



BA(Hons) Creative Songwriting

Course Overview

This is a course designed for the serious songwriter who wishes to explore every aspect of the craft and art of writing both commercial and artistically substantial material. Throughout the course, working with experienced professional writers you will be asked to examine your working practice, pace of writing and every aspect of quality control. We will push you to your limits in understanding the craft and the conventions of writing. We will encourage you to explore the boundaries of the art. We will help you realize your creative potential; find your own voice, reach your audience and provide opportunities for collaboration with exciting young musicians from different backgrounds and genres.

Semester 1	Semester 2
1. Creating Subject Matter and Lyrics	4. Developing Subject Matter and Lyrics
2. Songwriting Methodology (including live performance workshops)	5. Chart Writing (including theory of music)
3. The Domestic Music Industry	6. The International Music Industry
Semester 3	Semester 4
7. Arrangement Skills	10. Writing For Artists
8. Co-Writing	11. Writing For Film and TV
9. Principles of Record Production	12. Writing For Games
Semester 5	Semester 6
13. Publishing and Copyright Law	15. Songwriting Portfolio
14. Songwriting Workbook	16. Professional Practice Portfolio

1. Creating Subject Matter and Lyrics

Great songs are usually built on the lyrics and the subject matter. In this class we investigate the conventions of lyric writing and the use of structure. You will create much of the raw material for your writing and be encouraged to do so fearlessly. Additionally, you will be challenged to write at pace, perhaps producing more lyrics and titles than you are used to. We will discuss quality control and editing so that you can refine your lyric material in preparation for writing complete songs.

2. Songwriting Methodology

Songs are not always written from a lyric or title first. The point of this class is to share with you the almost limitless variety in the writing process. Many young writers get stuck in a rut, finding they produce one-dimensional material and run out of inspiration. We can use a tempo, a key, a visual cue (e.g. a painting) or an overheard conversation; any one of these could be starting points to stimulate the creative process. Sometimes the process can be free and artistically driven; other times, it can be more formal and the process or craft might take over. You will learn how the great hit writers of today work, from classic pop to modern experimental work, from full arrangements to minimal top line melody and lyric compositions. This class will transform your understanding of the writing process.

DIME will provide a house band and with guidance from your instructor, you will learn how to direct the musicians and take your songs from ideas in your head to working arrangements ready for stage or studio.

3. The Domestic Music Industry

This class will explain how record companies, publishers, managers, agents, writers, artists and merchandising interact in the modern age. It is a comprehensive overview of the music industry. Also you will examine sponsorship and product placement, discovering how artists and managers organize these income streams into a coherent business in the digital age. The class will incorporate the use of case study research on important artists, showing how they organize their commercial affairs in the United States.

4. Developing Subject Matter and Lyrics

This class builds on the work done previously in Creating Subject Matter and Lyrics and continues with the consolidation of specialist skills, techniques and methodologies for generating lyrics. The content of the class will play a key role in the continued development of your artistic voice and in providing more refined lyrics and titles for your developing portfolio.

5. Chart Writing

Not to be confused with writing pop songs aimed at the Billboard charts, this class actually deals with the business of score writing. Rather than using the specialist skill of standard notation, the technique of 'bars and beats' chart writing will be used, accompanied by detailed arrangement notes and reference material. In this way, we can produce a chart format that would be usable and acceptable in most professional situations. You will examine examples of charts of this description taken from the sets of live TV shows, studio sessions and live tours. DIME will provide live musicians as you will be required to direct and gain the skills of a musical director, controlling the creative direction of your material for both stage and studio.

6. The International Music Industry

This class builds on the previous study of the Domestic Music Industry by examining the rapidly changing online developments for record companies and artists. The class will cover the increasingly diverse income streams evolving due to interaction between new mediums and formats. Case study research on important artists will show how they exploit digital formats and organize their commercial affairs worldwide.

7. Arrangement Skills

Through the study of classic song arrangements you will gain the understanding and vocabulary necessary to transform your rough song format into a full song arrangement. You will have the authority to direct a band and manage your own material, being able to engage a producer, musical director or band member as an equal at every stage of the song's journey from page, to stage to studio. You will learn about the essential components of a song as you pick apart the hooks, chord sequences, melodies and riffs within the arrangements of classic works from the 50's and 60's to the present day. Songwriters are not expected to read music (although you may learn if you wish), but this study will enable you to describe exactly what you want to hear in a clear and concise way in the most demanding of professional situations on stage and in the studio.

