The Benefits of Collaborative Popular Music Songwriting: A Spectrum of Artist-Songwriter Involvement

This article explores the often-overlooked role of professional songwriters in popular music, who occupy the spectrum between craftspeople and artists. Drawing on seventeen episodes of the Sodajerker podcast featuring songwriters who write for and with popular artists, we outline the role of professional songwriters in the popular music industry and how collaboration between songwriters and artists shapes and refines songs. On this basis, we propose a five-tiered spectrum of artist-songwriter involvement, ranging from independent songwriting by professionals without a specific artist brief to scenarios where artists are mostly self-sufficient but receive musical or psychological support from co-writers as needed.

Keywords: songwriting; collaboration; creativity; communication; Sodajerker podcast

Introduction

As 'the face' of the industry, performing artists are easily associated with and credited for hit songs (Fitzgerald). While many artists do write their own material, it is often the case that professional songwriters contribute creative input and musical expertise. By providing the melodies, harmonies, and lyrics that form the foundation of countless popular songs, professional songwriters play an integral role in the music industries.

Despite its essential role, the profession of songwriting has been largely neglected as a topic in academic research (De Laat; Jones). As Paul Long and Simon Barber ("Voicing," "Conceptualizing") have pointed out, most of the literature on songwriting consists of how-to guides and journalistic accounts of well-known individual songwriters, songwriting teams, and older 'hit factories' such as Tin Pan Alley, Brill Building, Motown, or Stock, Aitken, and Waterman. Less information exists on newer songwriting and production centers like Cheiron Studios, Xenomania,

or Dr. Luke's Prescription Songs (Seabrook). While these sources have practical and historical value, they contribute little to a systematic understanding of the contemporary music industries or the realities of work for practicing creatives. Long and Barber correctly point out that there is "very little work on the organized approach to songwriting carried out by professional songwriters, either alone, as part of songwriting teams, or as employees of songwriting/publishing institutions" ("Voicing" 145), and there is even less research into songwriter-artist collaboration.

In this article, we explore the often-overlooked role of professional songwriters, who occupy the spectrum between skilled craftspeople and artists in the popular music industry (Banks; Jones). We pay attention to the fact that songwriters rarely write music alone, but rather, the creative process of professional songwriting is largely a collaborative endeavor. It has been argued that collaborative songwriting improves song quality (Bennett, "Collaborative"; DeVries; Elliott; Herbst, Ahlers, and Barber; Thompson). Historical data indicates that approximately half of the number-one hits in the US and UK were written collaboratively (Bennett, "Constraint"; Fitzgerald; Pettijohn and Ahmed; Tough). The chart positions and critical acclaim that many of these songs have received are a testament to the success of such collaborations. There is thus an industry expectation of well-crafted outputs from songs written collaboratively, as they are considered to increase the chances of positive audience reception and economic returns (Bennett, "Constraint" 150–51, *Constraint, Creativity* 129; De Laat).

We explore the role of collaboration in popular music songwriting, drawing on existing perspectives on collaborative creativity. Here, Keith Sawyer ("Group") has demonstrated the value of group flow. Together with Stacy DeZutter, Sawyer developed the concept of distributed creativity, which emphasizes the significance of unpredictable actions and unexpected responses in producing innovative outcomes through

"collaborative emergence" in groups. This concept aligns with Susan Kerrigan's revised version of Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's (*Systems Model*) systems model of creativity, which has been applied to collaborative popular music songwriting and production to explain creative processes and reconstruct successful recordings (McIntyre; Thompson). Ingrid Tolstad ("Tracking") has further argued for including non-human actors (material, technological, historical, and institutional) in the conceptual understanding of collaborative songwriting as processes of creative interaction.

In this study, we aim to show the benefits of collaboration among members of songwriting teams, as well as between songwriting teams and popular artists, which results in music that is not only commercially successful but also artistically significant, expressive, and emotionally meaningful. Stylistically, the music written by these songwriters encompasses commercial pop, rock music, and other genres of popular music, with the exception of predominantly electronic styles found in various cultures of electronic dance music. These styles seem to have a different creation process (see Brett) and, perhaps more importantly, are not covered in the sample of this study. Specifically, we focus on the collaborative efforts of accomplished individuals who write music with and for popular music artists in the Western, Anglophone music industry. Thus, when we refer to "popular music" or "pop," we use these terms as umbrella terms for various popular genres or songs from the Global North.

Our focus is on the songwriters as creators and performing artists when they have contributed to the creative process. Drawing on seventeen selected interviews from the *Sodajerker on Songwriting*[1] podcast, we seek to answer the following questions: 1) What is the role of professional songwriters in collaborative settings? 2) What

[1] https://www.sodajerker.com/podcast

characterizes the different modes of collaboration in songwriting? 3) What do songwriters consider to be the benefits of collaboration? Our data from the podcast interviews incorporates the period from the 1950s and '60s—with writers like Mike Stoller (Brill Building) and Lamont Dozier (Motown)—to today, with songwriters writing for contemporary popular music artists.

Our findings offer insights into the perspectives and experiences of professional songwriters collaborating in teams and with well-known popular music artists. After a short methodology outline, the empirical section is divided into three main parts. We first discuss the role of professional songwriters, followed by an overview of the ways in which popular music songwriters and artists collaborate and how these different 'modes of collaboration' are considered helpful in the process of bringing forth songs. To consider and evaluate the different levels of interaction between collaborative songwriters and the artist, we finally present a spectrum of artists' involvement, based on a reworking of Richard James Burgess's functional typology of record producers (9–17) and Joe Bennett's ontology of collaborative songwriters ("Collaborative").

Methodology

Since 2011, hosts Simon Barber and Brian O'Connor have released more than 270 episodes of the *Sodajerker on Songwriting* podcast, which explores the creative processes and working routines of professional songwriters. A few previous studies have used *Sodajerker* interviews to explore songwriting as work and emotional labor (Long and Barber, "Voicing," "Conceptualizing") and songwriting techniques and routines (Barber, "Professional"), but without a specific focus on collaboration. Barber ("Professional" 64–66) briefly touches on collaboration, emphasizing the importance of bonding and building trust with popular artists. He observes that some songwriters are barely interested in collaborating, while others prefer to work asynchronously rather

than through direct interaction. This shift in focus, and access to newly released episodes, therefore warrant revisiting the *Sodajerker* material for a systematic analysis to complement the small corpus of detailed studies on the working practices of internationally successful songwriters (De Laat; Long and Barber, "Voicing," "Conceptualizing"). It is worth noting that the *Sodajerker* podcast is not designed to meet this study's research goals. We draw on relevant information gleaned from subjects' responses, which means that the discussions were uninfluenced by potential bias on the part of the researchers.

