

# SongWritersNotes

The Newsletter for San Diego Songwriters

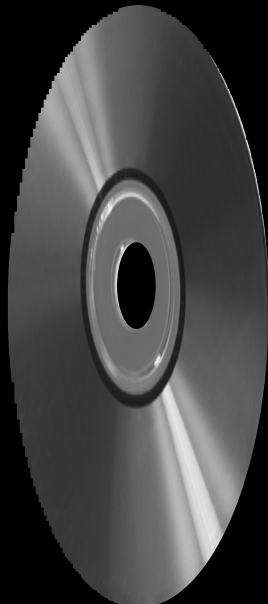
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*Country Music Pitch and Critique Monday, September 17*

## **Rex Benson**

REX BENSON MUSIC represents the #1 Smash Hit Single *Buy Me A Rose* by Kenny Rogers. This great ballad went to #1 in Billboard, R and R, Gavin, and CMT the week of May 1st, 2000, was a finalist in the 2000 CMA "Single Of The Year" category and the 2001 ACM "Vocal Event Of The Year" category. Rex also has a cut featured on Kenny Roger's new album, and his latest single *What I'm Up Against* is set for a September release on Chris LeDeux' new record.

Rex opened his first publishing company in 1979, and in 1982 his ASCAP publishing company, JESSE ERIN MUSIC, entered into a co-publishing agreement with Famous Music Corporation. Since then, Rex has opened 3 other publishing companies: REX BENSON MUSIC (BMI), REX TO RICHES MUSIC (BMI), CHECKS TO REX MUSIC (ASCAP).

While enrolled in college in 1972, Rex began his songwriting career. Numerous awards in national and international competitions such as the American Song Festival, soon followed. Since then, as a Writer /Publisher/Song-plugger, Rex has placed songs with many distinguished artists including: Garth Brooks (With Trisha Yearwood), Kenny Rogers (With Linda Davis), Tammy Wynette, Joe Diffie, Kenny Rogers (With Alison Krauss and Billy Dean), Chesapeake (With Linda Rondstadt), Rich McCready, The Oakridge Boys, Kenny Rogers (With Brad Paisley), Scott Joss, Shirley Meyers, Mel Tillis, Bobby Vinton, Lacy J. Dalton, Steve Gillette, and many others. Rex has written and/or placed songs for Network Television (NBC/CBS), The USA Network, The Disney Channel, The WB, and Film, and is currently aligned with PEN Music Group Inc. in Los Angeles, for Film and T.V. placement. Rex currently represents his songs, and songs of other writers, in Nashville and Los Angeles.

**Rex is interested in hearing female songs in the pop (Sheryl Crow) direction, songs which could also be pitched to female contemporary country artists like Faith Hill, Sara Evans or Martina McBride. Tempos are always a plus. Rex also seeks positive male love songs (Kenny Rogers) and contemporary country female songs in the style of Lee Ann Womack. Think BIG CHORUSES!**

*This pitch is open to SDSG members only. Pitch fees are \$10 per song, maximum two submissions per writer or team. Non-members may attend the session, admission is \$20. SDSG Members admitted FREE. Registration opens at 6:30pm, Monday, September 17 at the Doubletree Hotel in Mission Valley. **Thank You Randy Fischer for this session.***

SAN DIEGO SONGWRITERS GUILD PRESENTS  
**THE 2001  
SDSG SONG CONTEST**  
**SEE PAGE 3...ENTRY FORM ENCLOSED!**

# From the Songwriter's Desk . . .

## **Making Your Best Pitch** by SDSG Executive Counsel Member Bob Duffy



Baseball fans are familiar with key elements of good pitching including location, movement, velocity, and the element of surprise. To maximize pitching effectiveness, good pitchers stay in condition, practice regularly, study opposing hitters, and maintain good mechanics. Surprisingly, many elements that make for good pitching in baseball are applicable to songwriting. In my last article I discussed using professional critique to improve your songwriting skills. In this article I'll cover getting the most out of pitching your songs. We will focus on the three phases of your delivery: **The Wind Up, The Pitch, and The Catch.**

\* \* \* \* \*  
**The Wind Up.** Much like baseball, 90% or more of the effort in song pitching is spent in preparation. Great baseball pitchers have several pitches, and great songwriters have **lots of songs.** Keep gathering ideas and keep writing new songs. Until a song is actually "cut" by an artist, consider it as "in progress." Use professional critique, feedback from live performance and your own gut to rewrite your best work. Abandon (i.e. stop rewriting) songs which aren't worth your time and effort. Don't demo a song if it's not ready. I have started over 80 songs in the past three years but have taken only five to the professional demo stage. I have 10 more I'm actively moving toward pro demos. All this takes time, but I have more time than money.

