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
  
  Blume, J. (2004) *Steps to Songwriting Success*
  Frederick, R. (2008). *Shortcuts to Hit Songwriting*
Literature Review 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

  - 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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Brave Sheep
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