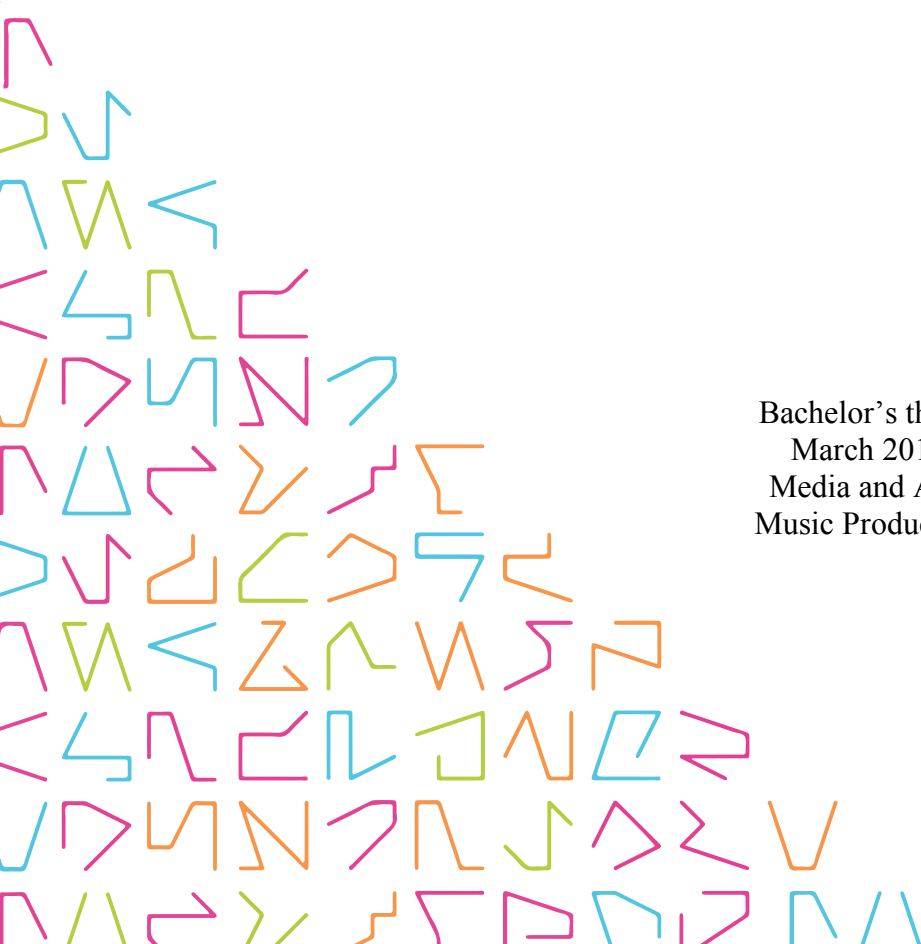


HOW TO MAKE IT AS A SONG- WRITER

My Personal Learning Experience

Marcus Tikkanen

Bachelor's thesis
March 2018
Media and Arts
Music Production



ABSTRACT

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MARCUS TIKKANEN:
How to make it as a songwriter
My personal learning experience

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The presence of songwriters has been always been very strong in the music business from the early days of sheet music into the present world of pop today. Still today the songwriters hardly get noticed and most of all get paid enough to keep the craft going.

An in-depth look via several books about songwriting and articles from reliable web sources gives an insight to the reality of songwriters. The aim of this thesis was to open the door to the world of songwriting by case examples and by looking into the interviews about what the hit writers have to say about the music business now.

Now more than ever in the growing music industry the need for great songs is constant and the future will tell if the songwriters will start getting more credit for the work they are doing.

Key words: songwriter songwriting topline music business publishing

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1 INTRODUCTION

Ever since I was a kid I was fascinated by music and nothing was better than mail ordering new CDs from my favorite american rock bands. I spent a lot of time reading the album covers and booklets because I wanted to dive deeper into the songs by going through the lyrics and who wrote the songs and who was the producer. Back then there was more mystery to the music and artists and it was less known publicly that there can be other people writing the music instead of the artists.

The passion for music grew more and more and soon I found myself playing in bands dreaming about being a rockstar and hoping for music to be my profession. As I grew older the dreams about rock stardom was replaced the reality and it was time to start thinking about other ways of doing music. Later on while studying at the Tampere University of Applied Sciences I discovered that I wanted to pursuit a career as a songwriter. One thing lead to another and I eventually met songwriter/A&R Radboud Miedema and after that it has been a rollercoaster ride into the music business with its ups and downs.

In thesis I will write my own experiences as a songwriter going from nowhere to being an established writer and also talk about the background story, respecting the confidentiality, about 5 of my released songs that were important to me before anything big had happened. I will try to cover the things that I feel are important to songwriters and what were important to me as a writer trying to get my songs out there.

Songwriting is a career that you choose out of passion and not by just wanting to have a job. To me there is nothing better than being able to do music and I hope it will continue for the rest of my life.

2 SONGWRITING

2.1 Career choice

If you have chosen a career in music business you have to understand that it's not a career showcasing the art of music but you are part of the music business and the objective is to earn money.

It is important to specifically define the target consumer that will be the likely purchaser and what changes can happen in the lifestyle and values during the upcoming years of the career. A single description can make the target too narrow this is why all the available talents of the artist should be exploited to help broaden the appeal of the artist leading to a growing fan base. This also leads to broadening the definition of consumers and fans. (Allen 2011.)

A good song can be anything in any genre and the only thing that matters is that it connects the listener to the song like in the article in The Guardian said by Sway (The Guardian 2011). This is something I have learned and you can see it trending in the urban genre. There's always the market for that bubblegum type of pop music but still all that matters in the end is that the song is good.

But for some reason according to Ross Golan the industry is screwing on the writers by not having a real distribution of wealth. He mentions that the middle class of songwriters has been demolished by giving an example of earning 3000 dollars for one song selling a 100 000 copies (The Rolling Stone, 2017). Also Broussard says the same in The Washington Post article by stating that he has made music for a living for a long time but for him to be able to provide income to his family he needs to stay away from home most of the year doing music (The Washington Post 2017).