When the song is ready, get the **best demo** you can afford. An effective demo conveys the your song's melody and lyric clearly. If you're not an excellent musician, hire people who are. You can get professional demos for as little as \$350-900 through studios that provide a turnkey service - you just provide a "work tape," a rough recording of the song which conveys the melody, groove and chords. I prepare work tapes in my home studio.

**Studying** is an important part of preparation. When you find out about a pitch opportunity, seek information on the person, style, genre or project that the pitch is for. If there's a website, check it out. If the reviewer has had songs cut by certain artists, get familiar with those artists. If there's a genre, listen to the latest hits in that area. Pitching takes time, money and effort, so spend your resources wisely. If you realize you don't have anything likely to fit, consider participating only as an observer. But be aware that the guest may be looking for something different from what they've done before, or may be moving in a new direction musically.

Don't forget the **details.** Always bring two (2) copies of the recording to the pitch **Continued on Page 3**

## What's Going On?

### SDSG LIVE SHOWS Coming up in September:

- **SATURDAY, SEPT. 8,** 8 to 11pm at **North Park Deli and Coffee,** 3823 30th Street, North Park.
- **THURSDAY, SEPT. 20,** 9 to 11 pm at **Lestat's,** 3343 Adams Avenue, University Heights

**MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 24,** 7:30-10:00pm: **NSAI WORKSHOP MEETING** at the home of Liz Axford. Group song critiques and a writing exercise. Please come prepared with cued tapes or CDs and 15-20 copies of typed lyric sheets. Please RSVP if you plan to attend to Liz at EAxford@aol.com or (858)481-5650, and to get directions. \$5 Donation.

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 20,** 1:00-5:00pm : **NSAI SPECIAL EVENT** at the home of Liz Axford. Liz will present a FREE workshop based on her new book "Song Sheets to Software - A Guide to Print Music, Software and Web Sites for Musicians" (Scarecrow Press, 2001). She will demonstrate several music software programs, and guide an Internet tour to music-related Web sites. Please RSVP if you plan to attend to Liz at EAxford@aol.com or (858)481-5650, and to get directions.

**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 10,** 10:00-5:00pm : **NSAI/SDSG SPECIAL EVENT** with Steve Seskin ("Grown Men Don't Cry" by Tim McGraw, "Life's a Dance" by John Michael Montgomery, and many more) at the Stratford Inn, 710 Camino Del Mar, Del Mar, CA, 92014. Steve will present a workshop on melody and lyric writing, answer questions, and critique songs. Don't miss this unique opportunity to hear a great songwriter and teacher! The registration fee for the event will be \$50 in advance, \$60 at the door. FREE lunch and parking. To register, contact Liz at EAxford@aol.com or (858)481-5650.

**STEVE WHITE** web site: <http://www.stevewhiteblues.com>

- Every Sunday at **Big Jim's Bar-B-Q** @12:00PM - 190 HWY 101, Encinitas
- Every Sunday at **Tom Giblins** @ 8:00PM - 640 Grand Av., Carlsbad



See "Opportunities and Newsmakers" on page five for contests and other events

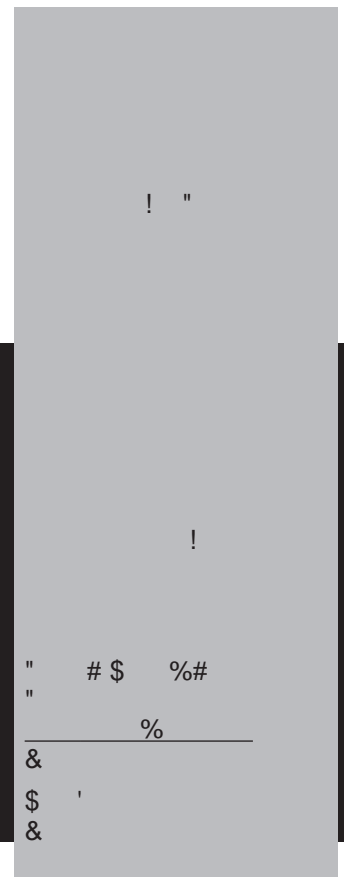
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It's nearly that time again... so get to it and prepare your music on CD or cassette, ready to submit to the panel of judges SDSG will have reviewing songs. This year, we will be judging entries in 10 different categories, so your chances of winning are excellent.

Check out the entry form enclosed in this issue of Songwriters Notes for rules and information.

You can only win if you try, so put the pedal to the metal (or country) and enter the 2001 SDSG Song Contest!



