

SONGCRAFTERS COLORING BOOK **by Bill Pere**

An Intentional Oronym (or is that unintentional oronym?)

I want to kiss the sky -- or is that “kiss this guy?” We have had several discussions about oronyms and their use or misuse, concentrating primarily on how they confuse the meaning of a lyric by making the listener hear words which sound similar to what was actually sung, but which have totally different meaning. We have also discussed how oronyms can be used deliberately to create humor. Here, we will look at some examples of oronyms of both types. Here is an example I found in a children’s story. The story was about the animals on Noah’s Ark. In this tale, the emphasis is on exotic animals with unusual names (Kookaburra, Kinkajou, Oryx, etc.). There is also an animal call a Rass. In this tale, a woman is walking along holding one of these creatures in her arms so it won’t run away. A child asks “Why is she holding her rass so tight? Oh well...

This property of our language has been used intentionally many times to create desirable humorous effects in songs and stories. The playwright Tennessee Williams, in “The Glass Menagerie”, has the young girl character being asked why she is called “Blue Roses?” She replies that when she was a child, she was ill with “pleurosis”. Another intentional oronym is used by Bill Harley and Peter Alsop on their album “In the Hospital”. In the course of the dialog, one line says “Tomorrow they’re going to give you a CAT Scan”. To which the reply comes, “What am I going to do with the butt of a cat?” As I was listening to this tape with four others, I saw all faces (including my own) smile at this intentional oronym. It worked. The frame of reference of your audience makes a big difference in what they are going to think they hear. We all know about the ‘girl with kaleidoscope eyes’ but an elderly woman asked why Mr. Lennon was saying that the ‘girl with colitis goes by’.

There is an interesting web site called KissTheSky.com, which is dedicated to logging all the mis-heard lyrics that people encounter in songs. It is both fun and educational to log in and look through the ways that what is written is not what is heard. You can also contribute your own examples to the collection.

Oronym -- Bull lyric? Or a nimble lyric?

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Bill Pere is a recording artist, award winning songwriter, performer, and educator well known for his superb crafted lyrics, with lasting impact. Bill has released 12 CD's, teaches private songwriting workshops and is as the Director of Special Projects for the Connecticut Songwriters Association. Bill is an Official Connecticut State Troubadour, and is the Founder and Executive Director of the LUNCH Ensemble (www.lunchensemble.com). Twice named Connecticut Songwriter of the Year, Bill is MBTI certified, a member of CMEA and MENC, and helps develop young talent in songwriting, performing, and learning about the music business.

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