That is also something that Jim Duguid, co-author of Paolo Nutini's debut album, describes how it shocks him that when having had some success how little money there is if your song isn't on an advert or TV (The Guardian 2011).

2.2 How to write a song that sells

“No artist, manager, or A&R (Artist & Repertoire) person searches for just any song. None searches for even a good song. Everyone is looking for a hit song. Unfortunately, most songwriters, and many A&R people, don’t exactly know what a hit song is. Fewer still have figured out how to construct one.” (Beall 2009, 11.)

The emphasis on hits is because hits make an impact that a thousand interesting, pleasant or experimental album tracks don’t. Only hits have the power to transform an unknown artist into a celebrity overnight. Since the 1960s the industry has never been as “single” -focused as it is today. There’s almost half-million songwriters in the United States only and to succeed every songwriter should take advice from Eric Beall:

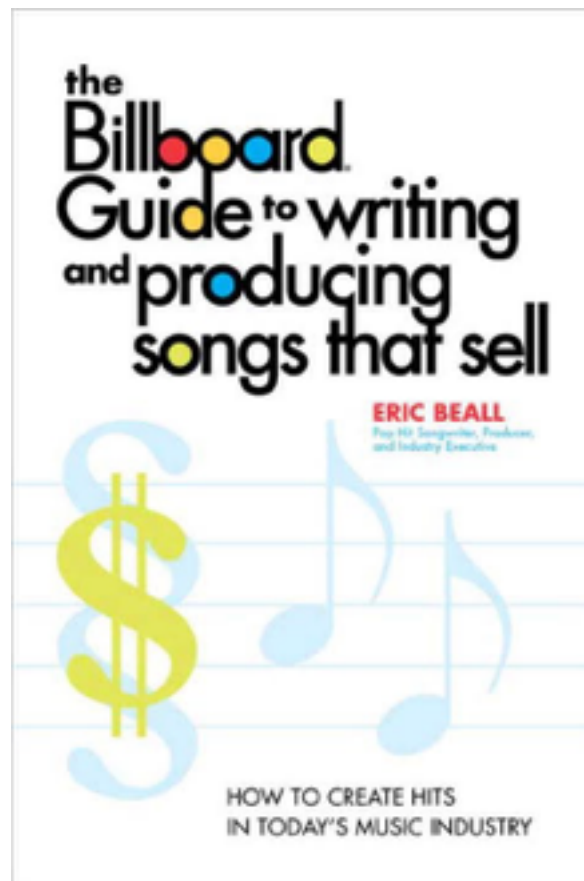
“Before you start writing or rewriting, it’s essential to learn what a record label A&R person, a radio music director, or music marketer needs for your song to succeed in the fiercely competitive environment of today’s music industry.” (Beall 2009, 14).

You shouldn’t fight the format when it comes to understanding audience. Rock songs must be rock and like every genre should appeal directly to the target audience. Of course there is a lot of examples of crossovers like dance pop but overall the genre needs to make sense in a way the consumer feels comfortable. Eric Beall tells an example of an A&R meeting where one executive presented a new project for which he had high hopes. A young black woman combined rock with heavy guitars and urban with hip-hop beats. But she wasn’t an urban artist and her lyrics had a rock attitude but she wasn’t a rock artist either. As Eric Beall writes the room felt very awkward and finally, the president of the company said:

“I don’t get it. Who is the audience then? Where do we take this? What radio station? What are we going to do with it?” The artist was dropped from the label roster before the record was ever released. (Beall 2009.)

My personal experience is that if you yourself don’t believe in the song you have written it’s not going to make anybody else to believe in it. So what makes a song relatable for

the audience? Well the melody, also called topline, has to be interesting so that it's unique, catchy and recognisable which I think is something that comes up naturally if you are in any way able to put out what you are hearing in the chords. It doesn't matter if you aren't a great singer, you can always play the melody with some instrument if necessary.



PICTURE 1. The Billboard Guide to Writing and Producing Songs that Sell: How to Create Hits in Today's Music Industry. (Photo: Eric Beall 2009)

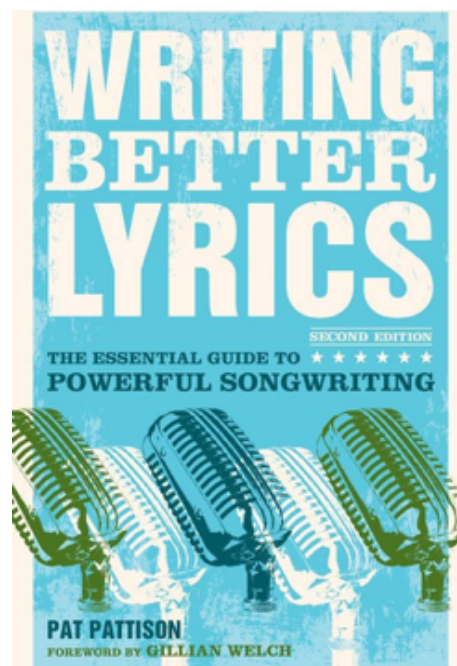
Eric beall goes into detail in the book The Billboard Guide to Writing and Producing Songs that Sell: How to Create Hits in Today's Music Industry about the hit formula and the recipe to writing a hit. Which is as funny as it sounds because no one actually knows how to write hits but there are some tools you can use to do it. It is like Eric Beall says:

“A hit song has something special - it's different, but not too different. That's the formula the best writers know how to use”. (Beall 2009).

The emphasis on lyrics and rhyming is big. Personally I've read a lot of books and tried to learn these things by doing exercises and if there's one book that I could recommend for every songwriter it's Writing Better Lyrics 2nd Edition by Pat Pattison, who has been

teaching songwriting at Berklee College of Music and has been teaching songwriters like Grammy winners John Mayer, wrote this book in 1995 and it's been since used to teach songwriting. I bought this book for my Kindle app and have been going back to every now and then because of the amount of information it contains.

