

Revising – Lyric Questions

Things to keep in mind and questions to ask when revising a song.

1. What is the Central point of this song? Is it too broad or too narrow? Does my whole song center on making this central point?
2. Does it sound unique or does it sound cliché? Can I find ways to make parts I think are cliché sound unique?
3. Does it work mechanically? Does the form seem clear? Do the words lay out in a natural meter? Does the rhyme scheme seem effortless or is it forced? Does the word emphasis match with the musical phrasing?
4. Can I hear this song being sung in a different voice than my own?
5. Are there words that can be replaced to be more descriptive (i.e. emotions – sad -> vulnerable; happy -> accepted, etc.)
6. Do I have too many metaphors? Do my verses compare back to my central metaphor?
7. Is my rhyme scheme and meter the same in each verse? Did I change it for a reason, or did it change because I didn't work at it hard enough?
8. Does the narrative flow? Does the song deliver something in the last verse, or does it not have an arc? Are the characters, setting, and situation clear?
9. Is this song abstract? Is it meant to be abstract? Does it still have a point even though it is abstract? Is the imagery clear?
10. Does the song sound like your voice? Does it sound like a narrator? Does the narrators voice sound like yours? Is it supposed to? Could you replace words to make the narrators identity more clear? Are there regionalisms you could use to highlight the character? Are there words that might match the characters emotional state more closely?
11. Does the meter of the words work for the emotion of the song? Is there a way you could change the meter or phrasing of the song to better match the character?
12. Are the words readily understandable to the average person? Could they be understood across the barroom/coffee shop? Does the audience need a dictionary to understand it? Is that your goal? Is there a way you could say the same thing in a clearer way?
13. Could you use the form and structure of the verses/chorus/bridge, etc. to better represent your story?