids an' callin' them out loud*

Now that we know there is a problem the character is facing, we can further ask the question:

4. Do the first lines introduce the problem the character in the song will have to deal with? And thus hook us and spark our interest?

Let's look at the first lines again. He's singing:

*Well, I went down to the grundy county auction
Where I saw something I just had to have
My mind told me I should proceed with caution
But my heart said, "go ahead an' make a bid on that!"*

Yes, we are hooked because we know that an auction is a place with lots of competitors who all want the same thing. There's a problem established right in the first line, which was very well done by just introducing us to the setting. The second line, "*Where I saw something I just had to have,*" further underlines that the narrator actively seeks to obtain something that seems very important to him.

Line 3 and 4 further elevate the problem as we witness the inner struggle the character fights. His inner monologue goes like this:

*My mind told me I should proceed with caution
But my heart said, "go ahead an' make a bid on that!"*

So there's a risk involved. His mind warns him that he should be careful. And the songwriters did such a great job with that first verse because not only do we get introduced to the character and the setting, the problem he is facing, and his goal, we also hear his inner monologue. There's clearly something at stake. And if you introduce a problem your character will face in your song, make sure that he got something to lose and not just something to win. Because this song proves, if we want something, we have to risk something in the process.

Does that make sense?

Analyzing the scene told in the song.



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[00:31:16] Okay, let's move on to analyzing the lover's meet scene in this song.

The way we do this is by using the Story Grid's five commandments. Those commandments are the five essential elements of every scene or story. You can use them to look at the big picture or zoom into every story's small units, like chapters in a book or scenes in a movie.

Since songs are a short form of a story and most often only deal with a certain scene taken out of a larger context, we should focus on at least having the first three commandments present in our song. I know this sounds very abstract, but bear with me. I'll explain them to you.

The first commandment is: there must be an inciting incident. That means there must be a causal or coincidental event that happens to the main character. Either it is unexpected, or it is an anticipated event that happens. The purpose of an inciting incident is to get the story or scene going and promise the audience what's to come. Causal inciting incidents result from active choices a character makes – like a girl breaks up a relationship, a young man starts his own business, or a singer decides to participate in a singing competition.

A coincidental inciting incident is when something happens by chance or accident. For example, someone wins the lottery, a man takes the wrong suitcase at an airport, or a tree crashes into someone's car.

The inciting incidents are like setting the starting position of the main character in your song. I like to look at it in the way of asking myself: What is the character's plan? I mean, he mostly sets out to go somewhere or do something. What is his first initial goal before the tables turn?

That's how it all starts.
Does that make sense?

Okay, perfect. Let's continue with the second must-have and the most important element: the progressive complication turning point.

It sounds like breaking your tongue, right?

But all that moment refers to is an unexpected moment that throws the character into a dilemma. He realizes he can't follow a straight line to his goal anymore. He is at a crossroads and needs to make a decision first. This turning of events is either caused by another character's action like a slap in the face or by a revelation when new information comes to the fore. Maybe someone you thought doesn't like you suddenly confesses they have feelings for you. Either way, a turning point catapults the main character straight into a dilemma. They ask themselves the question: *Shit, what shall I do now?*



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That question refers to the crisis, which is the third essential element. The character has to choose between two bad things where one thing is worse than the other: If I do this, then this bad thing happens, but if I do the other thing, then that happens.

It's also possible that the character has to choose between two irreconcilable goods, which means something could be good for him but not good for somebody else, or vice versa. No matter the crisis, there's always something to lose.

If we let a song end with a crisis and never find out what the character decided on, we have created a cliffhanger. The listener can continue painting the story in his mind but will never know how it turns out for the character in the song, except you are writing a concept album, and the next song on the album answers that question.

But if you want your audience to feel catharsis in your song, then you need to include the commandments 4 and 5 as well.

Number 4 is the decision the character makes, and number 5 is the resolution. This refers to the consequences of the character's decision and answers the question of how it all turns out for him or her.

Did you get a better understanding of the five commandments now?

Awesome, now let's define them for our song: "Sold (The Grundy County Auction Incident)."

So the first question we ask is:

5. What is the inciting incident?

We have the narrator going to the auction house. His goal is to bid on some cattle or whatever they offer there, probably. This is a causal choice of him, and the auction is something that he anticipates will happen.

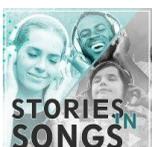
6. What is the unexpected event that turned the tables?

The unexpected event happens right in the second line of the first verse.

He says: "*Where I saw something I just had to have.*" We, as the audience, are left wondering what he is referring to. Thus he creates mystery because he, as the narrator, knows at that point more than we do.

What he means gets elaborated in the chorus as he sings:

*Yeah, I never seen anyone lookin' so fine
Man, I gotta have her, she's a one-of-a-kind*



The turning point that catapults him into a crisis is seeing that blonde-haired girl with ruby lips and blue eyes. It's an active turning point combined with a revelation that he comes to as he can't help himself but only feels the urge that he must win her over.

But what is he going to do about it?