From the many exercises chapter nineteen Understanding motion offers great insight on how to make your lyrics move. It explains how motion creates emotion and this is how you take the listener on an interesting journey. When you write lyrics there are two elements that create motion and emotion, the first one is the words and ideas themselves and the second one is the overall lyric structure. This means the how you control the grouping of lines and how they structure by rhythm and length you control the way the lyrics move. But like this chapter there's lots of exercises that goes deep into rhymes, stresses and rhyming schemes such as ABAB rhyming that I personally think that this book will last for a lifetime with reading and going back to it. These 288 pages are so much full of information that it takes a long time and many many reads to even understand the surface of it.



PICTURE 2. Writing Better Lyrics by Pat Pattison. (Photo: Pat Pattison)

Then there is the importance of rhyming which is that songs are made for ears, not for eyes. Which of course means that because people listen to songs you must learn to rhyme in a way that the ears know what's happening. Because rhyming is your friend it is important to learn how to rhyme in a way that the syllables' vowels rhyme. And also that

there's a difference between rhyming and repetition ie. by using words like birthplace, misplace and replace you don't rhyme you end up repeating because the endings are the same.

In rhyming you can see that a lot of times writers try to use perfect rhymes like wear/pair which means that the syllables' vowel sounds are the same, the sounds after the vowels are the same and the sounds before the vowels are different. Most rhymes like perfect rhymes belong to either masculine or feminine rhymes meaning that a masculine rhyme is command where as feminine is commanding. There's a difference on where the stress is. But you can also rhyme using imperfect like crash/half but these should only be used if you know how and when to use them.

2.3 Co-writing, sessions and splits

“Bear in mind that co-writing requires an understanding of each others' approach to writing.” (ASCAP.com 2017).

You can write a song by yourself but co-writing can be a lot more faster and a lot more fun. I've heard many times that songwriting business is a number's game and in a way it's true. Sometimes it can take many years for a song to get cut which is why you need to have a lot of songs on hold all the time and being pitched to A&Rs. That also brings up the question of quality, if you need to write 100 songs per year every year how can all the songs be top quality and the answer to that from personal experience is that a lot of the songs are just going to be ok level.

Co-write sessions set up usually by your publisher are a good way to improve your skills and reflect your writing and yourself as a person with other writers in the room. In my case my publisher always tries to put me into sessions with more established writers or at least with more established publishing houses or labels. It is good to have certain roles in the session, so that there is a tracker who does all the tracking, topliner who is responsible for the melody and lyricist, even though the roles are most of the time mixed.

I've learned to stay a bit more in the background not pushing my ideas that much anymore but more seeing what other people come up melody or concept wise and then take it from

there fine tuning these ideas. Sessions can be very sensitive because everybody wants to succeed so it's good to break the ice with just chatting the first hour and getting to know each other instead of jumping straight to work.

Ralph Murphy, a famous Nashville songwriter that has written tips to ASCAP has a good point when he says that if none of the ideas work out, do something else. Talking about the weather or anything else but not religion or politics will do good or even just booking another day for writing. Just repeating the process without nothing working you may be better off as riends than frustrated co-writers. (ASCAP.com 2017.)

It is good to talk about splits before the end of the day to see that every agrees on splitting the copyright share equally unless your publisher has already mentioned it before hand. There are cases where people don't want to share copyrights equally even though most of the time everybody agrees that everyone working on the song in the session should get an equal split. There are exceptions in example an additional producer is called to work on a certain part of the track and instead of getting an equal share the producer will get only a few percentages.

“Remember that successful collaboration doesn't mean that you necessarily have to be best friends. The only important thing is the quality of the song, and if the partnership doesn't work, don't worry.” (ASCAP.com 2017.)

3 MUSIC BUSINESS

3.1 How to get involved

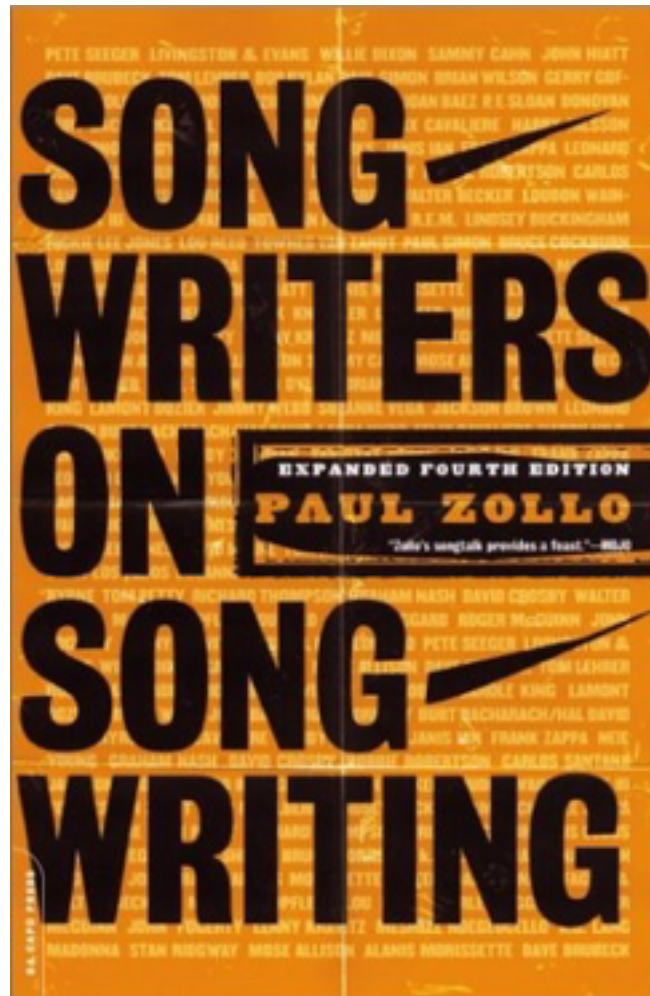
"The music industry can be best defined as encompassing a range of economic activities or revenue streams." (Shuker 2013, 20).