Investigating collaboration between professional, high-profile songwriters and popular artists required condensing the extensive amount of data of over 250 hours into the most relevant episodes. Our primary criterion for inclusion was that songwriters had a proven history of writing collaboratively for and with popular artists. We consider it beneficial that the songwriters cover a wide range of active periods and musical genres, from Mike Stoller (Brill Building in the 1950s and '60s) and Lamont Dozier (Motown in the 1960s) to William James "Bleu" McAuley (collaborator with contemporary artists like Demi Lovato and Selena Gomez), as this captures variance that adds to theoretical detail.

We selected seventeen episodes (approx. sixteen hours) that aired between 2012 and 2022. All songwriters were highly experienced, with an average date of birth of 1960 and a standard deviation of 11.8 years. Unfortunately, the sample was not very diverse, as all the songwriters were from English-speaking countries: nine from the United States, seven from the United Kingdom, and one from Australia. The gender ratio was not balanced, with only three women who made up less than 20% of the sample. This gender imbalance reflects the industry's reality (Ptatscheck), especially during the decades when the professionals interviewed began their careers.

With this data, we were able to gain valuable insights into songwriting practices with pop stars and popular performers spanning over six decades, including contemporary artists. The list of included songwriters is as follows: Glen Ballard (1953, USA; Guy Chambers (1963, UK); Desmond Child (1953, USA); Miranda Cooper (1965, UK); Sam Dixon (1973, AUS); Lamont Dozier (1941, USA); Paul Epworth (1974, UK); William James "Bleu" McAuley (1975, USA); Beth Nielsen-Chapman (1958, USA); Sacha Skarbek (1972, UK); Fraser T. Smith (1971, UK); Mike Stock (1951, UK); Mike Stoller (1933, USA); Mike Viola (1966, USA); Diane Warren (1956, USA); Eg White (1966, UK); Dan Wilson (1961, USA).[2] The interviews were transcribed and coded into categories, guided by Philipp Mayring's summarizing content analysis, which aims to "reduce the material in such a way that the essential contents remain, in order to create through abstraction a comprehensive overview of the base material which is nevertheless still an image of it" (64).

Designed as an interview study, this research phenomenologically examines the experiences and views of professional popular music songwriters. Musical analysis of the songs discussed by these professionals is beyond the scope of this article. Therefore, when we reflect on the quality of songs shaped through the creative process, we rely on the songwriters' experiences rather than an in-depth analysis of musical parameters. It is important to recognize that the songwriters' reflections on song quality are subjective and can have different meanings. Quality could generally refer to the level of craftsmanship (Banks), emotional connection to the song (Long and Barber, "Voicing"), or its market conformity and mainstream appeal (Bennett, *Constraint, Creativity*), all of which contribute to the likelihood of commercial success. The understanding of quality

[2] Each songwriter's complete discography is available on www.discogs.com.

can vary among songwriters and depends on the specific purpose of each songwriting arrangement.

The Role of Professional Songwriters in Collaborative Settings

Throughout popular music history, record companies and musicians have relied on professional songwriters to enhance their musical ideas or create songs specifically for them. This practice can be observed in rock, pop, and soul music from the 1950s to the 1970s (Egan; Fitzgerald) and in mainstream commercial pop music from the 1980s until today (Harding; Seabrook). The ways in which songwriters understand their relationships with other songwriters and artists are complex and interwoven. Several songwriters explained their journeys on the *Sodajerker* podcast, from their beginnings as artists to transitioning to session work and eventually concentrating on songwriting. On the one hand, these songwriters recognized that their strengths and passions lay in songwriting rather than performing; on the other, songwriting seemed a financially more viable area—and profession—than pursuing a career as an original artist. Previous research has referred to songwriting as emotional labor, as it involves distilling emotions into tradable forms that still appear authentic (Long and Barber, "Voicing"). Due to the pressures and expectations of the marketplace, artists may find it challenging to maintain their creativity and authenticity. Thus, professional songwriters are highly sought after. For example, several songwriters in our sample, including Cooper, Skarbek, and Smith, acknowledged that they transitioned from performing original music to songwriting because they recognized the demand for well-crafted songs and observed that some performers were held back by mediocre songwriting abilities.

The songwriters offered insights into the various reasons why professional songwriters were needed. Lamont Dozier recalled the time when Motown had many superlative performing artists, yet few were capable of outstanding songwriting (see

also Elliott 178–79). This situation led Berry Gordy to select Dozier, alongside brothers Brian and Eddie Holland, to write songs for his roster. Mike Stock cited renowned vocalists Frank Sinatra, Whitney Houston, and Mariah Carey as examples of top performers relying on professional songwriters. Although the number of collaborating songwriters, arrangers, engineers, and producers has increased in commercially successful pop music (Tough 106), performing artists are often more closely involved in the songwriting process today than in the 1980s and earlier, when professional songwriting and production teams supplied most of the material with little involvement from artists (Egan; Seabrook).[3]

Artists' desires to express emotional integrity and authenticity were cited by most songwriters as a central reason for their collaboration (see also Elliott 170, 173–74). Professional songwriters often use their experience to help artists draw on personal emotions and stories to produce authentic and meaningful lyrics that resonate with listeners, as Sacha Skarbek explained:

> What people want to hear in a song is honesty out of that artist; what is this person saying? They're able to explain how I feel about something emotionally and I think

[3] There appear to be trends in popular music where there is a shift in preference for songs written by performing artists versus songs written in collaboration with non-performing songwriters. Fitzgerald's study is an example of the influential period in popular music between 1963 and 1966— "the British Invasion, the rise of writer-performers, and the impact of Motown's black pop music" (86). During this time, the dominance of professional songwriters from previous decades (e.g., Tin Pan Alley and Brill Building) was challenged by writing performers such as Bob Dylan, John Lennon, Paul McCartney, Mick Jagger, and Keith Richards.

