

II. Creativity and Expression

1. creativity is trainable

songwriting has two parts:

- craft (harmony, form, rhythm, arrangement, etc.)
- creativity (idea generation and imagination)

most musicians train only craft

they wait for inspiration instead of training it

creativity is not random

it can be developed intentionally

key idea:

inspiration is a skill, not a mystery

2. the four personas

every creative process contains four jobs:

- madman → generates ideas
- architect → organizes ideas
- carpenter → executes the plan
- judge → evaluates the results

each role requires a different mindset

key rule:

only one persona at a time

3. writer's block = role confusion

most writer's block happens because the judge interrupts too early

common mistake:

trying to create and criticize simultaneously

solution:

separate the phases

create first

judge later

4. sensory writing

daily exercise:

- 5–10 minutes
- write sensory details only
- no opinions
- no analysis
- no judgment

focus on:

- images
- sounds
- textures
- smells
- movement

purpose:

- strengthen imagination
- train creativity on command
- create raw material for songs

key idea:

sensory writing feeds the madman

5. artistic songwriting vs. random songwriting

two approaches:

hail mary writing

- noodle first
- assign meaning later

artistic writing

- decide what to express first
- compose intentionally

key shift:

start with emotion, not sound

6. emotion comes first

before writing notes, ask:

- what am I trying to express?
- what emotion or idea is this song about?

write it down

paper remembers what inspiration forgets

key idea:

clear intention prevents getting lost

7. show, don't tell

weak writing:

"I was lonely."

strong writing:

describe:

- the empty street
- distant traffic
- cold air
- flickering lights

images create emotional impact

this applies to:

- lyrics
- instrumental music

key idea:

emotion → imagery → music

8. centered sensory writing

instead of writing freely:

stay close to one emotion or idea

generate:

- images
- sounds
- textures
- physical sensations

use these as source material

purpose:

translate emotions into concrete experiences

9. the seven elements of music

everything in music communicates through:

1. melody
2. harmony

3. rhythm
4. texture
5. timbre
6. dynamics
7. form

every musical decision affects expression

key question:

which choices best communicate the emotion?

10. dynamics are mindset

dynamics are not just volume

they represent attitude and energy

forte = push

piano = hold back

there is no true neutral dynamic

neutral playing sounds lifeless

key idea:

contrast creates emotional impact

11. rhythm of language influences music

speech contains natural rhythms

stressed syllables become musical accents

common metre (4-3-4-3) appears everywhere

language influences:

- phrasing

- lyric writing
- melodic rhythm

key idea:

music often grows out of speech

12. tempo is physical

tempo is connected to movement

ask:

how fast would someone walk while feeling this emotion?

that speed often suggests the tempo

examples:

- grief → slower movement
- excitement → faster movement

key idea:

tempo affects emotional perception

13. form vs. formula

most songs use:

verse → chorus → verse → chorus → bridge → chorus

this is a formula

not a rule

goal:

understand form well enough to break formulas intentionally

key idea:

form serves expression

not convention

14. idea generation systems

don't wait for inspiration

generate ideas deliberately

examples:

- sensory writing
- combining unrelated ideas
- dramatizing ordinary events
- collecting images and stories

key idea:

ideas are created, not discovered

15. topic selection matters more than technique

many musicians have skill

but nothing to say

technique alone is not enough

start with:

- a story
- an emotion
- a conflict
- a concept

then exaggerate and dramatize it

key idea:

content matters more than complexity

16. connecting musical ideas

when sections don't fit:

analyze differences using the seven elements

two solutions:

direct connection

change one section to match another

bridge section

compose a transition between them

surprising truth:

transition sections often become the strongest part of the song

bottom line

this section is really saying:

- creativity can be trained
- separate creation from judgment
- begin with emotion, not notes
- use imagery instead of explanation
- every musical element communicates emotion
- ideas are abundant
- great songwriting comes from intentional choices

and most importantly:

songwriting is not waiting for inspiration

it's learning how to think creatively on purpose