It was late 2014 when I started studying Music Production in Tampere University of Applied Sciences as a last attempt to try to make music a living. I had grinded over 10 years in bands before that and was questioning if I could actually earn money by making music or at least do it professionally with just enough income to live. Quickly during the first semester it came clear to me that I truly had a passion for songwriting so I tried to get every information available to speed things up. My first success already came a couple of weeks after starting school which was September 2014, I was able to get one of my songs to Finnish Eurovision Song contest called UMK. It wasn't a winning song but I was fortunate to earn some money and boost my confidence as a writer.

The business is hard and unfair which I learned right away and without the proper network and legal advisors it can get you down. In the book *All You Need To Know About Music Business* Donald Passman confirms that the first person in your team is a manager or a lawyer (Passman, 2017 41). It all comes up to getting the right people around you like in the book *Songwriters on Songwriting* there's a chapter about Alanis Morrissette in which the writer Paul Zollo sums it up accurately saying when Alanis had to find a collaborator it wasn't an easy task because all the previous collaborators had objected to her songform and changing the lyrics and music. Eventually after meeting with a lot of writers she found her musical partner capable of providing a foundation of freedom for the music and lyrics she wrote. (Zollo 2003, 652.)

A great example of how the songwriting business works is the legal dispute by Leona Lewis and Avicii where attempted to block the release of Lewis' new single *Collide* alleging that the instrumental was copied from his single *Fade Into Darkness*. Helienne Lindvall writes in *The Guardian* that the reason behind this is a common practice among dance artists that they sent an instrumental to topliners to work with which results in a somewhat similar melody among the writers. In case your topline isn't picked you will

be left with a topline that you spent time working with which you want to get released which is what happened in Lewis' case. In the end the legal dispute was settled by crediting all the writers involved. (The Guardian 2011.)



PICTURE 3. Songwriters on Songwriting. (Photo: Paul Zollo 2003)

Little did I know about the business back then and after meeting some of the Finnish industry people I soon found out myself again back to square one but this time with a lot more knowledge. I started truly focusing on writing better melodies and better lyrics by reading books and doing exercises, in which I will go more into detail later, and then a year later in September 2015 I attended a writing camp in Leeuwarden, Netherlands which was arranged by school. It was an intense week and basically my first cowrite session with people I've never met before. First time I got feedback for what I had written which was nice but I still knew there's a lot to improve. This writing week eventually led via people to getting my songs heard by my now present manager Radboud Miedema who had by the time written a hit with Lost Frequencies called Reality which topped charts in many countries. To me this was an opportunity I needed to take because I had

sparkled an interested to my skills in a multi-platinum songwriter. So I started to think what can I do to get to that level that my songs will end up in the radio.

How to keep grinding is a question I've asked myself many times when it seems that nothing is happening but in the end there isn't a shortcut to success and you just have to keep focused on writing quality songs one after another.

Like Burt Bacharach, the very famous pianist, songwriter and movie composer, says in *Songwriters on Songwriting* that songwriting is a discipline which you need to practice over and over again:

“And I don't necessarily go by this, but it's a rule I think I should go by, and when I'm right, I'll do it, which is: music breeds its own inspiration. You can only do it by doing it. You just sit down and you may not feel like it, but you push yourself.” (Zollo 2003, 205.)



PICTURE 4. In the session with Laidback Luke in October 2016. (Photo: Marcus Tikkanen 2016)

Fast forward to January 2017 Radboud had founded his own publishing company Roseville Publishing under Strengholt Music Group and I joined his team by signing an exclusive publishing agreement. We started writing together and arranging sessions in Sweden where I have been going frequently because it's close by and UK. The highlight of working together was 2017 summer hit Up Till Dawn (On The Move) released by biggest dance label Spinnin' Record with dutch DJ duo Lucas & Steve which was radio's most played song in Netherlands, topped the official chart there as number 2 and I received my double platinum record to hang on my wall.



PICTURE 5. Received double platinum from Radboud while having sessions in Stockholm. (Photo: Marcus Tikkanen 2017)

A lot of things have happened during these 3 years, I've met already many songwriters, business people and connected with various organizations and for every success there has been a bunch of setbacks.

Now it's time to develop my skills more and aim to get cuts with big US artists in the year 2018 which is hard but doable. Took a while to get to the level of getting big international leads and opportunities so now it's time to test the skills. I have been happy to be able to join Music Finland's vision, which was made public in Slush 2017, for the future of making Finnish music industry known and wanted as well as taking Finnish songwriting abroad (Music Finland, 2017). It is quite a vision when you look at the state of our domestic industry but if enough people believe in it and start making changes it is possible. There are cases like myself who skipped the domestic market completely and went straight abroad.

"The music industry is big business, an international multi-billion dollar enterprise." (Shuker 2013, 45).

Like mentioned by Shuker in the book *Understanding Popular Music Culture* the music industry is centered in the United States and the United Kingdom it makes sense for Music Finland to push domestic industry abroad for larger revenues (Shuker 2013, 45).

3.2 Publishing and copyrights

"The legal definition of a copyright is a limited duration monopoly." (Passman 2017, 369).

I won't go into the history of publishing but instead approach it from the songwriter's point of view and what I've learned personally. Once you write a song down or record it you have copyrights to what you have created (Passman, 2017, 370). With copyrights comes publishing and publishers and the need of a publisher is something that has raised questions in the music industry. It is true that in some cases there's absolutely no need for having a publishing agreement. Let's say you have managed to get connected to the in-

dustly by yourself and you already have an outlet for your songs and you trust the copyright organization for collecting all the money so why would you need a publisher to get a share of your copyrights? Well, in this case you don't.