THE PITCH continued from page 2 session. Don't lose out on an opportunity because the tape or CD you brought won't play. Test any CD's or tapes in advance. Cue tapes to within 3 seconds of the start of the song and make it obvious which side of the tape the song is on. For CD's, clearly specify which track you're pitching. Always bring at least three copies of your lyric sheet - one for the pitch, one for you to take notes on feedback, and one backup (or in case someone else at the pitch likes the song). There are different opinions on the format for lyrics, but in general if you can give the impression you understand song forms (Verse, Chorus, Bridge) it will leave a better impression than if you just write your lyrics like a novel. Typed lyrics look more professional than hand-written, and always make sure the lyrics match the recording. Make sure your contact information is on your tape or CD. Each lyric sheet should have your contact information, too.

**The Pitch.** Tips for the actual pitching are pretty straightforward. Come early, have your stuff ready, and use the entire pitch session for your benefit. Listen and take notes when the Guest speaks. Listen to good songs and good demos and find out who wrote them and where they were recorded. Observe the Guest to pick up tips on what songs connect with them. Be politely assertive if the guest asks questions, but please don't challenge the guest if he or she doesn't agree yours is the best song ever written. Remember the guest's opinion is just that- an opinion. Be professional and keep an open mind and you will survive!

**The Catch.** At the end of the Pitch Session, meet and thank the Guest if possible. There's no need to mention your song unless you're asked specifically, but if something the Guest said was valuable, acknowledge it. If the Guest has not specifically mentioned it, ask if he or she is open to future submissions and if so, where to send them. Your notes during the actual pitching will come in handy if you choose to submit something down the road.

Keep your expectations reasonable. In truth, very few big hits have been discovered in Pitch Sessions. Strive to make a positive impression on the Guest and others at the session. This may open doors for future submissions to the Guest, collaborations with other songwriters, or referrals. Acknowledge and encourage other songwriters. Songwriting is a tough, tough craft, and everyone needs encouragement. If you can find something positive to say about three songs and if you take the time to encourage three other songwriters, you have used the session for your benefit.

I like to keep my submissions that were not picked up. I write the date and the Pitch Session (i.e. SDSG Monica Benson) on the recording and the lyric sheet. I have three uses for these: As a starting point for a rewrite or re-demo; a record for the IRS of my efforts to become a professional songwriter; and as a reference point in my development as a songwriter. When I'm feeling especially down about my lack of progress, I will go back and listen to old submissions. Sometimes I get inspired to do a rewrite or new song. Sometimes I get some good laughs. At the very least, I'm able to remind myself that the journey is a big part of the experience. -BOB DUFFY

# Markus Van Such Serves "Sweet Bites"

Anyone who has attended an SDSG meeting has met our former president and perpetual cheerleader, Mark "HC Markus" Hattersley. Mark is the guy who runs our sound system during pitches and usually manages to slip in a few wisecracks along the way. He is our newsletter editor, a member of SDSG's Executive Council and, along with Randy Fischer, one of our most senior associates. Mark has been very successful in placing his songs in television and advertising over the years, and is now within a few months of bringing his own commercial recording studio, located in the hills of East County San Diego, on line.

A talented performer on keys and vocals, Mark is a founding member of the smooth jazz group *Markus Van Such*, which features David Van Such (Jennifer Holiday, Shalamar, Howard Hewitt, Sam & Dave) performing Mark's compositions on sax, flute and violin. David and Mark are backed up by Barby, Christopher and Jesse Boarman (voice, guitar and percussion respectively) and Dana Olsen on guitar. The group has just released its second CD, entitled "Sweet Bites." Its first CD, "A Change in the Weather," has garnered accolades from a variety of sources including a Four-Star review from *Strictly Jazz Magazine's* Warren H. White. The new release builds on the strong melodic foundation MVS established with "Weather" and continues the group's tradition of clean, yet rich production.

**"Sweet Bites" is available from Raging Bohemian Records, San Diego, CA 92150-1242.  
You can email Mark at [HCMarkus@aol.com](mailto:HCMarkus@aol.com) if you would like to order direct.**

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# SDSG Opportunities and Newsmakers

SDSG's **Tony Taravella** has been named the San Diego Chapter Coordinator for "**Just Plain Folks**," a national organization of singer/songwriters. In the next few months Tony will be scheduling showcases, which will be similar to the San Diego Songwriter Guild's live showcases. If you would like to become involved now as part of the "steering committee," please call Tony at (619) 280-3676.