You will be expected to perform your complete works in class, live performance workshop and real gig situations.

8. Co-Writing

Co-writing is a specialist skill and many successful writers do nothing else. You will be asked to produce a wide variety of material as you develop your skills through the collaborative process. Additionally, you will learn how to prepare for a successful co-writing session and how to ensure that these projects go smoothly.

9. Principles of Record Production

Although the course is focused on creative songwriting, it is important that you understand the principles of record production, particularly if you decide to specialize in writing for various pop genres. This class takes over where Arrangement Skills left off, we have the opportunity to discuss the journey from a finished arrangement or demo in the rehearsal room to a master recording. Additionally, the lessons will explore the strategy of completely removing the demo process to producing a fully finished master. You will examine the production on various recordings and draw conclusions on what impact the process has had on the success of these recordings.

10. Writing For Artists

This class focuses on the specialized realm of writing for the pop market. In today's industry, this will inevitably include writing for the contestants of TV talent shows as well as girl groups, boy bands and contemporary pop solo artists. This is a competitive area to work within, with its own set of conventions and expectations and is often fraught with political complications. Despite this, many writers have very successful careers in this role. There is much to be learned from studying the discipline of pop that can be applied to other genres. This class is a great opportunity to work with other musicians and vocalists on the performance courses.

11. Writing For Film and TV

This class explores the role of the composer and the range of material and sync opportunities available in contemporary media. You will deliver songs and compositions for a range of briefs, each of which will be a real-world example taken from a film, TV show or advertisement. With a focus on career development, you will examine networking, the process of building a profile as a composer and the effectiveness of online listings such as Sonic Bids and Broadjam.

12. Writing For Games

This class exposes students to the gaming industry and the rapidly growing opportunities for professional songwriters. Gaming has grown substantially in recent years and now employs significant numbers of full-time and freelance writers to produce audio content. The audio ranges from basic sound effects through to big budget fully scored orchestral compositions. The class will explore the myriad of opportunities available to a songwriter/composer in the gaming industry and how to adopt a writing style that is relevant to this industry. Additionally, you will explore the role of online listings, agencies and networking in this competitive and exciting industry.

13. Publishing and Copyright Law

Publishing and Copyright Law provides you with a detailed look at the publishing industry and the opportunity to gain an understanding of the major income streams available to songwriters. The class examines the content and terms of various types of publishing deals and how to protect your rights through knowledge of copyright law. You will explore other scenarios such as songwriting splits and how to agree them without conflict.

14. Songwriting Workbook

This class provides you with the opportunity to create and develop a portfolio of raw materials for songwriting under the supervision of your tutor. You will be asked to record your progress, file raw songwriting material and comment critically on your learning and development.

15. Songwriting Portfolio

This is your opportunity to present a mature, well-crafted body of work that demonstrates how you have refined your talent and skills. You will produce several complete songs with full charts, arrangement notes, lyrics and critical appraisal. You may have co-writes and song placements that could form part of the portfolio and any live, recorded or online achievements (including those as part of a band or as a solo artist).

16. Professional Practice Portfolio

The class requires you to research and report on the career opportunities available within your specialist area. You should also comment on how your craft can be contextualized in professional opportunities that will monetize your skills and inspire entrepreneurial practice and artistic excellence. Your portfolio will include a personal website and various forms of social media to support your professional work.

Entry Requirements

The BA (Honors) course is delivered by DIME in association with Falmouth University* (based in the UK, it is one of the world's leading international universities of the arts).

At DIME, given our emphasis on professional musicianship and quality, we will ask you to audition for us. You will need to prepare two *original* pieces of music that are each approximately 4 minutes long. These can be sung to backing track or self accompanied. Also we will ask you to play scales and exercises. You will be given immediate feedback on your strengths and weaknesses.

We audition strong musicians who are entirely self-taught alongside students who have had formal training. We welcome anyone with the passion, ability, and dedication, because having a strong work ethic is important to being a DIME student.

Please bring evidence of any music qualifications and experience you may have. Links to online performance material would be useful and relevant.

You will need to submit official high school transcripts with a minimum 2.5 grade point average. Official GED results will be accepted in place of transcripts. A minimum 401 composite score is required.

You will need to submit your ACT or SAT. The average expected ACT score of DIME students is 22. The expected average SAT score of DIME students is 1059.

* Subject to validation