He is at an auction, and the auctioneer gets everyone's attention, including the girl's.

7. So what is the dilemma that the character has to face? What are his options?

The narrator can either wait until the auction is finished trying to find her afterward but risking to lose her in the crowd while at least following the local manners of an auction and not making a fool of himself. OR he could shout out above the crowd to gain the girl's attention at the risk of not only making a fool of himself or getting thrown out for misbehavior but also repelling her.

The crisis is an irreconcilable goods choice. It would be better for the others if they could continue their business at the auction, but for him, it's better to take a stand and risk something to get the attention of that special someone.

You can also look at it as a best bad choice. Because either he's gonna repel her, or he's gonna miss out on meeting her. So both options do not promise a positive outcome.

8. What's the decision the character makes?

The decision can be found in the following line:

'Cause I just shouted out above the crowd!

9. And lastly, what's the resolution? How does it all turn out?

The wonderful thing about that song is that the narrator takes us into the future, and we get a glimpse of this couple's happiness. They have turned the memory of the day they first met into a ritual by repeating the words he shouted across the crowd to her.

Did this resolution make you smile too?

I think the song has created catharsis because it's a wonderful little love story.

Change

[00:39:04] Now let's move on to the most defining element to determine if the song tells a story or a part of it. Stories are about change. Every element of a story needs to include change. There needs to be a difference between the beginning and the ending. If there is



none, then we can say with utter certainty, nothing happened. And if nothing happened, we neither have a story nor an interesting moment.

Does that make sense to you?

Stories are about change.

And the bottom line with change is that it requires loss. Even when change is positive, we lose something of ourselves coping with its effects.

So when we fall in love, we lose our independence, and some say they lose their mind because everything is suddenly different. But love also gives us the chance to grow as a person, which means we leave a part of our old worldview behind, mature, and embrace a better understanding of the world.

And if you want to tell a captivating love story moment, you need to be aware that you show a change in your character's situation, and preferably in his mind. Did your character grow as a person, or did the unexpected event strike them down so hard that they have ended up disillusioned?

I can't stress this enough. You must know what incident brought your character to a crossroad moment because that unexpected turn of events either leads to a change to the positive or, if your character can't deal with it, to a negative outcome. The point is, if you want your song to work as an element of the story, you need to include the reason for the change, and you need to show it.

Now, after you have gone through the five commandments of storytelling, and you have come up with a turning point - that particular moment that puts your character at a crossroads - then you have your element of change included.

And now we only need to define the change that happened to your character and his or her situation.

Does that sound about right to you?

Okay, so the first question we ask is:

10. Did the song's main character change his perception of the world around him after going through that situation?

Our narrator in the song notices a beautiful girl at the auction. And this moment changes everything for him. He doesn't care about the auction nor the reason why he had attended the auction in the first place. Everything else becomes irrelevant. So in a sense, he loses the ambition or purpose of why he came there.

Now when we look closely at the character and ask: Did he mature? We can observe that he matured right that very moment as he laid eyes on her. By knowing nothing else mattered as



much as winning that girl's heart, he made a selfless choice just to let her know how incredible she is.

Do you agree?

11. So to wrap it up, how did the situation change for the main character in the song?

In a nutshell, his situation changed from being single to being in a relationship. So it's from a negative to a positive because being alone and single is not what a love story is ultimately about, right?

12. Another interesting way to observe if the song is about change is to compare the first and the last sentence of the song. Can we see a difference between how the song started and how it ended?

Okay, here's how it started:

*Well, I went down to the Grundy county auction
Where I saw something I just had to have*

And the song ended like this:

*Shes's got ruby red lips, blond hair blue eyes
An' I'm about to bid my heart good-bye!*

Isn't that amazing that those four lines frame the story told in the song?

We get a sense of how the situation was before the unexpected event, we know that something unexpected happened, which turns out to be meeting a girl, and we see the decision the character in the song makes: He will risk his heart to win her over.

Isn't that awesome?

That's a - hands-down- amazingly well-done way to wrap up a song by showing how everything changed between the beginning and the ending.

I love it.

Do you love it too?

Writing Techniques

[00:43:37] Okay, so the last part of the third step of the S.O.N.G. framework is to quickly take a look at the writing techniques used in this song. I like to refer to my mentor Shawn Coyne again, who said: Specificity breeds Universality.



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And that's something every storyteller and songwriter should take into consideration. It means the more specific you are in presenting your main character, the situation he or she is in, or how the world around him or her looks, the more universal your song or story becomes.

Does that make sense?

If you write in general terms, you never paint a uniquely identifiable picture, and thus it just doesn't seem real. But the more details you can give, the more we believe that the story must be true.

So let's answer two short questions about the writing techniques used.
The first one is:

13. Is the singer only revealing some general information, or does he go into the specifics?

Yes, I think he does.

First, he paints the picture of a guy going down to an auction. An auction is specific in itself. He's not just going down the street to whatever kind of place. He's going to an auction.

