

Where Did That Song Come From?

"I'm In Pretty Good Shape for the Shape I'm In"

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A lot of people have asked me, "Where did that song come from?" What gave you the idea to write that? I think some of the best songs are flukes, which just pour out as if a faucet was just turned on. Sometimes writing a song is very labor intensive, like I can imagine giving birth to a 12 pound child would be like.

I'm In Pretty Good Shape for the Shape I'm in came about around 1991 one evening at Sharron Anderson's kitchen table in Madison Tennessee. Sharron Anderson, Doug DeJoe and I had gotten together at her house to co-write. At the time Sharron was caring for her first child who was probably not even a year old yet and was not a happy camper that day, demanding her total and undivided attention. I remember her apologizing and telling Doug and I, "you guys go ahead and write something as long as you're already here." So that's what we proceeded to do.

Doug asked me, "You got any ideas in your notebook?" I think everybody that writes carries around a notebook full of hook lines, one line ideas and half written thoughts. As Doug and I looked through our notebooks I came across the line, I'm in pretty good shape for the shape I'm in. Doug said, "I kinda like that, you got any music to go with it?" I really didn't, so I picked up the guitar and just started playing. Doug sat there chewing on his pencil and humming. When I wrote with Doug this is usually the way it would go. We would pick a line from our notebooks or come up with a subject to write about and then I would just start playing the guitar. Sometimes playing the guitar and coming up with some music would come first.

It was fun to write with Doug because whatever I lacked in lyrics, he would make up for; and what ever he lacked in musical ideas, I would make up for. As I would play Doug, would all of a sudden say, "Play that again." That's when I knew we where getting on to something. As I would play, he would hum and write. After a few minutes of playing it over and over again, I would say, "Read what you got so far." Every now and then I would say why don't you say it like this or use this word instead. Doug, every now and then would say, why don't you use a different chord there or, let's change the feel of that rhythm. We'd go back and forth like that for hours until we came up with something.

I think we wrote I'm In Pretty Good Shape for the Shape I'm in, in about 30 or 40 minutes that evening. When we were done I think we both thought it was kind of a silly song that would never see the light of day outside our notebooks. A year or so later I decided to make a demo of it, in a little home studio I had, and after that included it on a compilation of 9 songs that I made about 300 cassette copies of. It turned out to be the only song that we wrote together that ever got published. In fact it got some major publishing and was pitched to a lot of major record company acts in Nashville, but unfortunately was never cut. I guess not too many people in the country music market want to sing about a guy that gets drunk, smashes up his car, gets in a fight and then can't remember what happened the next day. Maybe we should pitch it to some rock and rollers!

Songs come in many different ways to many different writers. Sometimes the words come first. Sometimes it's the music first. Sometimes it comes easy. Sometimes it's like taking a bone away from a mad, hungry dog. Sometimes when you're done, you think it's silly. You just never know when your silly song might be the next smash hit single by some major recording artist. Just keep writing and find people to write with that inspire you and stir up your creativity. Don't write because you think you can make a lot of money at it. Write because you love doing so.

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