

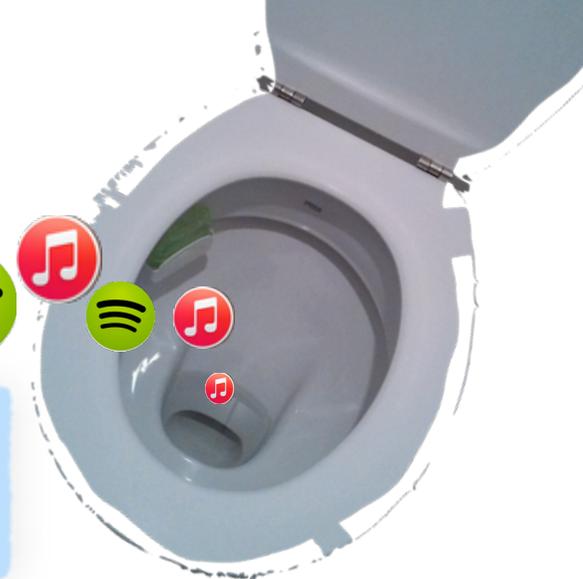
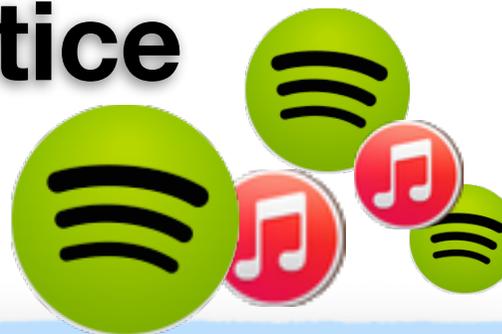
Weekly English Practice



14th May 2015

English Coaching Projects

weeklyenglishpractice.wordpress.com



BEN FOLDS: "SOMETIMES YOU SIT ON THE SONG TOILET AND NOTHING COMES OUT"

How does a songwriter know when a song is finished? How do you write a good song?

workshop: a discussion/study group

guidance: help and direction, advice

swap: to change one thing for another, to exchange

remove: to take away, to delete

adhere to: to follow, to stick to

fancy terminology: impressive or special technical words

concerned: related, connected

inner: internal, on the inside

struggle: fight, battle

chuckle: to laugh

as for: regarding, with respect to

pretend: to make others believe, to give a false impression

What is a good song? How does an impulsive idea become a melodious reality that can elicit emotions in others (and generate a new Twitter follower)?

For the North Carolina musician Ben Folds, there is no easy answer, but he does have some suggestions. "A three-minute song takes three minutes to compose," says Folds, who was recently at a **workshop** with students at Dublin's Royal Irish

Academy of Music. He adds, though, that the decisions made around that three minutes can take up to 15 years, which is how long it has taken him to finish one song.

Folds, who is best-known for his band Ben Folds Five, was in Dublin at the invitation of the US ambassador to Ireland, Kevin O'Malley, under the Creative Minds series, in which visiting American creatives impart their knowledge to inquisitive young Irish people.

Folds, most famous for his 'nerd rock' band 'Ben Folds Five' - visited music colleges in Dublin - the British Irish Modern Music Institute and the Royal Irish Academy of Music - to offer **guidance**.

His practical advice to students includes methods he employs himself, such as **swapping** the first and second verse to get away from a "once upon a time" narrative or **removing** two beats before the first chorus to bring an element of surprise ("because life is full of surprises").

Songwriting is an elusive and creative art. There are rules, guidelines, standards and best practices to adhere to (or break). While great songwriters may know lots of **fancy terminology** like "dominant" and "crescendo", it's the human input that gives music feeling.

The majority of Folds's thoughts on songwriting are **concerned** with that human element: dealing with the **inner** monologue

of a writer, putting your truths into the songs and finding an authentic way to express that.

Folds says he hates writing songs because the "inner editor" is hard to ignore, and this **struggle** isn't always fruitful.

"Sometimes you sit on the song toilet and nothing comes out," says Folds, **chuckling**.

As for lyrics, "find moments in your own life to explore", he says. "Life is about small moments."

"Yes, you can even write a song about a bus," Hannon interjects, referring to his 1999 hit with The Divine Comedy, National Express.

