

With a Lotta' Help From My Friends:  
Creativity and Collaborative  
Contemporary Songwriting in New  
Zealand / Aotearoa 2011

Tony Waine

# The Research

- Research was a creative Masters = Studio Practice + Dissertation
- Research project provided an opportunity to improve my songwriting

# Literature Review 1

- Non academic+theoretical framework
- Magazines, Interviews, Biographies – Carole King, Keith Richards, Tom Petty, Stephen Stills...Katy Perry
- Books
  - Chunn, M.& J. (1995) *The Mechanics of Popular Music*
  - Shute, G.(2005) *Making Music in New Zealand*
  - Blume, J. (2004) *Steps to Songwriting Success*
  - Braheny, J. (2006) *The Craft & Business of Songwriting*
  - Frederick, R. (2008). *Shortcuts to Hit Songwriting*

# Literature Review 2

- ① Cohen, S. (1991) *Rock Culture in Liverpool: Popular Music in the Making*. Oxford, Clarendon/Oxford Uni Press
- ② DeVries, P.(2005) *The Rise and Fall of a Songwriting Partnership. The Qualitative Report. Vol 10, No. 1, p 39-54*
- ③ Bennett, J. (2011) *Collaborative Songwriting – the ontology of negotiated creativity in popular music practice*. Journal on the Art of Record Production, Issue 5
- ④ Hass, R., Weisberg, R., Choi, J. *Quantitative Case-Studies in Music Composition: The Development of Creativity in Popular Songwriting Teams*. Psychology of Music, (38(4), 463-480
- ⑤ Brien, D. Brady, T. (2003). *Collaborative Practice: Categorising forms of collaboration for practitioners*. TEXT: journal of writing and writing courses, 7(2).

# Research Question

What preferred models of collaborative songwriting are emerging in commercially successful contemporary songwriting collaborations in New Zealand 2011?

# Methodology

- Qualitative, structured retrospective interviews
  - Joel Little – Goodnight Nurse, Kids of 88
  - Zowie – Sony Australia
  - Jimmy Christmas – D4, Luger Boa
  - Mike Chunn – Split Enz, APRA, Play It Strange
- Quantitative research (published statistics, case studies) – billboard, NZ Charts
- Prevailing discourse
- Studio Practice – album of collab music

# Studio Practice

An album of collaboratively written songs:

- Shona Laing
- Hammond Gamble
- Jordan Luck
- Dave McArtney
- Rikki Morris
- Matt 'Recloose' Chicoine
- Wayne Gillespie
- Andy Dickson (Narcs)

# Theoretical Framework

- Bennett (2011), Cohen (1991), DeVries (2005), Hass, Weisberg & Choi (2010)
- Toynebee, J. (2000). *Making Popular Music. Musicians, Creativity and Institutions*. London: Arnold
  - Social Authorship model
  - Songwriter – own set of traits, habitus
  - Field of cultural production - fields of historically accumulated works + cultural production itself



# Findings

- When tested against interviews and my own songwriting studio practice – the models (Bennett, 2011) overlap

# Findings

- Benefit at its most basic, the completion of a song within the required time frame
- Drawback: Brown Smoke – the ‘control’ song was by voted best song (publisher + 2 pro songwriters). Do songwriters compromise their vision of the song?

# Findings

- Most collaborations are even splits. Moving from this model is problematic.
- Uncovered the ***Covers Model of Song Authorship*** - Mike Chunn - which identifies compositional elements
- Is authorship broadening - musicians, song doctors, producers?

# Implications

- Learning is a balance of collaboration + independent learning – future study
- Do songwriters compromise their vision of the song by collaborating?
- In a body of work the collaborations function as a positive enabler for finishing all work including solo projects.

# Next?

- Keep writing and releasing songs
- Professional songwriters understand song constraints = collaborate with less experienced, commercially unsuccessful and/or alternate artists
- Complete songs without collaboration, explore more rigorously

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<http://researcharchive>

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[wintec.ac.nz/2092/](http://wintec.ac.nz/2092/)

## **Brave Sheep**

<http://bravesheep.bandcamp.com/>