> it's incredibly important that that comes from an artist. It's not just written by a hit songwriter that's putting a sort of formula together to do it. (Skarbek)

Skarbek and other songwriters conform to Allan Moore's concept of authenticity in rock music, whereby the listener often assumes that a performing artist, particularly one in the tradition that began with the confessional singer-songwriters of the 1960s, is singing their truth and sharing their own experiences and emotions. Moore defines this phenomenon as "second person authenticity," when a song successfully conveys an emotion or experience that validates those of the listener, indicating that the music is "'telling it like it is' for them" (220). Validated emotions are commonly shared: falling in love, protecting a loved one, heartbreak, and loss. Dan Wilson agreed, recalling his collaboration with Adele in writing "Someone Like You" (2011) and highlighting how he harnessed an emotional investment in the song: "I really felt like there was a story that she had told me, this really sad story about this breakup she had, so I was trying to help her honor that story." Wilson worked with Adele to develop a vehicle that best conveys her authentic story, enabling her to superimpose additional emotional nuance through her vocal performance and inflection.

Modes of Collaboration

The *Sodajerker* interviews support the previously summarized research that highlights the benefits of collaboration and offer further insights into its advantages. From a practical perspective, collaborative songwriting can help position songs and songwriters in the music industries and its markets (see also Elliott 169–70). For instance, since copyright remuneration is the primary income source for professional songwriters, the higher likelihood of success serves as motivation to write collaboratively, as each collaborator is typically entitled to an equal share of the potential royalties (De Laat 238; Jones 227). Collaborators also frequently benefit from each other's network or

popularity, leading to future work opportunities or increased traction for the output (Bennett, *Constraint, Creativity* 129; Elliott). An example is what Bennett dubs the "Svengali model," where popular artists benefit from professional songwriters' knowledge and experience, while songwriters benefit from the artists' popularity (Bennett, "Collaborative"). Although such collaboration may result in songwriters not receiving proper credit or lower royalties (De Laat 235), it can still be lucrative in the long term (Bennett, *Constraint, Creativity* 246–47; Long and Barber, "Voicing" 152).

Many of the songwriters, including Ballard, Dixon, Nielsen-Chapman, Skarbek, and Warren, appear to have less regard for record company expectations and market conformity than, for instance, producers (Hennion; Harding). Their primary concern is how collaboration can provide emotional benefits, such as boosting a songwriter's confidence or motivation to write (Bennett, *Constraint, Creativity* 129). Several songwriters emphasized the importance of 'excitement.' According to their experience, it is crucial for the artist to be excited about an idea they can share with songwriters due to a personal connection, which could then be translated into music. In Bleu's words:

> Somebody comes in, and they're excited about something. That's the main thing I'm chasing in a collaboration. It's the feeling of what we're doing together, not in the music, but personally. Like chasing that fun and that exciting feeling of working together on something. (McAuley)

Likewise, Desmond Child recalled co-writing Bon Jovi's "Livin' on a Prayer" (1986), remarking:

> That's the beauty of collaboration. Everybody brings their soul, their story, their history, their experience, their skills, everything to the table, and you just throw it all down, and you walk in with a blank piece of paper, and you walk out with a song that changed the course of pop music. (Child)

In the rest of this section, we will outline the various modes of collaboration described by the songwriters and explore how these different approaches contribute to enhancing the songs in various ways (e.g., emotionally, artistically, commercially), as well as the experience of songwriting itself.

Complementary Roles, Skills, and Competencies

One of the most important factors considered to contribute to well-crafted and commercially successful songs is the complementary skills each collaborator brings (Bennett, *Constraint, Creativity* 129; DeVries; Fitzgerald 88; Harding). The benefits of sharing roles, commonly between lyricist and songwriter, are demonstrated by the success of historic songwriting teams such as Gerry Goffin and Carole King, Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller, or Barry Mann and Cynthia Weil (Egan; Fitzgerald). Lamont Dozier, one-third of Motown's successful songwriting team, referred to his collaboration with Brian and Eddie Holland as a "factory within a factory," where each songwriter contributed ideas or skills that were lacking. Dozier and Brian Holland composed, arranged, and produced, while Eddie Holland provided lyrics and vocal melodies (Bulgren; Egan 123–29). But different preferences and musical backgrounds can also be beneficial by contributing "something extra" (Anderton, Dubber, and James 54), and this is reflected in the number of team-written entries in pop music charts (Tough 106). Eg White cited the "cumulative effect" of having collaborators with different music theory backgrounds contributing alternative approaches to chords and harmony, which was beneficial to songs such as James Morrison's "Wonderful World"

(2006).[4] Australian songwriter Sam Dixon emphasized the value of collaborating with specialized engineers because it allows songwriters to focus on their strengths. His motivation for delegating is to access specialist skills while being able to focus on specific aspects of songwriting rather than simultaneously spreading his creative energies into musical and technical aspects.

This experience of delegating tasks in commercial pop music production is not unique (Harding; Thompson). The importance of delegation also suggests that a song's quality is judged not only by the musical and lyrical components but also by its recorded sound, even in the pre-production phase. Similarly, Miranda Cooper finds inspiration from working with engineers and producers who provide beats or other technologically created structures as stimuli for writing. This view accords with Phil Harding's preferred division of roles in commercial pop music production, with dedicated topliners, keyboard and rhythm programmers, engineers, and producers. As further demonstrated by Ingrid Tolstad ("Tracking," "Bring"), today's practice of co-writing in commercial pop is built around working in team constellations of songwriters specialized in roles and competencies as either producers or "trackers" (responsible for providing beats, instrumentation, recording, and mixing), and topliners providing melody and lyrics. Songwriter/producer Paul Epworth emphasized the importance of being a good collaborator and having a range of skill sets to utilize within any given songwriting situation: "I have to find my role within each situation. Some people want someone to bounce off, and they just want to make all the music, and some people want you to offer lyrical suggestions or try and help them find a direction for the music, and it's obviously different from artist to artist."

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[4] The song entered the top ten of the UK singles charts in October 2006.

