

fourteen in february

Songwriting Journal

Scott Simpson &
Dancin' Moon Studio



fourteen in february

Songwriting at Dancin' Moon Studio in Spearfish Canyon

*A songwriting journal to accompany the documentary film produced
by Scott Simpson & Dancin' Moon Studio in 2022...*

www.ScottSimpsonMusic.com/songwriting-course

Feel free to experiment with the 2022 FAWM weekly challenges as well as the "strategies" that Scott found helpful in writing his "fourteen" in February of 2022. View segment 01 the Introduction to the film here:



Copyright 2022, Scott Simpson, ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

For further questions or to see about booking Scott for a songwriting workshop, contact Scott at

scott.blackhills@gmail.com

Fourteen in February Songwriting Journal

There's no *one way* to write a song. There's no *right way*... and no *wrong way*. There is only *your way*—the way that you find this *one time* for this *one song*. Now, that way might work out for you again, or it might need some adjusting at a different time in a different situation... or it might have been simply a once-in-your-lifetime, productive strategy.

Songwriting is no science. The quality of the final product—the song—is a subjective matter. If you're writing songs to please other people first, you'll be frustrated most of the time. Please yourself first, find your voice first, pound out your frustration, angst, trauma, love, narrative, or heart the way it needs to be done for you. If someone else hears it and connects deeply with it, then count yourself fortunate. Sometimes the thing of beauty we make for ourselves is found beautiful or useful by others too. But, often, it will be overlooked. Your songs, if written, recorded, and/or produced by you will have beauty and significance, just know that your songs are not the first or only lovely and important things that this world has overlooked... and then, realize that you yourself have been overlooking many lovely and important things. Once you can admit that, then you'll be able to open your eyes and ears a bit more and see and hear *those things*, and maybe make some songs of them.

Fourteen in February is the story of a few songs that came to be for me during one month in February of 2022. It's not an exhaustive exploration of songwriting, and as I point out in the film, it's not even the endpoint for these fourteen songs. It's a small record of their conception and birth. I offer it selfishly—I wanted to document the process for myself and for my grandchildren who might find the journey interesting. But I'm also a teacher. That means that part of my pleasure in life is know that someone grew something with a seed I helped them to plant. These might be seeds. See if something comes of them for you.

By far the best way to learn songwriting is to spend some time with other people who do that, and to do a bit of it together. It helps if the process is more collaborative than competitive, but I won't suggest that competition has nothing to do with songwriting. Competition can be a powerful motivator for creating a song, but it's also an acid that will eat away your own true voice and hollow out your words to nothing but a recipe for more streams and fans.

Do some listening. Do a lot of writing. Place different sorts of instruments and tools in your hands. Look around you. See what calls you in a way that you can ignore. Open your mouth. Sing.

--Scott Simpson, March 19, 2022

Week One '22 FAWM Challenge:

Write a song about a body part

Scott's strategies



Segment 02 "Off My Chest"

- Use whatever instrument is handy—even a homemade or "non" instrument
- If the music's working, just generate "placeholder" lyrics



Segment 03 "This Growing Old"

- After writing with a "main" instrument for a while, change instruments for writing
- Emulate a musical mentor... musically or lyrically
- Take a deep look at your community... what's inspiring there?



- Intentionally play around with a particular musical genre
- Try for the “unexpected” lyrically or musically



Segment 05 "In Your Eyes"

- Use an instrument differently in some way



Segment 06 "This Dance"

- Use an old, "cheap" or homemade instrument to do some songwriting
- Write specifically to make people dance



Segment 07 "Beautiful"

- Look to some old photos for inspiration
- Try to write a song with a strong lyrical "hook"



Segment 08 "If I Only Had a Tail"

- Write about animals or your pets
- Write using an instrument that challenges your capacity to play

Week Two '22 FAWM Challenge:

Write a song with a one-note melody

Scott's strategies



Segment 09 "Berries & Thistles"

- Try putting an old poem or piece of writing to music
- Write early in the morning, while you're still a bit "dream-headed"



Week Three '22 FAWM Challenge: Write a song based on “polysemy”

Scott's strategies



Segment 11 “Second Story”

- Take an old idea that failed the first time and try songwriting it again
- Take an idea someone else did well, and write it very differently

Week Four '22 FAWM Challenge: Write a song with a 4-chord loop

Scott's strategies



Segment 12 "Howl"

- Meditate on a chord pattern and see what it suggests lyrically
- Write about a current political or social struggle that you care about
- Gather inspiration from a striking work of art that's NOT music



Segment 13 "Ukraine"

- Write about an immediate, "shared event" that's impacting your community
- Write about some major decision OR indecision you're facing



- Begin with chords or a progression from a cover song you admire
- Write a birthday song
- Write a "stage of life" song



Segment 15 "Our Trees Dance Together"

- Write a plea for peace or unity
- Repurpose old writings of any kind ("found" songwriting)
- Write about a lesson learned from nature

View the final segment, number 16, of the film here:



Or view the full film here:



Use the remaining 8 journal pages to continue or complete songwriting explorations you began in the pages above.

