

Edward Contreras, K-58078  
Voices from "A" Yard

### **Songwriting Composition**

This is a class where different groups of people gather once a week to compose music. As a class, we choose a lyrical/musical topic to write about for the next class.

Jason Heath, a talented and insightful musician, facilitates the class. He drives down from Los Angeles to sit and jam with us, taking time out of his life to give instruction and guidance. He is an incredible man, full of wisdom, patience, and understanding. Wayne Kramer, of the legendary band MC5 and voted as one of *Rolling Stone's* top 100 guitarists of all-time, has a non-profit organization called, "Jail Guitar Doors". This class is a product of their progressive and positive efforts in prisons throughout the country. I speak for the class when I say that it is a supreme honor and privilege to have met and worked with both of these wonderful men. We cannot express how grateful we are for the opportunity to create and arrange music with them.

This class contains many different people, with a lot of different musical interests and ability levels. It is amazing that this class is possible. Besides the obvious obstacles of incarceration, we are only given one hour to write a song within a group of 4 to 8 men. Using acoustic guitars, keyboards, and Cajon drums we create music. On my first day, I did not think it would be possible for us to accomplish anything at all. However, we have come through with some interesting songs.

I have been away from music for a long time, and I previously thought it would take a miracle for me to get back into it. However, I have been able to create and perform music again, not at the level I was at 20 years ago, but I am making music these days and my silence has been broken. Yes, I am finally making music again! I have achieved some things in my songwriting here at the CSP-LAC PPF yard, which I was unable to accomplish before. I do not know how it happened but I have tried some experiments, such as writing a verse in Latin and writing a song with a Celtic melody. This experience has evoked moments of inspiration for me.

I do believe that there could be improvements in the equipment and environment we have to work with, as well as the time we have allotted to us. In addition, I believe we should have provisions for coaching so we could hone our craft. Eventually, the entire music program in general should expand with musical instruction and studio facilities available to its members. This Songwriting Composition class could possibly be the seed of a new program for musical instruction and development that signals new hope.

I thank everyone who has helped me on this journey back into music. Music has always been a love of mine. I also love to write. Combine these two and you then have poetry in motion. I look forward to someday working on musical projects that I have always dreamed of, but in the meantime, I have a catching up to do and I will need practice to get back into musical shape again. I believe that at the end of our sessions, we all have a feeling of accomplishment.

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