PICTURE 6. Me signing an exclusive publishing deal in Rotterdam, January 2017. (Photo: Marcus Tikkanen 2017)

But if you are an upcoming songwriter with no connections grinding by yourself somewhere in Finland then yes, you definitely need a publisher. Your publisher is the one who's going to pitch your songs, get you into sessions and eventually makes sure all the publishing money is collected because that's also their money. Publisher is someone who can vouch for you when people like A&Rs from other companies ask what has this songwriter done, is he or she any good and why should this writer to be taken into sessions let alone work with one of their artists? This is the reality I have faced while going to places and talking to my manager Radboud. Someone needs to take care of business. (Passman 2017, 384.)

On my own journey I had to prove my skills by writing many songs, I think somewhere around 10, before I even got into working title basis. Then of course I had to prove my

work ethics by actually being able to deliver topline after topline to the instrumentals he provided to me and most of all my mentality for craving success which took about the whole year in 2016. Finally again late 2016 things started rolling and I was invited to sessions abroad with people like Laidback Luke which was a great experience and I started getting cuts with smaller DJs. Cut - a commercially released recording of a song as explained in the website SongTown (SongTown 2017). All of these small steps were very important for me to get a stamp of approval on my writing even though in the end none of the smaller songs brought any money which is a sad side of the music industry when you are working as a songwriter. I ended up writing about 100 songs during that year which most of them eventually I ended up throwing into the trashcan because the quality just wasn't good enough to end up in the radio.

Up until this point I had been working title basis with Strengtholt Music Group, in which Radboud was an A&R at the time, so eventually after all of my cuts and sessions he asked if I'd like to do an exclusive publishing deal with them.

Personally I have found having a publishing deal very useful while building my profile as a songwriter and it has definitely been boosting my career. I've been able to get into places and sessions into which I would have not been able to go without someone speaking for me. I also have someone who is pitching the songs I write and constantly creating new opportunities with leads which are, shortly explained, briefs for artists looking for a certain type of songs. A good publisher has four functions that he acts in behalf of the songwriter – as an administrator, banker, promoter and nurturer. (ASCAP.com 2017).

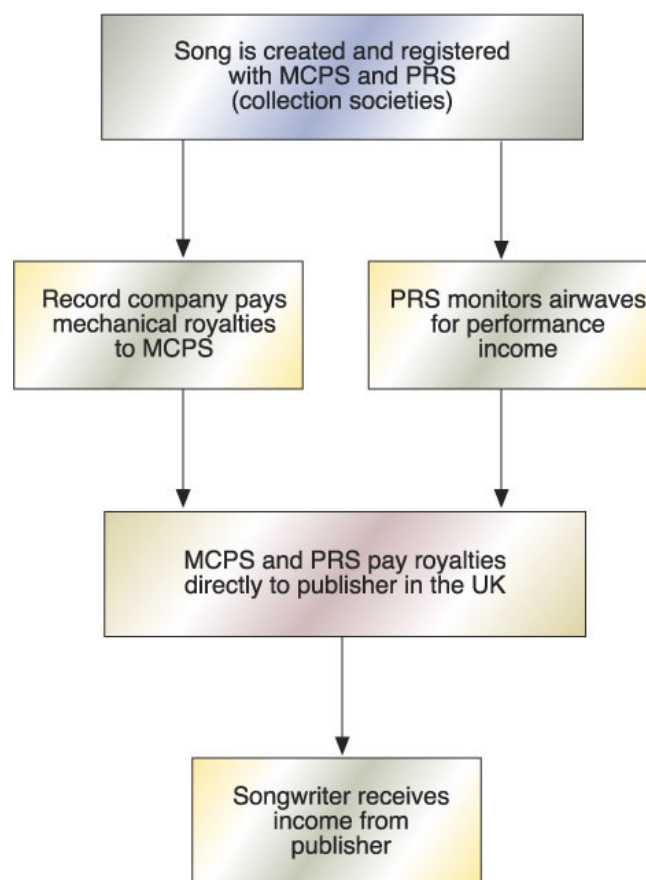
3.3 Publishing agreements

The very typical publishing agreement usually is that in your domestic country your publisher will have 33% of your copyright money and abroad 50% of the song that he represents. These can vary a lot depending on the level of the songwriter and how successful they are. (Passman 2017, 386.)

As I mentioned earlier I worked title basis which means all the songs my publisher was able to get cut I signed to his catalog. When publisher are working with other publishers they usually have sub-publishing agreements but these never interfere with songwriter's

share, nevertheless what is the publisher doing a songwriter will get the share that is in the agreement. There can be many other different kind of agreements but these are the most typical and what you need to know as a songwriter. (Passman 2017, 467-472.) And because copyrights are the main income for songwriters for the music they are doing remember to always check the agreement you receive with a legal advisor's so there aren't anything that could ruin your career. Copyrights are paid to the writer by the copyright organization which in my case is finnish Teosto.

Being an exclusively signed songwriter means that everything you write within the period of your agreement belongs to the publisher who is representing your share. You can also ask for an advance payment for a reasonable sum that you think you are able to recoup while you are bound by your agreement. Passman writes that an established writer the advances can range from 2000 dollars to several thousand dollars per month (Passman 2017, 501). As Wikipedia explains there's also a staff writer deal in which, the writer is paid on weekly or quarterly basis (Wikipedia, 2017).



PICTURE 7. How publishing works. (Photo: Sound On Sound 2005)

4 THE 5 MOST IMPORTANT SONG THAT I GOT CUT

4.1 Run Wild

This song was written on top of an instrumental provided by a dutch DJ Ralvero released by Mixmash Records on November 2016. Last time I checked it had about 1,5 million views on YouTube and over 763 000 streams on Spotify.

When I got the instrumental somewhere around spring 2016 from my publisher Radboud I remember it's brief being the same as almost all the briefs around that time, either Calvin Harris or Chainsmokers with hit potential. So I started listening to the instrumental and I got the vision of what the song was about immediately. It reminded me of my early teens how we always used to wear black clothes, get drunk and just do whatever we liked. The first verse sums up the story nicely when the lyrics go:

"Young and wild, dressed in black / Tales from nights and flashbacks / One more time before the night is gone / That's how we roll and we ain't turning back".