If you are interested in earning a living from your music, you may wish to peruse **Todd and Jeff Brabeck's** book about the business titled "**Music, Money and Success**." The Brabecks now have a web site dedicated to the proposition that Music + Income = Dollars and Sense. [MusicAndMoney.com](http://MusicAndMoney.com)

In an exclusive interview, superstar writer & producer **Desmond Child** talks about his many hits for Bon Jovi, Aerosmith, KISS, Joan Jett, Michael Bolton, and most recently, writing "Living La Vida Loca" and other hits for Ricky Martin. Hot songwriter/producer **Adam Anders** tells how he co-wrote the latest Backstreet Boys single, and **Brad Rosenberger** Of Warner/Chappell Music is featured in the "Publishing Executive Profile." See **Dale Kawashima's** [songwriteruniverse.com](http://songwriteruniverse.com)

SDSG's "**Love Notes**" CD is available. Proceeds from sales go to **Children's Hospital**. If you'd like to hear this great CD for yourself, and support music for kids, please send your \$15.00 check or Money Order payable to SDSG to: 3368 Governor Dr, Suite F-326, San Diego, 92122.

**The SDSG 2001 Song Contest is coming...** submission deadline is November First, so start preparing now! See the enclosed entry form for details.

The **Northern California Songwriters Association** presents its **21st Annual Songwriters Conference** Saturday and Sunday **September 8 and 9, 2001** at the Foothill College Campus in Los Altos Hills, CA. Call (650) 654-3966 or email [info@ncsasong.org](mailto:info@ncsasong.org)

The **Dallas Songwriters Association 2001 Song Contest** deadline has been extended to September 15, 2001. Please direct inquiries and entries to: Dallas Songwriters Association, 2001 Song Contest, James Cornelius, P.O. Box 459, Royse City, TX 75189 972-636-9230 Email: [jaelius@flash.net](mailto:jaelius@flash.net)

The 2001 **Unisong International Song Contest** is open for entries! For entry details, visit the Unisong website at: <http://www.unisong.com> or send an e-mail to: [entry@unisong.com](mailto:entry@unisong.com) to request a text file of the entry form via e-mail. To receive an entry form by mail, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to: UNISONG ISC, 5198 Arlington Avenue, PMB 513, Riverside, CA 92504

**Email [HCMarkus@aol.com](mailto:HCMarkus@aol.com) or call the SDSG Hotline at 619-615-8874 and leave a message to share your news**

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## " THE PITCH SESSION "

**PRODUCERS, PUBLISHERS, A&R REPRESENTATIVES, MANAGERS and ARTISTS** may screen for a specific recording project. They use these events to find songs, singers, musicians, etc. Our guests may critique your song and give you valuable feedback on how you could improve upon it if time permits. The guest may "pick-up" your song which means they would like to hear it again for further consideration.

### Submission Rules

- One song per Guild Member will be listened to before those of Non-Members.
- On exceptionally busy nights, we reserve the option to limit the number of tapes submitted by an individual to any event. This option applies equally to those members submitting tapes by mail. We ask that writers number their tapes, #1 being your first choice, #2 your second, so that we may play them according to your priorities.
- Due to time limits, we cannot guarantee that your song will be heard in the Pitch Session.

### Fees

- For the submission price of \$10 per song (limit 1 to 2 songs per writer, varies with guests), you may enter your song(s) for the Pitch Session. Members may sign up songs in advance.
- You may join The San Diego Songwriters Guild on the night of an event for a \$45 yearly membership fee.
- Non-members are charged a \$20 door fee in addition to tape submission fees. The door fee must be paid by non-members wishing to pitch songs. Some pitch events are open only to SDSG members

### How It Works

- Bring neatly typed lyric sheet and CD or cassette cued to the beginning of the song you want heard.
- Tapes will not be accepted for the Pitch Session after the start of the event.
- Be sure to include your name and phone number on both your lyric sheet and your tape or CD because they may get separated.
- The Pitch Session is limited to 70 tunes. Once event is filled, sign up is closed, even if the event has not started. SDSG reserves the right to limit the number of submissions further.
- When you check in your song, sign in all names of writers, song title and phone number, so that others who hear your song can contact you.
- Submissions will be referred to by song title. Writers may or may not remain anonymous during the Pitch session depending on our guest for that event.

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# SDSG AT THE 2001 DEL MAR FAIR

On Tuesday, June 19, The San Diego Songwriters Guild took the "Endless Summer" stage at the Del Mar Fair from 2 to 5pm. Every year we try to have a different lineup, and this year the lineup was really different! The Del Mar Fair gives us the chance to let people know about the Guild, to publicize our "Love Notes" CD, and to give some of our members exposure. It also gives me the chance to grab an ice cream cone while somebody else is on stage.

