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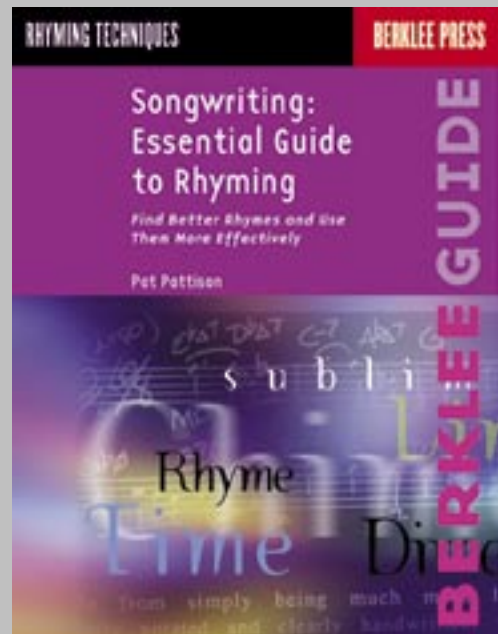
Songwriting: Essential Guide to Rhyming

Pat Pattison

Introduction

Do I Have to Rhyme?

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INTRODUCTION

DO I HAVE TO RHYME?

Songs are made for ears, not for eyes. Because people listen to songs, you must learn to write for eyeless ears. So many times rhyme seems like your enemy. Because it is so hard to use rhyme and still sound natural and genuine, most songwriters go through a "trying not to rhyme" phase. Too often, rhyme seems to pull you in a wrong direction, either

1. toward something that sounds unnatural, or
2. toward something cliché.

Both drain the blood out of your lyric.

1. *Something Unnatural*

How many appeals have gone "to the stars above" —how many emotions have flown in on "the wings of a dove?" Those countless stars and doves have every right to feel like teenagers who get attention only because they hang out with someone who rhymes with "love." They aren't really wanted for themselves.

The need to rhyme has certainly hdd the shotgun at many an improbable wedding. You may have been to a few yourself. . .

Sometimes the search for rhyme is even more destructive. Everyone has been in this situation: trying, to find a way to connect words like

liege
besiege.

(No problem with cliché here.) Unless you were writing a comedy version of King Arthur or Robin Hood, you might never face this particular problem, but you have faced it in other ways many times. You will face it again.

"Besiege" is a transitive verb —you must use a Direct Object like "the castle" to complete its sense. Putting a Transitive Verb at the end of a phrase inverts the natural sentence order:

He y o r e an oath unto his liege
Tomorrow the castle he would besiege

You can pull your poetic license out of your back pocket all you want to, but you won't make the phrase sound any more natural. Of course, the natural syntax is

He swore an oath unto his liege
Tomorrow he would besiege the castle.

You might try

He swore to his liege as a loyal vassal
Tomorrow he would besiege the castle.

The first phrase is ambiguous. Is the liege the vassal? Even though "liege/besiege" are in the same internal spot, the meaning is obscured. This is better:

To his liege he swore as a loyal vassal
Tomorrow he would besiege the castle.

This is a lot of twisting in the wind for a rhyme. And you still didn't get

liege
besiege

2. I've got a COLD SPOT in my heart
Just for you
Just for you
It doesn't matter what you do
Ain't no fire getting through
I've got a COLD SPOT in my heart
Just for you

You can feel the difference. The rhymed version has punch and sarcasm. The unrhymed version doesn't. Yet both versions have approximately (maybe even exactly) the same **meaning**.

The decision is not between rhyming and not rhyming. The only decision is to learn how to rhyme more effectively.

Rhyme can be your best friend, your biggest help in leading all those eyeless ears through your lyrics. Or it can be your enemy. I want to show you how to make rhyme your friend. That is why you should work your way through this book. Carefully.

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