Live Collaboration vs. Asynchronicity

Many songwriters stressed the value of exchanging ideas with another artist/songwriter in real-time or asynchronously. Except for Diane Warren, almost all the songwriters in this sample prefer collaboration because it is enjoyable and often yields better results. As Bleu remarked:

> If you were to take away the energy of collaboration, I think I'd get pretty depressed. [...] I think they both really have their place, but I do think that working with other people helps you to get out of your modes. And think freshly, not just because of their ideas, but because of the interaction; like, you start to think differently when you're interacting and collaborating with other people. It's almost like two minds are greater than two minds because you have all your ideas; they have all their ideas, but then you have all the new ideas that you're thinking of because the other person is there. (McAuley)

Sometimes, the mere presence of a collaborator is sufficient. For instance, Beth Nielsen-Chapman emphasized the importance of being in the same room and open to any outcome: "The best co-writing is where you're sitting there with somebody else. And they're also doing that, and you're both knowing that's what you're doing. And somebody might say something really stupid, but that's fine. Because on the way to that thing, there's another thing." Lamont Dozier recounted a similar experience from his collaboration with Brian and Eddie Holland:

> Some of the songs would just come naturally […] When we felt something when we triggered something on a piano that we came up with, we could easily just look at each other without even saying. Maybe sitting there reading the newspaper or whatever we're doing. And then we stopped, "What was that?" That's how we wrote, and when things came up that got our attention, we all three would pop, "Oh yeah," and then we would work on that. (Dozier)

On the other side of the coin, some songwriting partnerships work best in sequence rather than in series. Simon Barber observed that some well-known songwriters, such as Elton John and his songwriting partner Bernie Taupin, rarely collaborated live ("Professional" 65). This observation is supported by Miranda Cooper, part of the Xenomania songwriting and production team, who recounted that their songs often began with a "seed of an idea" that was then shared with other team members to develop independently. Because of the open-ended nature of the idea and the absence of constraints, this process led to substantially different versions featuring arrangements that combined the different styles and tastes of each collaborator.

Jamming, Flow, and Collaborative Emergence

Songwriters recognized the benefits of spontaneous interaction in various forms, consistent with existing literature on creativity and popular music songwriting and production (Kerrigan; McIntyre; Sawyer and DeZutter; Thompson). Several songwriters cited examples of band-style jam sessions where melodic ideas, chord sequences, and structures emerged through improvisation. Sam Dixon emphasized that recordings of these jam sessions "would be a great starting point for a new song," indicating that while improvisation is effective in generating ideas, it rarely produces finished songs. Guy Chambers pointed out that jam sessions are a form of co-writing where a song's foundation is laid, suggesting that further refinements are usually necessary. Bleu further noted that having less control during improvisation can be valuable because it adds energy and immediacy that cannot be achieved when writing at a desk. Similarly, Tolstad ("That," "Tracking") has described how co-writing sessions are characterized by initial and repeated jamming sessions.

Journalistic accounts of songwriting have been criticized for obscuring the creative process by referring to inexplicable moments of inspiration or genius (Jones; Long and Barber, "Conceptualizing"; McIntyre). However, several songwriters' statements support the idea that interaction in the creative process can afford unexpected inspiration through collaborative emergence (Sawyer and DeZutter), flow (Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow*; Sawyer, "Group"), or simply the presence of a collaborator. Tolstad (*Snowflake* 226, "That") has described how songwriters express the experience of collaboratively generated creative flow by saying that 'songs write themselves.' Many songwriters have reported experiencing flow states and cited examples of sessions where hit singles or albums were seemingly written in a matter of days (see also Elliott 172). A representative example is Alanis Morissette's (1995) *Jagged Little Pill* album. Morissette and Glen Ballard reportedly wrote the single "You Oughta Know" and another song in one day, with Ballard highlighting the "synergistic" nature of the collaborative process. This and other examples indicate that such "synergy" can produce results greater than the sum of its parts—in line with the theory of distributed creativity (Sawyer and DeZutter), which encompasses interactions between people, objects, and their environments.

Collaboration can also benefit from discursive factors, leading to musical and lyrical refinement and the integration of diverse ideas and influences. Miranda Cooper believes involving more people in the process can lead to a slicker outcome, citing the Sugababes' "Round Round" (2002) as an example of a song that quickly reached the top of the charts. Beth Nielsen-Chapman noted, "There's a finer and finer sieve that the final song goes through, and the holes get smaller and smaller." Critical debates and heated discussions were frequently described as helpful in this regard. This observation is consistent with Bennett's ("Collaborative," "Constraint," *Constraint, Creativity* 226–

27) stimulus evaluation model, according to which collaborators' vetoes and subsequent refinements function as a quality control and improvement mechanism (see also Elliott 175–6), similar to those successfully employed in Motown's hit factory in the 1960s (Bulgren; Flory 41–68). Correspondingly, Tolstad ("That," "Tracking") has described how jamming in songwriting sessions is followed up with analytical and evaluative discussions within the team, lining out the further trajectory of the song and the songwriters' focus. Mike Stoller described his relationship with Jerry Leiber as a six-decade-long argument essential to their creativity (Stoller; see also Leiber, Stoller, and Ritz). Disagreement as a force for creativity is also evident in shorter-term collaborations, such as Sacha Skarbek's account of debating the inclusion of swearing in the lyrics of James Blunt's "You're Beautiful" (2004).

Such debates not only enhance quality but, interestingly and perhaps counterintuitively, speed up the writing process (see also Elliott 172). Beth Nielsen-Chapman expressed that working alone slows her down because it makes her more picky, extending the time it takes to complete a song. This experience resembles Bennett's (*Constraint, Creativity* 129) emotional benefits of collaboration, instilling confidence in the outcome and encouraging taking creative risks. It is also possible that solutions to problems are more easily found when individuals collaborate, making the refinement process more efficient. Accordingly, Nielsen-Chapman noted that co-writing can increase productivity, which is advantageous because only a small fraction of songs achieve success (Jones 235; Long and Barber, "Conceptualizing" 567). Conversely, such negotiations can also prolong the process and not necessarily improve song quality. For example, Lamont Dozier found the Motown songwriting team's habit of discussing and approving all compositions increasingly inhibiting to his creativity, eventually leading him to end the partnership.

The songwriters demonstrated a supportive and collaborative approach, consistent with Bennett's observation (*Constraint, Creativity* 132–33), who argues that an equal power balance between songwriters is advantageous because it is necessary for the stimulus evaluation model conducive to song quality. However, it is important to acknowledge that our focus here on the benefits of collaboration could overlook underlying power relations or hierarchies between songwriters of different genders, races, skill sets, or career stages that are not commonly acknowledged or articulated.

Regularity vs. Breaking Routine

Some songwriters prefer working with the same constellations in established songwriting teams or with regular collaborators. Such consistency can offer songwriters predictability, both in terms of having enjoyable writing sessions and bringing forth well-crafted songs due to established or improved creative processes. Unsurprisingly, established teams like Holland/Dozier/Holland or Mike Stoller and Jerry Leiber find routine to be productive (Egan). However, Brian Holland explained elsewhere that there is no "pattern to inspiration striking" (Egan 129), suggesting that routine provides an optimum productive environment for creativity rather than a formula for successful songs. Correspondingly, creativity scholar Sawyer speaks of a "daily schedule" (Zig 149), and producer Harding emphasizes the value of "idea time" (59).