The most pertinent thing for songwriters that Folds talks about is finding your own voice. It might sound like something you hear on 'X Factor', but it's true. Every artist - from Adele to Dylan - had to find what makes them unique, mainly by imitating their heroes.

"The truth is that most artists would not want you to see the evolution of their voice. It would be very embarrassing," he says. "We all like to **pretend** we came out special and it all just magically happened."

*Now do the **crossword** on page 2 and chat about the **questions** too.*

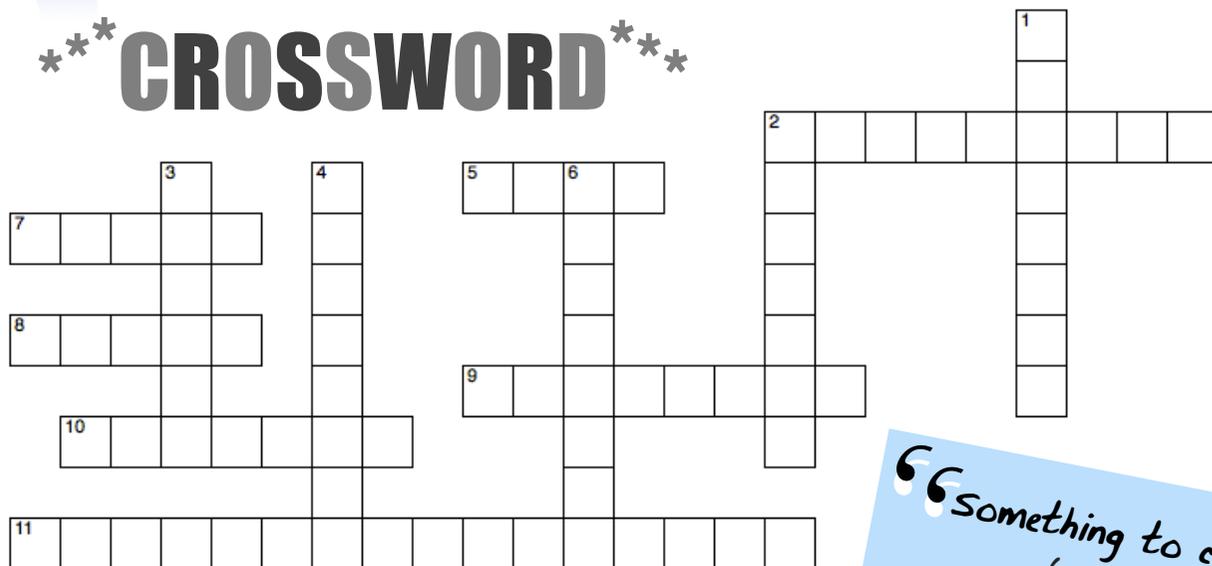
This story was adapted from:

<http://www.irishtimes.com/culture/music/ben-folds-you-sit-on-the-song-toilet-and-nothing-comes-out-1.2151604>



“iLook, iThink, iSpeak” Express yourself better!

CROSSWORD



ACROSS Complete the puzzle with the vocabulary from the article on page 1

- 2 related, connected
- 5 to change one thing for another, to exchange
- 7 internal, on the inside
- 8 regarding, with respect to
- 9 fight, battle
- 10 to make others believe, to give a false impression
- 11 impressive or special technical words

DOWN

- 1 a discussion/study group
- 2 to laugh
- 3 to take away, to delete
- 4 help and direction, advice
- 6 to follow, to stick to

Friday
19TH JUNE
See you there!



You are
INVITED

to our

5TH

Anniversary
PARTY!!

Music, Pintxos, Craft Beer,
Wine, Great Conversation,
Even Better Company and
PRIZES!!

And introducing...



Ideas worth eating pintxos with ;-)

Ask your ECP coach for
more details!

“Something to chat about”
(See article on page 1)

- If you were going to write a song today, what would the process be like?
- What “little moments” in your life could you write about?
- What is your favourite song? Why do you like it?
- Do you pay more attention to the music or lyrics when you listen to a song? Why?
- What is the difference between a good song and a bad song in your opinion?
- What do you remember about Ben Folds from the text?
- What advice would Ben Folds give to new songwriters?