I had to rewrite the prechorus melody and lyrics two times until Ralvero was satisfied because he wanted it to be something that everybody could sing along. The final version goes:

"Everybody high doing just fine / Do a little dance have a good time / Are you with me now? We're running wild".

And then for the second round I changed the lyrics a bit to avoid too much repetition:

"Everybody high and it's alright / We ain't gonna sleep, go all night / Are you with me now? We're running wild".

The chorus melody and the lyrics I came up right away when I was freestyling to my phone:

"Cause we run run run run wild / Young and wild, running wild".

Usually the second verse can be a bit hard to figure out but here the story could be summed so easily saying:

”When we ride, we don’t look back / Warning sign, panic attacks”.

The rest of the second verse has the same ending as the first verse which was a decision I chose to make because the melody is there the one creating the change. One of my favorite songs still even though it didn’t blow big on the radio but it has been nice to notice that in YouTube the song lives its on life.

This one took a few revisions with the writing process since the first prechorus I did wasn’t “sing along” enough so I ended up doing two more and the DJ picked one of those. I recorded a singer for this one with my AKG Perception 120 budget mic with Slate Digital Virtual Mix Rack for processing the vocals. I had to coach and guide the singer to make get the proper delivery and feeling to the vocals because Ralvero was quite precise how he wanted the vocals to sound like.

The release of this song ended up on being on Mixmash Records even though it was offered to other labels but the sound of the production didn’t fit the other labels profiles. I signed agreements for master royalties with a decent percentage amount but the problem with these royalties like mentioned earlier in this thesis is that the money still doesn’t come down to the writers but it disappears along the way. Copyrights we split equally 50/50 for music and lyrics.

4.2 Stay High

I remember receiving the instrumental in the beginning of 2016 from my publisher and thinking that the chord progression was so weird that I needed to just think about something out of the box even though the brief had the same “looking for Chainsmokers style” topline. That’s how I came up with the eastern type melody with a bit progressive rhythms. Lyrics in this one are mostly repetition but here the magic of the song was the feeling. This one was released by We Are Loud via Spinnin' Records on January 2017. Ended up played in dutch radio, has over 747 000 views on YouTube and about 877 000

streams on Spotify. The reason why this song was important to me is that it was released with Spinnin' Records which is the biggest dance label in the world.



PICTURE 7. AKG Perception 120. (Photo: AKG)

This one took almost a year to get released and at some point I thought it never will. Don't know if the reason was just the usual business politics of negotiations taking forever or that there was so many versions done by the guys. Vocals again were recorded with the same setup of AKG Perception 120 budget mic with Slate Digital Virtual Mix Rack.

I was happy to get a decent amount from master royalties and the copyrights we split equally 33% each of us three. At the same time I went to Rotterdam to sign my publishing deal I got to see the music video shooting for this song which was a nice experience.

4.3 XOXO

This one I wrote to another instrumental provided by my publisher during the beginning of 2016 but when I sent it the artist had already picked a topline. Sometimes you have to be very fast with these toplines but in my case it eventually got done after a year of the actual writing. I got an instrumental from Ralvero in the following summer and wrote a couple of toplines on it which he didn't like so I just thought if I try this old one I had for it. Suited quite nicely with the chords it had and send it to Ralvero which he did like.

I remember recording the song from three different keys with the singer because Ralvero wanted to try how the instrumental sounds in different keys again with the same setup of AKG Perception 120 budget mic with Slate Digital Virtual Mix Rack. It was quite a tedious task but had to be done in this case. It took quite a few months when Ralvero eventually notified it will be a collab with him and Luke which was a nice surprise for me since I've been wanting to have a song with Luke for a while already. It's quite funny how in the beginning you're nowhere and then suddenly you are.



PICTURE 8. Slate Virtual Mix Rack. (Photo: Slate Digital)

Why I chose this song to be in my thesis is that it brought me a lot of memorable experiences like playing it live on dutch radio with Laidback Luke and doing an acoustic "live"

music video. It was a collaboration between Laidback Luke and Ralvero released with Mixmash Recods on February 2017 and has now over 2,1 million streams on Spotify.



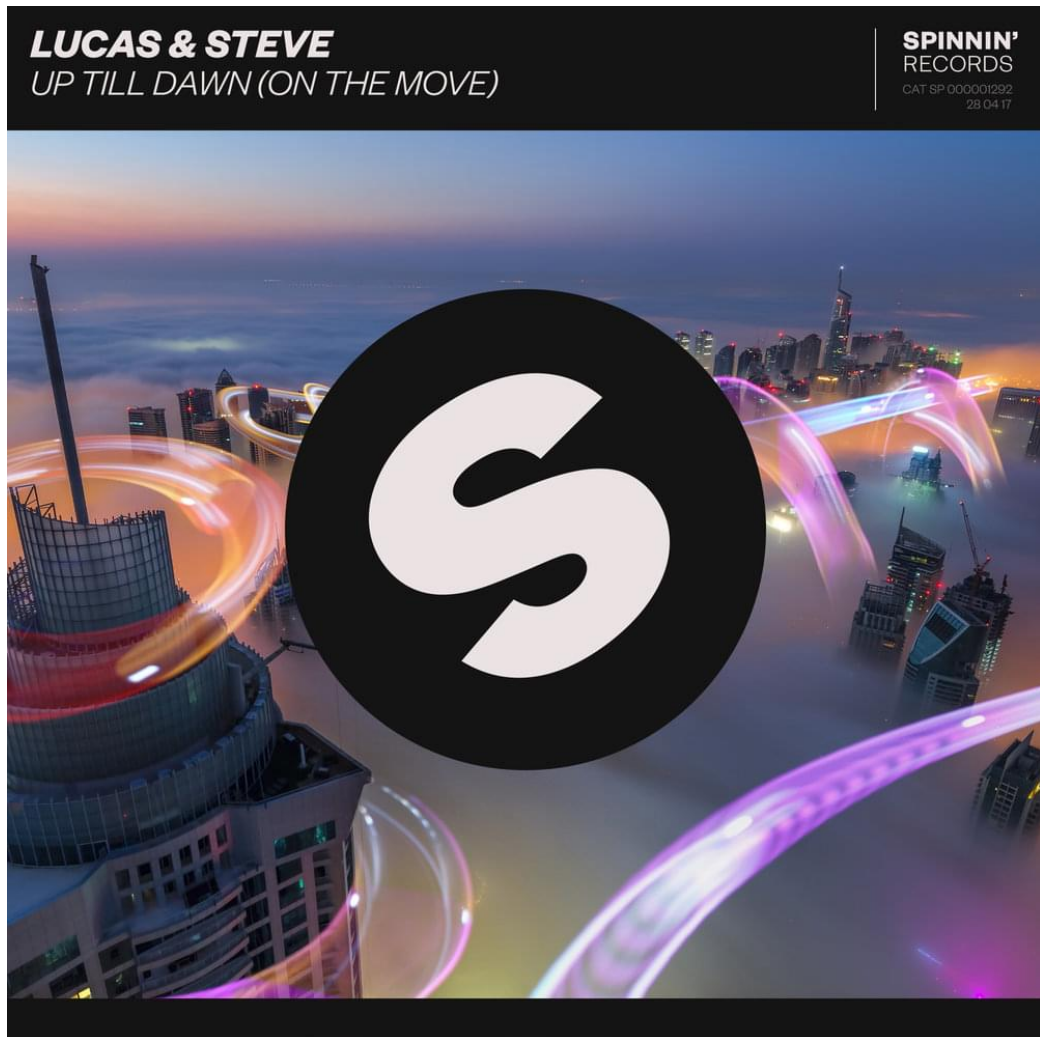
PICTURE 12. Live radio performance of XOXO. (Photo: Niko Mansikka-aho 2017)