Most songwriters also emphasized the value of breaking routines by collaborating with varying creatives, forcing them to adapt. For instance, Fraser T. Smith believes this approach helps him develop his skills and stay current. Beth Nielsen-Chapman accordingly stated that "there are things that I've written when I co-write that I would never have written because I don't normally do some certain thing. And I love that aspect of it." Working in new constellations is also an important part of

contemporary popular music songwriting, emphasizing how "mixing it up" allows for a variation in ideas and input (Tolstad, "Tracking" 32, "Bring" 13). Collaborating in new ways, then, seems to be conducive to creativity by offering new stimuli, in line with the concept of "collaborative emergence" (Sawyer and DeZutter). For this reason, Bleu, like other songwriters, finds that stepping out of their comfort zone is beneficial:

> When people come in now, and they're, "How do you like to work?," I'm like, I like to work however you like to work, and if you like to do it a way that I'm not into, I'm actually more excited about that because the variety is what makes it fun and interesting. (McAuley)

The interviews hence suggest that the stereotypical image cultivated in America in the 1960s, of songwriters working an eight-hour shift in a cubicle (Barber, "Brill-Building"), no longer meets the demands of contemporary pop music songwriting. Nevertheless, having a dedicated space and time still seems to facilitate the emergence of ideas, as supported by several interviews (see also Barber, "Professional" 57–58). Tolstad ("Tracking" 31, "Bring" 13) has similarly observed the 'one day, one song' format applied in contemporary co-writes.

Building Trust and Relations

Most songwriters emphasized the importance of social factors in the collaboration process. Although some form long-term writing partnerships with other songwriters or artists (see also Elliott)—for example, Sam Dixon has worked with Sia since the early 2000s—new collaborations are the norm. The songwriters stressed that new collaborations often feel awkward for various reasons, including fear or admiration. Hence, breaking the ice is essential to create a comfortable environment where artists

and fellow songwriters can open up and write emotionally meaningful music. Humor was considered particularly effective.

Socializing over a meal or drink is another popular way to ease relationships. Desmond Child typically initiates new collaborations with lunch (see also Elliott 177), and Sacha Skarbek explained that sharing meals could also help resolve any issues that may arise later on:

> Adele fairly reluctantly came into the studio because she wrote a lot herself […] We spent a day and a half really struggling to get somewhere, and we didn't bond particularly well […]. But on the second day, we had a bit of lunch, we chatted a lot and just learned a bit of trust with each other. It's really tough when you're in these situations when you're shoved into a room with somebody you don't really know. And sometimes that thing can be worth a lot of money. And there's a lot of people waiting to hear a result from it […] and then you're expected to unload your heart, just strip naked. That's really not easy to do. But we sort of came back in, and we were working on one idea, and she was like, "I've got this other little thing." And then she started to go into the chorus of "Cold Shoulder" (2019) as in the melody line of it. And it was like two and a half hours, three hours, and we knocked it out. (Skarbek)

Skarbek argued that collaboration requires openness and trust, and spending social time together helps to develop these qualities more effectively than simply making music. This experience is consistent with producer Harding's (66) experience that socializing is an integral part of songwriting, as well as with Bennett's (*Constraint, Creativity* 231–32) observation that collaboration benefits from a "greeting period" in which the ice is broken by sharing anecdotes about songwriting over drinks.

Discovering commonalities was deemed particularly beneficial, not only for building trust but also for writing meaningful songs. Miranda Cooper, a former artist turned songwriter at Xenomania, resonated with the Sugababes, who were struggling after losing their record deal:

> I suppose they were in their late teens, and I was in my mid-late 20s. We were going through the same things […] starting to be successful women in the music industry, maybe earning a little bit more than our partners. So, I felt like it was honest; well, in all the lyrics that we wrote, we never cynically projected something onto the girls. We would always be writing sincerely for ourselves, and then the girls gave those ideas wings. (Cooper)

Other songwriters highlighted the importance of understanding the artist's "life story," which Sam Dixon stated was "part of the job." Bleu elaborated:

> I want to talk about what they're doing, what their goals are, both from a career standpoint, but also like where they're at emotionally and where they're at in their life and all that kind of thing, and musically, too. So that we can try to hit those goals together because, obviously, in that case, I'm trying to get them something that is going to feel authentic to them. (McAuley)

This familiarization process includes listening to music, discussing musical preferences and the personal meaning of certain records, and sharing past musical releases. These activities serve as a foundation for songwriting and can even spark inspiration for a specific song. For instance, Adele's "Someone Like You" (2011), co-written by Dan Wilson, was inspired by Adele's enthusiasm for rockabilly singer Wanda Jackson.

Ultimately, the songwriters agreed that a personal connection is essential for achieving the best results, regardless of whether the artist is famous or unknown, which aligns with the work of professional US songwriter and songwriting scholar James Isaac Elliott. The songwriters believed it was best to avoid collaboration if there is no connection because, in Sam Dixon's words, it could harm the songwriter's "self-belief." Although this could also occur with trusted collaborators, according to Dixon, it typically concerned new collaborations. Mike Stock accordingly emphasized that songwriting is a highly personal activity that cannot be shared with just anybody, aligning with Elliott's various case studies and testimonials. Overall, then, the

emotional component between songwriters and artists is crucial. Collaboration can provide emotional benefits like confidence and motivation (Bennett, *Constraint, Creativity* 129), but establishing a personal connection and emotional rapport seems to be a fundamental requirement rather than a bonus to the collaborative songwriting process.

A Spectrum of Artist-Songwriter Involvement

The following spectrum of artist-songwriter collaboration builds on typologies of collaborative songwriting (Bennett, *Constraint, Creativity*) and production (Burgess; Martin). Richard Burgess offers a spectrum of creative ownership (9–19) from the producer's chair, ranging from auteur, where the creative vision uniquely belongs to the producer, to enablative, where the producer's role is to enable the strongest creative input from other team members. Adam Martin suggests a tripartite model of musical, social, and technical tasks for the producer (117–25). A commonality between these producer typologies is the emphasis on their social function and command of power in the creation process.

All of the scholars who attempt to define the producer's creative role remark on the difficulty of categorizing them due to their overlapping duties; this is also a feature of the songwriters studied in this research. One common feature shared by professional songwriters and producers is that of "professional listeners" (Hennion) who bridge the gap between artists' ideas and listeners' expectations.

In order to assess the varying degrees and levels of interaction between collaborative songwriters and artists, we propose a spectrum of involvement, based on a reworking of Burgess's functional typology of record producers (2013, 9–17) and Bennett's ontology of collaborative songwriters ("Collaborative"). The proposed

spectrum (Figure 1) is as follows: *autonomous*; *dialogic*; *interactive*; *supportive*; *introspective*.

[INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE]

'Autonomous': Writing without a Specific Artist in Mind

Some songwriters adhere to what we could term as 'autonomous' writing, similar to the auteur category in Burgess's typology (9–19). By this, we are referring to songs written without an artist in mind, where the only creative force is the songwriter. Diane Warren believes that a great song should stand on its own, irrespective of who performs it. Thus, she prefers writing songs without strict guidelines and for no particular artist because these constraints limit creative freedom. Beth Nielsen-Chapman took a similar view: "When I'm writing a song, I don't want to think about who's going to cut it. I don't want to worry about how to get it to the publisher. I want to serve the song and just fall into the world of that song. What is this song trying to be? That's the way you write great songs." Within our sample, the autonomous mode of working was relatively uncommon, indicating a preference for some form of collaboration and some guidance or constraints to foster creativity. One major drawback of autonomous writing—the flipside of lacking industry constraints—is that it can be difficult for songwriters to have their songs recorded by an artist, which is, ultimately, the main way to monetize their craft (see Elliott 169, 176, 179). On the positive side, however, songwriters are not held back by the potentially mediocre songwriting skills of collaborating artists—either in terms of craft or increased workload—which many of the professional songwriters Elliott interviewed cited as a common issue in songwriter-artist collaboration (178–79).

'Dialogic': Writing in Dialogue with Specific Artists

Tolstad ("Bring") has described how writing to 'briefs' for specific artists is a main feature of professional songwriting in contemporary popular music, especially for aspiring songwriters. When writing to briefs which describe the kind of songs an artist is looking for, songwriters usually do not have any direct contact with the artist in question. However, while not always possible, greater interaction with artists is considered more advantageous (see also Elliott). One of the more common and generally preferred ways of working, in line with the previously explored 'modes of collaboration,' is thus for songwriters to co-write with an artist, although not necessarily in real-time all the time. Mike Stock recalled writing asynchronously with singer Donna Summer:

> We didn't jam. Normally, I'd arrive at 11 a.m., knowing that, for example, Donna Summer would be there at 1. And I'd had an idea driving home the night before. I went to bed, woke up, and my mind had been working on it overnight […] I'd go upstairs to the desk, put the chords down, put a basic drum pattern and bassline down, and then finish off the lyrics with Donna because the agreement was that we worked together. So, I have the song, the title, and the basic flavor of it. And then she sat down and refined the lyrics with me. (Stock)

Since most songwriters felt that the main ideas should ideally come from the artists themselves (see also Elliott 170, 176), they seldom prepare ideas in advance (see also Elliott 174). Some of the writers, including Wilson, White, Cooper, and Child, mentioned having collections of ideas to draw from, if necessary, but they rarely rely on them. Fraser T. Smith referred to prepared ideas as a "fallback" option but prefers to approach each project with a fresh perspective: "It's better for me, anyway, to have a conversation with the artist and to then see where they're at. And I think if you're in the right frame of mind, you can usually come up with something fresh." In line with this perspective, Sam Dixon explained that preparation makes more sense when the artist

already has a clear vision for the album and its production aesthetic. Preparing groove ideas, chord progressions, or sounds could then inspire the artist's creativity. However, in Dixon's experience, bringing material to the songwriting session is rarely useful if there is no musical concept yet, as the artist may not have an emotional connection to it.

For Miranda Cooper, "the vocal is king, not the track," and so the songwriting process is incomplete without testing how it sounds when performed by the recording artist. Therefore, a song's quality can only be properly evaluated when considering both the composition and its performance, which inevitably involves collaboration. Cooper recalled:

> We'd sing stuff down. Sometimes, it might be the best melody, but the lyric might not be quite right, and it just doesn't translate when you sing it. The final piece of the puzzle is the artists coming in. And really, it's then down to "Is it a hit vocal or not?" So, it's completely performance-activated. So, even if we had a chorus that we knew was amazing, and we loved it, if the artist didn't sound good on it, it didn't matter; it would have to be shelved. (Cooper)

'Interactive': Co-writing with Artists in Real-time

An 'interactive' mode of collaboration occurs when the intended artist is fully involved in the creative writing process as it unfolds. Such collaboration implies a high level of interaction between the artist and songwriter in developing all aspects of the song, including its thematic focus, lyrics, rhythm, harmony, melody, and arrangement. A high level of artist involvement is considered to increase the likelihood that the written song aligns well with the artist's vision and emotional outlook and, thus, the chances of it being recorded and monetized (Elliott).

The collaborative writing process itself might take on different forms. Australian songwriter and bassist Sam Dixon did, for instance, recall songs emerging from jamming in rehearsal with DIG (Directions in Groove):

> It was very much an equal democratic process between the five members, we'd rehearse and jam. And the songs kind of evolved from that. Someone might bring in a melodic idea or chord sequence, but it would usually come from us just playing. (Dixon)

Guy Chambers similarly recalled his time in World Party with Karl Wallinger:

> We used to just jam for hours, and then we might find something within the jam that may then turn into a song. So that was a form of co-writing. And he [Wallinger] didn't really see it like that because, for him, a song is just the top line, the chords, and then obviously the lyrics. So, he didn't take my contributions very seriously. (Chambers)

Songwriters also stressed the significance of performance and expression in this type of interactive co-writing. Mike Viola emphasized how jamming and playing song ideas with a band influenced the way he sings. Noting that "the inflections change the way the lyrics are delivered. […] It's not songwriting, but it's what makes a song," Viola suggests that the expressive qualities of a performance are integral to the composition. Fraser T. Smith echoed Viola's experience, recalling his collaboration with Adele on "Rolling in the Deep" (2011). The composition only came alive when Adele performed it, describing it as a "golden moment of realization." In this regard, pop music may be closer to the blues in that harmonies and structures are formulaic, but the quality and characteristics of the composition are determined by musical phrasing and expression. Songwriters and artists writing together thus seem to improve song quality by acknowledging and emphasizing the high relevance of the artist's performative expression in mediating artist authenticity.

