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Ryan Kershaw is a board member of Independent Music New Zealand and recipient of the 2012 Music Managers Forum 'Mentoring Success' Award. The creator of Guitars On Fire and the NZ Underground Festival. He has written the worlds first book to combine personal growth and music called 'Use Your Buzz To Play The Guitar'

ryankershaw.com



Symbolism/metaphor: Using symbolism and metaphor is a very common, and effective way to write a song. You can write a song about a 'hook' but the hook might represent not an actual hook, but a thing that is keeping you from achieving your dreams. You can use words that mean other things from there first thought of meaning, or even make sounds on your guitar to represent things.

Example: Star Spangled Banner performed by Jimi Hendrix (hear the bombs dropping and the machine guns?)

Physically using or recording an object: (Funny thing happened today after writing this article – my mate came over and showed me pictures of him recording a live hawk in the recording studio. Literally a big f&*king bird flying from one end of the room to the other!

You can use anything to make music because music is sound based and most things make sound when moved or connecting with something else. On the track Second Hand News, Fleetwood Mac used tapping on a chair to get a rhythm going, which can be heard on the final recording. On Burning Of The Midnight Lamp, Jimi Hendrix used a hair comb wrapped in cellophane by blowing into it to create a sound reminiscent of a kazoo. What objects lying around your room could you use to create a unique sound. Bluesmen used to use the necks of broken beer bottles to create a slide effect, hence the term 'bottleneck slide'

I have used a couple of things on my live performances, which can be seen on my Live @ Studio DVD.:

Examples: Deodorant can for slide, and toy laser gun on Ryan Kershaw's performance of Voodoo Child, from the Live @ Studio DVD

Story behind and evoked emotion: Whilst it's true that a picture can paint a thousand words, it can also make you cry, laugh, try and forget or wonder what could have been. The greatest songs come from a memory or the stirring of the soul and there is nothing like your emotions to help create a song. You may have an ornament that a relative had given you before they passed away, or a piece of jewellery from an ex-partner. These will evoke emotion which can lead you to write music.

These items may also have a story behind them that you can write the soundtrack too, or you may be going through something that causes you to write.

RAINDROPS ON ROSES, WHISKERS ON KITTENS - FINDING INSPIRATION IN EVERYDAY OBJECTS

A common problem for aspiring songwriters is being stuck for ideas, but if you let them, ideas can come from anywhere. You can even take ideas from just looking around you where you are now.

Here are some ways that you can turn what is in and around your house into the spark that ignites a song being written.

Objects for Lyrics: Look around the area that you are in and pick an object. It might be a table, book or chair. Let's use book as an example. Write the word 'book' and then follow with words that rhyme with 'book'. Use this to start a line. For example: This is a song about a book, with a recipe which you cannot cook, a magic sound that is a hook, the secret ingredient in a great song book.

Examples: Green by Goodshirt, Cheap Sunglasses by ZZ Top, Cars by Gary Numan

Another way to come up with lyrics using household objects is to describe it in great detail, but never reveal what it is. You can use this almost as a riddle, or even to make the listener think that you are talking about something meaningful, when in fact the lyrics are just about a steaming kettle!

Objects for music: Here's a nice challenge. Make music that would be the sound of an object, area or animal. Think of something like a lava lamp. Would the music be fast? Probably not. What qualities does a lava lamp radiate when switched on? It is slow and smooth. It's contents change and create pictures to the person that is watching. Could you make music to suit that atmosphere?

Examples: Effervescing Elephant by Syd Barrett/Pink Floyd, Dolphins by Ryan Kershaw, Mountain Serenity by Byron M. Davis.

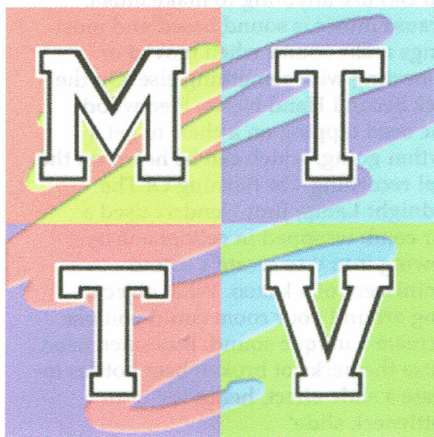
"Hendrix used a hair comb wrapped in cellophane"

Guitar Intuition

I often think that although it can be best to leave interpretation open to the listener, knowing what a song is about can often provide more relevance for the listener and a sense of connection with the song.

My song 'Instrumental' was written in my first successful patch of being sober in a long time. I wrote it to express the sense of rising above that I was feeling after going through some things that were personal to me. You can hear it start softly, then crashes as the band comes in, the boat starts to rock in the harmonized part, then it starts to build again. It reaches the high note where it stays, feeling like it has become strong but just has that little bit further to go, then breaks into the main part at the end signifying the overcoming.

Do you have anything in your house which is sentimental to you, or something that reminds you of someone. Before you go onto your next activity, try and write a riff or small piece of music now using one of the ideas I have gone over in this article.



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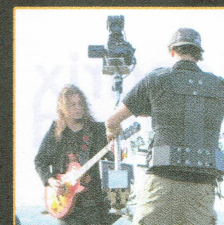
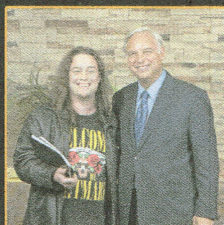
Ryan is an active board member of Independent Music New Zealand and has featured on the following radio and television productions



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