

## The Lyrical Mirror Miracle

We've spent several articles discussing how some fundamental dimensions of personality affect the craft and business of songwriting. A common theme is the need to understand how a person's preferences are, on the one hand, translated into areas of strength and accomplishment, and on the other hand, produce blind spots that inhibit artistic and commercial success.

The four factors that shape our interactions with other people and with the world around us have been discussed previously but are briefly summarized here for new readers: These dimensions, represented by letters, are:

### 1. How we focus our energy:

E= Extravert (75% of the population) ---> Outgoing; Acts first, thinks after; Seeks interaction with others;

I= Introvert (25% of the population) ---> Introspective, reflective; Thinks first; Inner voice;

### 2. What we pay attention to or Perceive:

S= Sensor (70% of the population) ---> Focus on detail, precision; Sensory data and facts matter most

N= iNtuitive (30% of the population) ---> Focus on 'big picture'; Concepts, ideas, and possibilities matter most;

### 3. How we make our decisions and Judgments

T = Thinking (50% of males, 40% of females) ---> Logic, Reason, Objectivity, Fairness ; Seeks what is true;

F = Feeling (50% of males, 60% of females) ---> Emotions, Subjectivity, Kindness; Seeks what is valued;

### 4. Which aspect of our life we emphasize (i.e., #2 or #3)

J = Judging (50% of the population) ---> Order, planning, schedules; No loose ends; Quick conclusions;

P = Perceiving (50% of the population) ---> Random, spontaneity, wing-it; Open-ended, Withholds judgment;

When all four dimensions are taken into account, there are sixteen combinations, each with very distinctive strengths and areas where they excel. There is a strong relationship between a preference profile and choice of career path. A preference means the mode that the person is in when there are no external situations or pressures at work... it is their 'natural' state of being. A person can (and often must) act in their non-natural modes, but this requires expending energy and thus is not effectively sustainable for long periods.

It takes all eight dimensions to produce a great song, yet it's very rare for one person to be able to effectively command all eight modes of operating. This is why collaboration is so prevalent and important to an endeavor like songwriting. Successful collaboration requires the interplay of opposites, but it is often hard to get along with someone who is fundamentally different from you. One of things that can help is to better understand how the world looks and feels through the perspective which is opposite from yours. Working toward this goal also helps you get more in touch with the opposite sides of yourself, and allows you to access those sides when you need to. Just as writing with your left hand when you are a right-hander (and vice-verse for a left-hander) stimulates the less favored side of your brain, operating in opposite modes helps develop those dimensions of yourself. Different meditation techniques are used to access opposite parts of yourself. If you are a strong "P", it may be hard to stay focused on one thing for an extended period. Meditation techniques which use a repeated mantra, (e.g., Aum) are designed to access the focused and structured part of consciousness. If you are a strong "SJ" and want to become more open to new ideas and stimuli, the Bhuddist techniques of pondering "What is the sound of one hand clapping?" access the "N" and "P" dimensions.

A useful exercise for flexing your opposite sides is to write a song about a person who is very different from you. A great strength of a songwriter is to be able to reach into him/herself and pull out genuine experience, feeling and belief. That strength is expanded when the same writer can also write

convincingly about experience, feeling, and belief that is outside of him/herself, but is dear to others. For example, iNtuitives who use their natural gift for metaphor to write in their preferred abstract way will reach 3 out of 10 people, but if written in a concrete, sensory oriented way, more than twice as many people, i.e., the 7 out of 10 Sensors of the world will be touched.

Let's look at some popular song lyrics where the preference dimensions of the singer or singee (which are not necessarily those of the writer) are shown very clearly. Use these as references and then try to write your own lyric where the singer, singee, or main character is your opposite. Start listening to lyrics from a preference profile perspective and you'll be exercising some very important parts of your creative self.

### **Example 1. The INFP oriented lyric in first person (the Singer)**

A strong ESTJ usually has a well-defined sense of self, and will not spend much time pondering "Who am I". For the INFP, "Who Am I" is a theme central to their life. In this well-known lyric recorded by Supertramp, the singer is clearly INFP, commenting on an ordered, ESTJ world.