'Supportive': Facilitating an Artist's Songwriting

Close on the spectrum to the "enablative" category in Burgess' typology (9–19) are those songwriting teams that write with a particular artist and fulfill whatever musical or emotional role is needed to coax the best out of the artist. We are terming this role "supportive." Referring to his early work as a musician and creative collaborator with the singer Craig David, Fraser T. Smith expressed that he still views himself

> as the guitarist or the right-hand man of the artist. So, I'm really there to make things happen. And this [songwriting] is just a glorified version of that, really. So, whenever the artist comes in, I'm there for them like the guitarist is usually there for the singer in a band. (Smith)

The role of a professional songwriter, then, seems to involve aspects of being a session musician—itself a complex role with varied skills (Herbst and Albrecht)—and producer (Bennett, "Collaborative"; Harding 56–57; Tough 79). As Eg White stated, "I'm practically a producer, and just being able to accept both roles or a huge continuum from one extreme to another and adapt has been really helpful." He emphasized the importance of developing sensitivity to the artist's needs, at times taking charge and at other times being observant and silent.

In keeping with the songwriters' general appreciation of most artists' songwriting skills, many stressed the importance of only providing as much help as needed (see also Elliott 170–74). Sacha Skarbek expressed an attitude that was generally shared:

> I think a good co-writer to an artist is flexible and knows when to shut up and let the artist breathe […] And then also be able to step in when it hits a low, and hopefully, be able to reignite it but bring some ideas in there. (Skarbek)

Eg White shared an example of stepping back even further. Regarding his collaboration with Rebecca Ferguson for "Nothing's Real but Love" (2011), he stated, "From that point onwards, I realized what an amazingly good writer she was, and I wouldn't collaborate. I would not collaborate. I wouldn't put in the seed idea after that." Rather than writing on her behalf, White helped her improve her writing discipline and offered structure and guidance as needed. Meanwhile, Skarbek acknowledged that even established artists can experience creative blockages and feel numb and that it is his responsibility to help instigate new ideas during these times. He elucidated that his input often consists of guidance on song structures, creating effective hooks, combining melody and chords, and ensuring the song follows an overarching concept, stressing that the "individualness" must come from the artist. Sam Dixon further elaborated on this point:

> My involvement in music has been as a collaborator and a functioning part of the machine. And I'm not one of those co-writers that will come in and be like, "This is the song, we're doing this," because I just think when the audience is listening to something, they're going to subconsciously connect with it much deeper if it's the artist and not some middle-aged Australian telling an 18-year-old from Brixton what to say. That's ridiculous; it's never going to be believable or real. Of course, I work with people who are a lot younger than me, but I feel like when I'm with them, it's more about drawing certain things out of them or perhaps acting in more of a sort of editorial sense rather than like "It's this, it's that." If the lion's share is coming from me, it's usually rubbish. (Dixon)

Dan Wilson also recalled Adele's superlative songwriting skills and adaptability:

> She played me the first four lines of what we turned into "Someone Like You" (2011). And I thought: "Oh, that's the one I want to write for sure." So we worked on that. She was playing it on the guitar, and she said: "Try it on the piano; maybe it'll be more inspiring." So I did that arpeggiated thing on the piano. And by the end of the day, we had recorded the piano, and her singing the first verse, and her singing the choruses. (Wilson)

'Introspective': The Artist as Primary Songwriter

The 'introspective' mode of collaboration is a step further along the spectrum, with the artist carrying the primary creative load, and songwriters helping only if and when needed. Elliott's study, for example, includes several case studies of successful collaborations between recording artists as lead songwriters and professional non-performing songwriters. Within our sample, there were similar cases. For example, Eg White recounted the nature of his creative input in a partnership with Duffy:

> Duffy and "Warwick Avenue" (2008)—the verse was completely her, 100% her […] She had a melody in total, whole verse eight bars, and I just underpinned it. Put a bassline under an already existing thing. And then, at that point, I said: "Okay, now we need a chorus," and then we wrote that in the room together, the three of us. Then the middle eight, we just knocked off at high speed. (White)

Similarly, White credited Adele with much of the musical input to "Chasing Pavements" (2008): "The title was totally her … I kind of served up the sequence, and then she started to sing, and then the two of us just batted off each other." Guy Chambers remembered a similar interaction while writing "Angels" with Robbie Williams:

> He literally just walked into my flat and started singing the verse to me, a cappella, and I just started playing the piano, almost straight away. My main function was to try and play something very simple. And then I wrote that melody that goes into the chorus, and it didn't take very long. (Chambers)

Chambers continued: "He knows a lot about the writing process, as we were writing so much. He just loved writing. I mean, that was his favorite part of being a pop star, really. He finds the gigs very difficult. He's a brilliant natural writer."

Conclusions

This study has explored the role and significance of collaboration between members of popular music songwriting teams and artists based on secondary data from the *Sodajerker* podcast, guided by three research questions.

Firstly, we investigated the benefits that songwriters see in collaboration. Our findings suggest that there are 'soft' social benefits, such as emotional support, self-confidence, or motivation to write, which is consistent with Bennett's (*Constraint, Creativity* 129) previous research. One of the main motivations for social interaction is 'excitement.' Several songwriters emphasized that excitement leads to inspiration, which is meaningful to artists and, by extension, songwriters, benefitting the musical outcome. The songwriters revealed that working with diverse artist personas is inspiring and helps them produce their best work. For artists, working with professional songwriters often means access to well-crafted songs that are still authentic because of their own involvement. For both parties, well-crafted songs with a personal connection to the artist have economic benefits, which aligns with Bennett's "Svengali" model ("Collaborative"). For most songwriters, working with new collaborators is often stressful but rewarding, both creatively and economically. However, for collaboration to succeed, songwriters and artists need to bond, typically through shared meals or drinks (Bennett, *Constraint, Creativity*; Elliott; Harding), to develop trust, discover common musical interests and preferences, and acquire a shared vision. This is not to imply that all songwriting collaborations are devoid of problems stemming from entrenched inequalities. Though it is beyond the scope of this article, we have identified that there is space for future research to explore in more detail power imbalances around gender, race, or other forms of discrimination that may exist in the writing room.

Secondly, we explored the characteristics of different modes of collaboration in songwriting. Collaboration is motivated by the intention of bringing together individuals

with complementary skills, preferences, and backgrounds in order to create well-crafted songs, consistent with previous research (Anderton, Dubber, and James 54; Bennett, *Constraint, Creativity* 129; DeVries; Harding). This manifests in what Eg White termed the "cumulative effect," making the musical idea more refined or original. Furthermore, complementary skills also allow for delegating tasks and responsibilities, enabling collaborators to focus their concentration on the writing instead of juggling various musical and/or technical aspects simultaneously. This delegation approach resembles commercial pop music production methods where work is assigned to specialized roles, such as recording, mixing, and mastering engineers, producers, and other creative/technical roles like programmers (Harding; Thompson).