Secondly, he vividly describes the girl and can't even explain how beautiful he thinks she is. He says:

*I'm sold! on the lady in the second row
She's an eight, she's a nine, she's a ten, I know
She's got ruby red lips, blond hair, blue eyes*

And, of course, having the auctioneer taking the bids and calling them out loud strengthens our perception of what the environment of the narrator looks like.

So do you agree we have some very well-defining specificity in this song that makes it unique yet believable?

And the last question we ask is:

14. Is the song evoking specific pictures in the audience's mind by using imagery?

When I say using imagery, I'm talking metaphors, painting pictures with words, that kind of stuff. Now what comes to my mind is that by elevating her from an eight to a nine, to a ten that he is using the environment of the auction to make it clearer for the audience how great she is.



Now we've covered all important parts to better understand how well the song told a part of a story, and we also know why it was done so well.

4. Gist

[00:46:00] Now we're left with the fourth and last step: What's the gist of the song? What's going to be its big takeaway?

So we start with ...

1. Looking back at the problem the character had to deal with in this song, did he solve it?

The problem the narrator faced was how in the world could he get the attention of that special girl while in the middle of a live and very loud auction. The answer was shouting across the room to her. So yeah, he came up with a solution.

Do you consider his solution as a guideline in case someone else experiences the same kind of situation? Is that song telling us a prescriptive tale?

I guess so, but it will get more evident when we answer the next question. And this is the most important one when thinking about the big takeaway of a song:

2. What is the message of the song? What can the audience take away from it?

The message is beautifully woven into the song. It's not screaming out to be heard, and you need to read between the lines, but when you do, you could say that the message of the song to its audience is:

If the risk is too high of losing out on your once-in-a-lifetime chance, then you better go for it.

This realization brings us to the next question:

3. Does the title refer to the message of the song?

Now let's look at the song's title. The song is called: "Sold (The Grundy County Auction Incident)" by John Michael Montgomery.

Even though the connection doesn't seem that obvious, but when we say in our message, "you need to go for it," then that's another way of saying that you are indeed "sold." Sold on an idea or sold on a specific action you must take.

So yes, the message refers to the title. Another promise was kept.



Now we have gone through the 4-step-framework of analyzing the storytelling in the lyrics of a song.

Are you feeling overwhelmed?

Remember, that just means you have just heard a bunch of new stuff, and you are taking in new things, trying to build connections to what you already know, and basically, you are learning.

So that's awesome, and congratulations on having studied the lyrics of "Sold (The Grundy County Auction Incident)" by John Michael Montgomery successfully.

You did a fantastic job!

Song Exercise - The Lovers Meet

[00:48:17] Now let's move on to the promised exercise to apply what you've learned, which means the more you practice, the better you will get at using the craft of storytelling in your own songwriting.

Today, I want you to create an original "Lovers Meet" scene that is inspired by Montgomery's song "Sold." This is intended to give you an inspirational nudge to write your own unique song.

In the show notes of this episode, you can download the PDF with all the instructions. But I will also go through the exercise now so that you know how you are supposed to do it.

Of course, there are some constraints that I would like you to follow so that you have some guiding points that help you along as you write the lyrics.

The primary global constraint is that the scene must take place in a specific setting. Please use the first-person narrative to turn your main character in your song into your story's narrator. Just put yourself in the shoes of your hero and use the pronoun "I."

The third constraint is that I want you to include all five commandments. But they do not have to be in order. You can switch them up between your verses, chorus, and pre-chorus.



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1. So the inciting incident of your character is establishing an event that the character in your song anticipates. That's his status quo.
2. The turning point will be meeting that special girl or boy for the very first time.
3. The crisis must show what's at stake for the character if he makes a move or misses his chance.
4. Show his decision
5. And include a resolution letting your audience know how it all turned out.

Since we want to write a song similar to "Sold," I would advise you to use Montgomery's song's message to clarify what you want to express in your song. Ensure the song's message is somewhere along the lines of sometimes having to go for it when it's a once-in-a-lifetime chance.

For further inspiration, I will add the abstract beats of the song "Sold" in the exercise PDF. Abstract beats are kind of like identifying the specific moments in your song's little story. And I will use abstract terms so that those beats give you a variety of options to how you can use them for your own lyrics.

For example, a beat might be called: Shock and Awe, the What-If game, or as simple as "the last temptation." But don't worry, I will explain every beat.
Sound good?

So if you want to do this exercise to get better at telling stories in songs, please check out the show notes of this episode and download the exercise PDF. It will be more comprehensive than the introduction I have given you here in this podcast episode.

And once you see the task laid out in front of your eyes, it will become clearer.

Alright, this was a very long episode since we had to cover so much. Talking about love stories, what they are, and about the lovers' meet scene, as well as getting to know the 4-step S.O.N.G. framework.

You did an amazing job, and I hope you will continue with the exercise.
Remember to download the PDF in the show notes.

In the next episode, we will stay with the meet-cute scene. But this time, we will move away from the country vibe and look at a popular modern song that encapsulates the lovers' meet scene in another wonderful and exciting way.

Are you excited?



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Then subscribe to my podcast so that you don't miss the next episode.

Thanks a lot and see you next time.



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