#### **THE LOGICAL SONG -- Words and Music by Rick Davies and Roger Hodgson**

*When I was young it seemed that life was so wonderful, a miracle  
Oh it was beautiful, magical  
And all the birds in the trees, they'd be singing so happily, joyfully  
Playfully watching me*

*But then they sent me away to teach me how to be sensible, logical  
Responsible, practical  
And they showed me a world where I could be so dependable, clinical  
Intellectual, cynical*

*There are times, when all the world's asleep,  
The questions run too deep, for such a simple man...  
Won't you please, please tell me what we've learned  
I know it sounds absurd,  
Please tell me who I am...*

*Now watch what you say or they'll be calling you a radical, liberal  
Fanatical criminal  
Won't you sign up your name, we'd like to feel you're acceptable, respectable  
Presentable, a vegetable!*

*There are times, when all the world's asleep,  
The questions run too deep, for such a simple man...  
Won't you please, please tell me what we've learned  
I know it sounds absurd,  
Please tell me who I am...*

### **Example 2a. -- The "INT\_", "IN\_J" oriented lyric in first person (the Singer)**

If the INFP's are always asking who they are, the IN\_J,s with their introverted intuition, and INTP's, have a stronger sense of self through their inner voice, even though they are very hard for the rest of the world to understand. This lyric, written in first person, says it perfectly. Though written by Margie Adams, it could as easily have been written by well-known school dropouts like Thomas Edison or Albert Einstein.

**THE UNICORN-- words and Music by Margie Adam (Libyris Music Co, ASCAP)**

When I was growing up, my best friend was a unicorn, The others smiled at me and called me crazy  
But I was not upset, knowing I did not conform, I always thought their seeing must be hazy...  
The unicorn and I would while away the hours, playing dancing and romancing in the wild flowers  
And we'd sing "Seeing is believing in the things you see, Loving is believing in the ones you love..."

When I was seventeen, my best friend was the Northern Star, the others asked why was I always  
dreaming  
But I did not reply, I found my thoughts were very far away from daily hurts and fears and scheming  
The Northern Star and I would share our dreams together  
Laughing, sighing sometimes crying in all kinds of weather  
And we'd sing "Seeing is believing in the things you see, Loving is believing in the ones you love..."

And now that I am grown, my best friend lives inside of me, the others smile at me and call me crazy  
But I am not upset, for long ago I found the key, I've always known their seeing must be hazy  
My friend inside and I would while away the hours, playing dancing and romancing in the wild flowers  
And we'd sing "Seeing is believing in the things you see, Loving is believing in the ones you love..."

**Example 2b. -- The "INT\_", "IN\_J" oriented lyric in third person (the Main Character)**

A great example of opposite-side writing is another portrait of the misunderstood Introverted iNtuitive, from the pen of Harry Chapin, who was an ESFP. Written in third person, it's level of accuracy and insight is a tribute to it's author's understanding of human nature. Just as *The Unicorn* could have been written by Edison or Einstein, this song could have been written about Edison or Einstein. Note how the "T" and "F" aspects play against each other.

**SHOOTING STAR -- Words and Music by Harry Chapin**

He was crazy of course, from the first she must have known it  
But still she went on with him, she never once had shown it  
She took him from the street, dried his tears of grieving  
She listened to his visions, she believed in his believing

He was the sun, burning bright and brittle and  
She was the moon, shining back his light a little  
He was a shooting star, she moved softer and more slowly  
He could not make things possible but she could make them holy...

He was dancing to some music no one else had ever heard  
He'd speak in unknown languages, She would translate every word  
And when the world was laughing at his castles in the sky  
She'd hold him to her body, till he once again could fly...

He was the sun, burning bright and brittle and  
She was the moon, shining back his light a little  
He was a shooting star, she moved softer and more slowly  
He could not make things possible but she could make them holy...

She gave him a daughter, she gave him a son  
She was a mother and a wife and a lover when the day was done  
He was too far gone for giving love, What he offered in its stead  
Was the knowledge she was the only thing that was not in his head...

*He took off one morning toward the rising sun's red glow  
She knew he was going nowhere, but of course she let him go  
As she stood and watched him dwindle, far too empty too be sad  
He reappeared beside her saying "You're all I've ever had..."*

It is of interest to note that songs like the above are rarely Top 40 hits, despite their great crafting and poignant lyric. If Introverted iNtuitives (science, math and fine arts) are 1 out of 100 people, these songs do not speak universally. But for those to whom they speak, they do so with great power.

