

EPISODE 039

Attention Grabbing Opening Lines – Part 2 – The Shocking Statement

See the show notes at storiesinsongs.com/podcast/episode-039

[00:00:00] Hi, this is Melanie from Stories in Songs - Writing the Lyrics.

“Have you heard the news that you’re dead?”

Oh my god, what did I just say?

That’s shocking!
How could I say something like that?

I promise you, it has a purpose.

I got your attention now, don’t I?

And that’s exactly what this episode is about.

Today, we continue with another technique of how you can create an attention-grabbing opening line for your lyrics beginning.

So without further ado, let’s get started.

TEASER



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The Shocking Statement

[00:01:08] When we talk about Shocking Statements, let's just give a big shout out to the song "Dead" by My Chemical Romance (The Black Parade). They start that song singing: *"Have you heard the news that you're dead?"*

The entire song revolves around one Shocking Statement that serves one specific purpose: rattle the cage of the patient and make him face one particular question: Figure out what his life meant.

You don't have to dedicate an entire song to confronting your audience (or your song's character) with a Shocking Statement. But, to stick to our first-line techniques that grab your audience's attention, the Shocking Statement as an opening line is one of the most powerful ways to make your listeners stop in their tracks. Hearing a Shocking Statement has the same effect as when you are told: "Have you heard the news that you're dead?" It's an unexpected ball of chaos that spins into your life and knocks you out. You have absolutely no idea how to deal with that information. You are completely stunned, out of words, and don't comprehend.

The beauty is: As human beings, we have a fierce desire to make sense of the things that don't make sense. Even if it drives us crazy, we NEED TO understand them. Opening your lyrics with a Shocking Statement gives you the power to exploit your audience's stunned "WHAT?" moment. Then, after stunning them, you can elaborate to help them make sense of what you so boldly announced in your song's first lines.

Different Ways to Create a Shocking Statement:

[00:03:35] The key to writing a catchy, mind-blowing Shocking Statement is to hint at a Powerful Problem. So although the Shocking Statement could count as a Powerful Problem, the audience's attention is grabbed by HOW it is said, or HOW that problem is addressed, and not WHAT that problem actually is.

- Declare **what something is** that no one has yet dared to say out loud:
 - "The world is a vampire..." – 'Bullet with Butterfly Wings' by The Smashing Pumpkins
 - "Jeremiah was a bullfrog." – 'Joy to the World' by Three Dog Night
- Go **against** what everyone believes.
 - "I don't believe in an interventionist God" – 'Into my Arms' by Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds



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- “Imagine there's no heaven” – ‘Imagine’ by John Lennon
- **Provoke.**
 - “Jesus died for somebody’s sins / but not mine...” – ‘Gloria’ by Patti Smith
 - “God save the queen, The fascist regime” – ‘The God Save the Queen Symphony’ by Sex Pistols
- Say something completely **odd.**
 - “The silicon chip inside her head gets switched to overload” – ‘I don’t like Mondays’ by Boomtown Rats
 - “Some people call me the space cowboy...Yeah” – ‘The Joker’ by Steve Miller Band
- Tell the **truth.**
 - “Life is a mystery, everyone must stand alone” – ‘Like a Prayer’ by Madonna
- **Surprise.**
 - “Oh what an ordinary day / Take out the garbage, masturbate.” – ‘Birth in Reverse’ by St. Vincent
- Induce **fear.**
 - “One of these days I’m going to cut you into little pieces.” – ‘One of These Days’ by Pink Floyd

More examples of songs that start with a Shocking Statement:

[00:07:02] Here are some more examples of strong opening lines that start with a Shocking Statement:

1. “This is the end. Beautiful friend.” – ‘The End’ by Doors
2. “I am not a human being.” – ‘I Am Not A Human Being’ by Lil’ Wayne
3. “I don't give a damn 'bout my reputation” – ‘Bad Reputation’ by Joan Jett
4. “There's a lady who's sure all that glitters is gold...” – ‘Stairway to Heaven’ by Led Zeppelin
5. “Nice guys finish last” – ‘Nice Guys Finish Last’ by Green Day
6. “Don’t Wanna Be An American Idiot!” – ‘American Idiot’ by Green Day
7. “They paved paradise and put up a parking lot” – ‘Big Yellow Taxi’ by Joni Mitchell
8. “Wake up kids, we’ve got the dreamers disease” – ‘You get what you give’ by New Radicals
9. “Baby we can talk all night but that ain’t getting us nowhere” – ‘Two out of three ain’t bad’ by Meat Loaf
10. “I don’t go to therapy to find out if I’m a freak.” – ‘What Do You Hear In These Sounds’ by Dar Williams
11. “I decree today that life is simply taking and not giving” – ‘Still Ill’ by The Smiths



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12. “We’ll be fighting in the streets / With our children at our feet.” – ‘Won’t Get Fooled Again’ by The Who
13. “Love is a dress that you made long to hide your knees” – ‘Love and Some Verses’ by Iron & Wine
14. “Mother Earth is pregnant for the third time for y’all have knocked her up. – ‘Maggot Brain’ by Funkadelic
15. “Sister, I’m not much a poet, but a criminal” – ‘Thank you for the Venom’ by My Chemical Romance
16. “As soon as you’re born, they make you feel small” – ‘Working Class Hero’ by John Lennon

The Shocking Statement - Wrapup

[00:11:16] A Shocking Statement needs to stun your audience and make them stop in their tracks. It also needs to hint at a Powerful Problem. And the HOW it is said is more important than what is being said because the audience's attention is grabbed by that shocking statement, the HOW, and not what that problem is about.

And to wrap it all up, here are a couple of different ways how you can pull off the shocking statement:

- Declare what something is that no one has yet dared to say out loud:
- Go against what everyone believes.
- Provoke.
- Say something completely odd.
- Tell the truth.
- Surprise.
- Induce fear.

I hope this second attention-grabbing opening line technique inspires you.

Now, lastly, if you’re enjoying the show, it’s safe to assume there are others out there like you who would also enjoy the show. Help them find it. So please rate and review the show on your favorite podcasting platform. Those people will appreciate it, and you’ll feel great about yourself.

Thank you
Melanie



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Show Notes

- Attention Grabbing Opening Lines – Part 1 – The Powerful Problem
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