4.4 Up Till Dawn (On The Move)

The biggest song I have made that established my position as a hit writer in Europe and opened doors to me also here in Finland. It is a partial cover based on Barthezz - On The Move which is the lead melody in the chorus. I co-wrote it with Radboud and did a nice job combining a singer songwriter style into this corny uplifting summer theme which suited perfectly to the dutch DJ duo Lucas & Steve.

It was a brief from Strengholt's Niels Pijpers who had told Radboud they wanna offer a rework for Spinnin Records so me and Radboud started working on it from a singer songwriter point of view to make it more radio than clubby.

We ended up writing completely new verses, prechorus and bridge to the song with the chorus melody being the rework of the original song our lyrics added to it. It was a winter day here in Finland when I recorded the vocal take with the singer and sent it to Radboud to do some guitars and additional editing. I liked doing this one because it was my first rework based on a direct brief between the publishers and label. Then Lucas&Steve worked around our vocals and guitars creating the final result which can be now heard.



PICTURE 9. Lucas & Steve – Up Till Dawn (On The Move). (Photo: Spinnin Records 2017)

Publishing side for this one was different since it was already being registered and we had to negotiate a deal around that. Sometimes in these cases it can be that the writers who do the rework don't get any copyrights or a very little amount. I'm happy to say I got pretty nice deal along with the master royalties and being listed as a performer on the song playing guitar which creates me income through Sena, which is the same as Finnish Gramex. At that point I decided to join Sena because it's lot more easier for me.

The lyrics in the first and second verse go:

”Sometimes when love is calling / I just try to take it slow, oh / It’s gone the other morning / Like those angels in the snow, oh”.

”Sometimes without a warning / I go and give someone my soul, you know / You leave and leave me longing / For that special night once more, I’m up for more”.

So the verses follow a very intimate singer songwriter style combined with the ”oh” melody hook in the end of the lines. To create variation the second verse the ”ohs” were replaced by lyrics. Prechorus also is in the same style going:

”On our way / To the bay / Dazzled by the way the sun shines on your face, oh / If you say / You will stay / We could feel the love and dance the night away”.

Then the corny and a bit goofy style comes up in the chorus when the lyrics go:

”Cause oh the night is young / We’re drinking cocktails in the sun / DJ plays that song / You and I go on and on / We’re just having fun / Feels so right it must be wrong / We’ll be up till dawn”.

This one is a good example that sometimes the very obvious and goofy things work especially when it suits the artists profile. A perfect summer hit which launched Lucas & Steve to be known in Europe. Released with Spinnin’ Records on April 2017 and now that I last checked has over 5,8 million views on YouTube and 23 million streams on Spotify.

4.5 Feel Good

I chose this song to be the last on the list because to me it is very special one. 2014 I started an artist project called Everest with my friend Niko Mansikka-aho as the face and me being in the background. This song is the first outside of Finland for us released by FRNT Records on May 2017 and I’m really happy with zero promotion it now has about 83 000 streams on Spotify and steadily living its on life.



PICTURE 10. Everest – Feel Good. (Photo: FRNT 2017)

We went to Dancefair, which is a music happening with the dutch dance industry, in Utrecht Netherlands lasting two days where the industry gathers, showcases talents and arrangers workshops to offer our songs to the labels and hopefully sign a deal. We had a meeting with the people from Mixmash Records to which FRNT is a sublabel and managed to get them excited about Feel Good demo.