Due to time constraints, I started performing while our closing act was setting up its equipment. Being a full band, we thought it best for them to set up right away and then take the stage at their performance time. When you're a performer, you have to get used to playing music with somebody setting up a drum set behind you. I gave my camera to my friend Bill and asked him to take shots of me during my set. I smiled whenever I saw him pointing the camera at me and tried to make sure he got my best profile, but I kept forgetting the lyrics I was singing. I really liked the Endless Summer stage. It's big and spacious, has a killer PA system, and a wooden dance floor between you and the audience in case they want to get up and move their feet. If you sit in the right place the acoustics are pretty good too. It's not too loud (I must be getting old) and not too soft.

Following me was new Guild member **Sharelle** playing keyboards and acoustic guitar with her husband Adam accompanying her on acoustic guitar. Sharelle performed "A Lifetime isn't Long Enough" which took the category for best Pop song in our 2000 SDSG song contest, along with others in her Pop-Rock style. Sharelle and her husband have been down here from LA for less than a year, and this was their first visit to the Del Mar Fair. In review she said the stage was comfortable and the crowd supportive. She also says that it's easier to get gigs in San Diego than in Los Angeles. "You don't have to go to an open mike over and over again to get a gig someplace here," she says.

After Sharelle came my long time friend and no stranger to performing at the Del Mar Fair, acoustic fingerstylist and singer/songwriter **Bill Mayes**. Bill uses a headpiece microphone during his live performances so that he can dance around the stage. Bill calls his relaxing style of original music "Dreamscape" but he opted for more up-tempo songs at the Fair. "Crankin' Up the Juice" and "Lyin'" are acoustic rockers. "Happy Guitar" is an example of one of his guitar instrumentals, and he also performed "The Same Song" along with recorded background tracks to add to the variety of his lively entertainment.

Quite a crowd had collected by the time **Erika Thompson** took the stage to sing two songs along with recorded background music. Her first song, "Rain Falls" is a ballad and "Broken Dreams" is techno pop. This was Erika's first ever appearance at the Del Mar Fair and first ever showcase with the Guild. She held the stage like an old pro. The audience enjoyed her.

I don't think anyone was prepared for our closing act, "**Myron & the Koniptionz**," except maybe their friends and family members in the audience. Using a wireless microphone, bandleader and vocalist Myron Frame mingled with the audience, writhed on the floor like a dying man, and climbed speaker towers as he sang up-tempo Blues. It was hard for passers by not to notice as lead guitarist Patrick Reynolds, bass player Paul Clark, and drummer Terry LeGros kept a solid, driving, rhythm.

We are very grateful to the Special Events department at the Del Mar Fair for allowing us the opportunity to perform again this year and to **Joshua**, the soundman, for doing a good job under hectic circumstances.

PS: I did get the opportunity to sneak away and have a chocolate ice cream cone during the showcase. It was good.

- **Tony Taravella**

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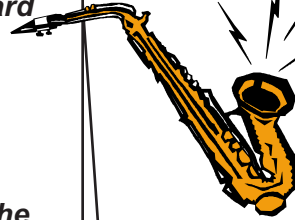


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 Every year the Guild brings music industry professionals to San Diego - just to hear your song! Get your songs heard by pros who want to hear them. Participate in members only pitch opportunities. Join the Guild.

**NETWORKING**  
 Meet the songwriters and artists of the community at \*Special Events \*Live Showcases \*FREE on-line postings \*FREE postings in our newsletter. Friends of the Guild include NSAI, SLAMM, and many, many San Diego studios, music merchants, producers, venues and industry professionals.

**DISCOUNT on TAXI**  
 SDSG Members get a \$50 discount off their first-year TAXI membership dues.

Take your songwriting seriously.  
 Join SDSG today.

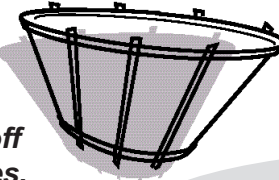


Rex  
**BENSON**  
 country  
**Pitch**

Monday, September 17  
 7:00 Doubletree

Steve **SESKIN**  
 SEMINAR SATURDAY, NOV 10

"If you can't beat them, arrange to have them beaten."  
 - George Carlin



**CONTEST**  
 Song submission deadline  
 November 1, 2001

Call (619) 615-8874 or  
 check [sdsongwriters.org](http://sdsongwriters.org)

## SongWritersNotes

The San Diego Songwriters Guild  
 3368 Governor Drive, Suite F-326  
 San Diego, CA 92122

Address Correction Requested

Please check your membership expiration date below

**First Class Mail**