**Example 3 -- The “\_STJ” oriented lyric in first person (the Singer)**

In the interest of providing equal time, there is another great lyric from the opposite of the Introverted iNtuitive, where the singers are ESTJ's or ISTJ's, reacting to the “uncivil” N's, F's and P's among our founding fathers. This song, from the musical “1776” is written by Sherman Edwards. Though set in the 18th century, you will certainly know people you have met who fit this portrait to a “T”.

**COOL COOL CONSIDERATE MEN -- Words and Music by Sherman Edwards**

*Come ye cool, cool conservative men, Our like may never ever be seen again  
We have land, cash in hand, self-command, future planned  
Fortune thrives, society survives in neatly ordered lives with well-endowed wives  
Come sing Hosanna, Hosanna, in our breeding and our manner, we are cool*

*Come ye cool, cool considerate set, We'll dance together to the same minuet  
To the right, ever to the right, Never to the left, forever to the right  
Let our creed be never to exceed regulated speed no matter what the need  
Come sing Hosanna, Hosanna, emblazoned on our banner is “Keep cool”*

*What we do, we do rationally, We never ever go off half-cocked, not we  
Why begin till we know that we can win, and if we cannot win, why bother to begin?  
And we'll hold to our gold, tradition that is old, reluctant to be bold  
We say this game's not of our choosing. Why should we risk losing, we cool men?  
I sing Hosanna, Hosanna, in a sane and lucid manner, we are cool*

**Example 4 -- The ESFP oriented lyric in second person (the Main Character)**

If the majority of people are Extraverts and Sensors, then ES oriented songs will touch the masses. Look at Billy Joel's well known lyric about an ESFP (the “all of life is a stage” profile).

**BIG SHOT -- Words and Music by Billy Joel**

*You went up town riding in your limousine, with your fine Park Avenue clothes  
You had the Dom Perignon in your hand and spoon up your nose  
When you wake up in the morning with your head on fire and your eyes too bloody to see  
Go on and cry in your coffee but don't come bitchin' to me*

*You had to be a Big Shot, didn't you, You had to open up your mouth  
You had to be a Bog Shot, didn't you, all your friends were so knocked out  
You had to have the last word last night, you know what everything's about  
You had to have the white hot spotlight, you had to be a Big shot last night...*

*Well they were all impressed with your Halston dress and the people that you knew at Elaine's  
And the story of your latest success kept them so entertained...  
Now you just don't remember all the things you said, and you're not sure you want to know*

*I'll give you one hint honey, you sure can put on a show*

*You had to be a Big shot didn't you, You had to prove it to the crowd  
You had to be a big shot didn't you, all your friends were so knocked out  
You had to have the last word last night, so much fun to be around  
You had to have the front page, bold type, you had to be a Big Shot last night...*

### **In Summary**

Every one of the above lyrics shows a tension between the opposites in at least one dimension. To get yourself more in touch with the four preference dimensions which are opposite yours:

- (1) **S**EEK INPUT - See what kinds of critiques you get on your songs
- (2) **A**SK - Does the profile reflect the singer, or a main character in the song
- (3) **L**ISTEN - Start listening to lyrics from a preference profile perspective
- (4) **E**XERCISE - Try writing from those perspectives.

It will open up new sources of strength for you to apply to your songwriting endeavors, and may help you work more productively with people whose preferences are the complement of yours. And not coincidentally, you see that the fist letters of these four steps spell SALE!

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*The information presented here about preferences is based on the MBTI (Myers-Briggs Type Indicator), a well researched and globally used indicator of personality preferences. Millions of people worldwide have been profiled. The MBTI was developed in 1942 by a mother and daughter who, amid the backdrop of World War II, wanted to know why people could not accept differences among each other. For more information refer to:*

**Gifts Differing** by Isabel Briggs Myers, CPP Books; **Type Talk** by Otto Kroeger and Janet Thuesen, Delta/Tilden Press; and **Please Understand Me**, by Kiersey and Bates, Prometheus Books. Also recommended is **The Songwriters Idea Book**, by Sheila Davis, Writers Digest Books.

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