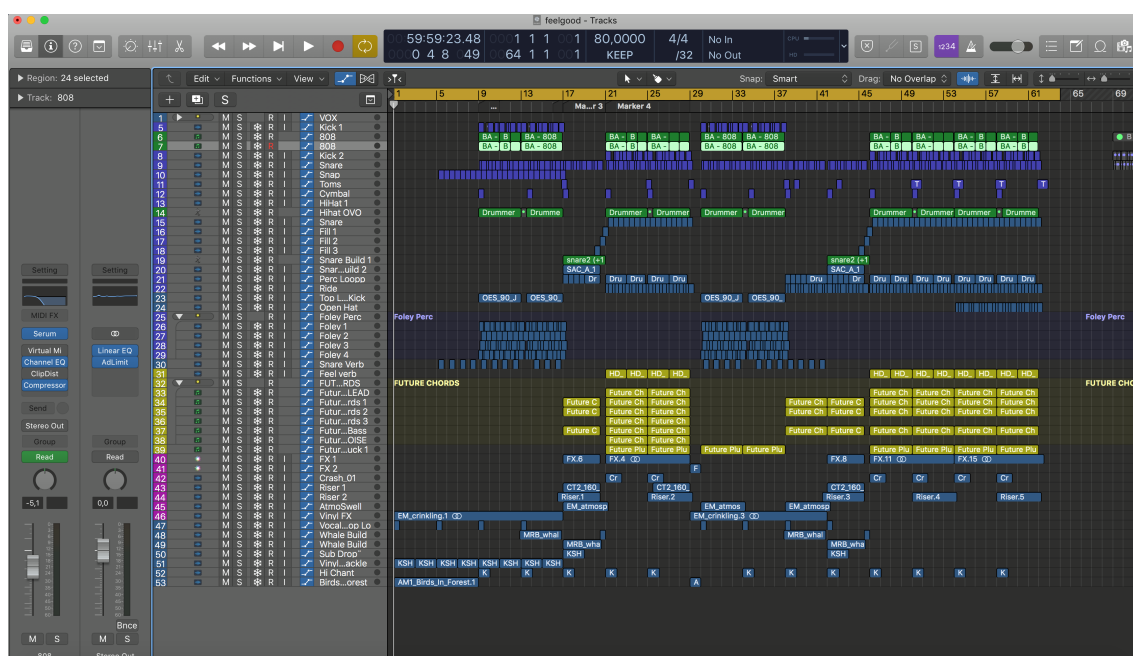


PICTURE 12. Dancefair 2018. (Photo: Dancefair 2018)

After that we spent quite a few days finishing the production and I guided the vocalist how to sing the song via Skype. Then after getting the vocal files I spent time editing and doing production in Logic X which is the main DAW I work with.

We signed a single deal with FRNT with terms that are confidential and I recommend everyone to check their deals with a legal advisor. The industry is still flawed with the deals and some of the terms are back from the day when physical sales were high which doesn't hold the ground anymore when almost all the income comes from streaming.

For the copyrights it was equal split between me and Niko. The song follows an urban and poetic vibe which later on has brought as a lot of nice things I can't write about for the confidentiality reason.



PICTURE 11. Project file of Feel Good. (Photo: Marcus Tikkanen 2017)

I believe in poetic lyrics especially in the urban genre and I can dive deeper into the story of the songs which is a one night stand described in a very poetic way. The first verse goes:

”Shy paced thrilling ride / See you flow like a river / Smile of gold and the glimmer / Such a nice way of killing time / Lying down here together / Feeling light like a feather”.

Because the verse uses normal things in a very playful way like smiling with descriptive words such as gold and the glimmer leading the story forward I wanted to let the listener

breath and think about things in the prechorus. Which is why the prechorus only repeats the line "feel good" instead of bringing anything more to the table. Then the chorus kicks in where the listener realizes what's actually happening, which of course can mean a lot of things to other people, when the lyrics are very understandable saying:

"You, always take my breath away / You, come and take my pain away".

The we dive again to the poetry in the second verse describing the situation again:

"Wild taste, kiss n' cry / Feel your warmth like a fever / Signs of love make me shiver / What a great way to bill tonight / You and I here forever / Better right now that never".

Up until now the story has remained in the same state of just having this merciful relief of the other person but the bridge gives a little bit of a twist with the following lines:

"You take me by the hand / And make me feel alive / Cross my heart, hope we don't crash / I don't want tears this time".

And the ending line here saying "this time" is the hint to the listener that this same thing has happened before. I personally really enjoy writing this kind of poetic lyrics and it has been very nice to notice the songs connects to people. Like Kinder says in the Washington Post article:

"Songwriters are the stenographers of our lives, and without them, you wouldn't have that memory". (The Washington Post 2017).

5 DISCUSSION

The music industry couldn't survive without the songwriters who are the working horses behind the machinery bringing humanity into the world of music with the songs the consumer can relate to. There is always a need for songs about partying, heartbreaks and stories about life in general.

By writing this thesis I realized that the amount of information I have gathered during these years has abled me to work with the people today because I'm no longer a novice but an established writer. Going from zero to writing a summer hit has been a long journey full of many happy moments of things moving forward but also a lot of disappointments like realising how hard it is to get ahead in the business and sometimes it takes several years for a song to cut let alone the fact that you need a legal advisor to guide you through the agreements so you don't sign a bad deal.

The compensation for the songwriters isn't fair when compared to the overall revenue a song creates so that's something where you as a songwriter need to figure out different streams of income. The future will tell if songwriters will eventually get the compensation they deserve from the revenues or will they still be on the bottom of the food chain. At least the bigger players in the songwriting business are using their voices to get the problem noticed so there seems to be a brighter future ahead.

The good thing about the bad things happening is that you learn from those and know in the future where to focus. The main focus should still be creating good music, learning new writing methods and most of all learning from other writers and after that you should think about the business side. I've been fortunate to have Roseville and Strengholt to help with the negotiations so the pressure doesn't come directly to me but to my managers and this way I will stay as the good guy who just writes songs.

I hope that whoever reads this could benefit from my experiences and realize that everything is possible if you just work hard and believe in what you do. Nowadays the supply and demand doesn't meet when there's too many songs available all the time and the output which creates money isn't that equal to that. Most of the income a song creates comes from the radio or sync unless the song streams hundreds of millions which only

happens with big establish or breakthrough artists. This I've heard many times from the old school people in the business like Grammy Awarded songwriter and producer Rob Davis whom I had a session in London who's biggest success was Can't Get You Out of My Head by Kylie Minogue.

A productive songwriter writes about a hundred songs per year and when you calculate how many songwriters are out there you get the idea that there's just too many songs to be pitched. Of course there's always light at the end of the tunnel that's been proven by history of hits that when the song is good it will get released eventually even if it would take many years. That's something I believe and will hold onto while focusing on writing good music.

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