Regarding the creative process, most songwriters favor a collaborative, interactive approach, believing it to be more productive and enjoyable. Several songwriters pointed out that the mere presence of another musician could often be inspiring. Popular and common were spontaneous live interactions in the form of jamming, where ideas for a song were found and developed. The reduced level of control in improvised jamming benefits the energy and immediacy and helps break with songwriting routines and preconceived ideas. However, jamming was considered less effective in refining song ideas and turning them into full compositions. Regardless of the nature of jamming or other less spontaneous real-time interactions, most songwriters deemed this way of working as effective in achieving flow states and unforeseen ideas often perceived by the creatives as "inexplicable." However, these align well with creativity research on concepts like flow (Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow*; Sawyer, "Group") and collaborative emergence within distributed creativity (Sawyer and DeZutter). It has been shown that collaborative emergence benefits from a lack of predictability; therefore, it is no surprise that most songwriters prefer working with unfamiliar artists

and songwriters. Apart from the immediate creative benefits of the collaborators' ideas, the songwriters appreciate new work arrangements because they help them keep their skills up-to-date and explore new musical styles and compositional approaches. In this respect, many contemporary songwriters differ from older-generation songwriters, such as Holland/Dozier/Holland or Leiber & Stoller, who found a routine and a fixed songwriting team productive (Egan).

The songwriters' experiences underpin the importance of debate and discussion suggested by Bennett's ("Collaborative," *Constraint, Creativity*) stimulus evaluation model, whereby veto and revision requests enhance quality, as well as Tolstad's ("That," "Tracking") finding that jams in songwriting sessions are typically followed by analytical and evaluative discussions to refine and finalize a tune. Interestingly, some songwriters felt that such discussions and subsequent revisions actually expedite the songwriting process because problems are identified more quickly, or ideas are confirmed as strong, which could take longer if carried out by a single person.

Our third research question related to the extent and nature of collaboration between songwriters and performing artists. We proposed a five-tiered spectrum of collaboration inspired by producer typologies (Burgess; Martin). Firstly, there is the *autonomous mode*, where songwriters create tunes without a specific artist in mind. There is no direct equivalent in the production domain, as production requires a song to be produced. In some ways, it resembles Burgess' "auteur" producer (9–19), who—in the tradition of Phil Spector—is audibly the primary creative force on the released record but primarily through decisions in recording, mixing, and, to some extent, arranging. Yet, auteur producers rarely create songs from scratch unless they are also the artist. Based on our data, the autonomous mode of songwriting is uncommon, especially when compared to the more prevalent auteur producers from George Martin,

Brian Wilson, Brian Eno, Trevor Horn, and Trent Reznor (see Moorefield) to Pharrell Williams, Timbaland, Mark Ronson, and Jack Antonoff.

Secondly, there is the *dialogic mode*, defined by songwriters writing in dialogue with specific artists, with some interaction in real-time, and also asynchronous and subsequent work on ideas. During live interaction, songwriters may build on ideas they have prepared based on briefs or as a fallback option, but most songwriters prefer to create and develop the song material with the artist (see also Elliott). Once the artist and songwriters have developed and agreed upon a vision, songwriters can create some material alone, later reviewed and refined with the artist. Songs written partly asynchronously must be checked for compatibility with the artist, and songwriters appreciate the importance of ensuring that artists feel emotionally connected to the song and that it sounds good when performed and recorded. The dialogic mode of collaboration bears considerable similarities to the work of producers, who are not always present in the recording sessions and may mix/produce in the absence of the artist, based on prior conversations about the desired aesthetic and with occasional listening sessions to ensure that the artist and record label agree with the production's direction.

The third mode, *interactive*, is one of the most popular and common ways of collaboration, at least among accomplished songwriters; it may be less common among developing songwriters. The interactive mode is characterized by songwriters and artists writing most, if not all, of the song together in real-time. Artists are fully involved through performative interactions (e.g., jamming) or contribute significantly to the writing by offering thematic cues, developed lyrical elements (or all lyrics), and melodic, harmonic, rhythmic, or structural ideas. This mode of working can yield excellent results because songs written this way naturally fit the artist well. Another

major advantage for songwriters is that the resulting songs have a high likelihood of being recorded and released, which promises the greatest economic return (Elliott). There are similarities here with Burgess' "collaborative" producer type, sharing the creative load and bringing in different skills with, ostensibly, minimal hierarchy.

Fourth, the *supportive mode* is defined by professional songwriters stepping back and offering support to the artists writing their songs when needed, whether musically or by boosting the artist's confidence. This help can involve valuable emotional support, similar to Bennett's (*Constraint, Creativity* 129) observation, and can also be seen as a form of emotional labor, as noted by Long and Barber ("Voicing," "Conceptualizing"). This supportive mode shares similarities with several of Burgess' producer types (9–19): facilitative (producer carrying out skills an artist does not have, usually technical); enablative (producer being present and supportive in the recording); consultative (producer mentoring artist by offering conceptual, psychological, and visionary input). In the case of songwriting, support is typically less technical and more performative, overlapping with the role of session musicians (Herbst and Albrecht), with songwriters acting as "right-hand assistants." Input and direction are kept to a minimum to let the artist's personality shine, although the supportive mode assumes that the artist is skilled at writing. In the analyzed data, many high-profile artists have advanced songwriting skills, but it is unclear how well and frequently this mode works with most recording artists.

Fifth, there is the *introspective mode*, where the artists write most of their tunes themselves and receive little help from professional songwriters. This mode is similar to the supportive mode, except that the artist's contribution is greater and sometimes covers more than one area (lyrics, melody, chords, structure, arrangement, production). It is at the other end of the spectrum from the "autonomous" mode, where the writing is

entirely in the hands of songwriters, independent of the performing artist. It can be concluded then that the degree of collaboration between the artist and songwriter, and therefore where the collaboration would sit on the on the spectrum of artist-songwriter involvement, depends to a large extent on the artist's songwriting abilities.

Collaboration comes in many forms and is crucial to popular music creation at all levels—from writing and arranging to recording and producing a song. This study highlights the importance of professional songwriters, not only for the functioning of the industry but also for the musical quality of many popular songs. Songwriting is not solely an economic necessity within the craft worker tradition (Banks) but rather an art and a craft. Songwriters interact with artists across a spectrum of involvement to help them write and refine songs that align with their vision and brand and are meaningful to all parties involved—artists, fans, and songwriters themselves.

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Figure Captions

Figure 1. Spectrum of interaction between collaborative songwriters and artists