

# NSAI Online Chat with Pat & Pete Luboff

The following is a transcript of an online chat we had with the Nashville Songwriters Association International group. Mark Ford was the moderator and writers from all over the country were able to write in and ask questions. A lot of terrific information came out in the process.

**Mark at NSAI:** Hello, everyone. Welcome to NSAI's on-line chat with an industry pro. At this point, it's my pleasure to welcome Pat & Pete Luboff. Pete served as workshop leader for 20 years at the National Academy of Songwriters in Los Angeles and taught advanced songwriting at UCLA for 13 years. Pete and Pat co-authored "101 Songwriting Wrongs and How to Right Them" and have completed a new book, "12 Steps to Building Better Songs." As songwriters, Pete and Pat Luboff have had success with "Trust Me," the first single on Snoop Dogg's Topp Dogg album, as well as cuts by Patti LaBelle, Bobby Womack and Calvin Richardson, as well as the featured song in the John Travolta movie, "The Experts."

**Chris: How do you fight through writers block?**

**PAT & PETE:** Great question! We don't believe in writer's block. We found a way to overcome, ignore, make writer's block disappear. We wrote about it in our new book "12 Steps to Building Better Songs." It has to do with talking until you figure out what you want to say. Talk about the people in the song, the place they are, the feelings they're having, the situation that just occurred to make them want to sing this right now and there just is no writer's block when you do that. It's a way of getting a real clear, strong focus on your message.

**Marissa: What are the top 3 songwriting wrongs listed in your book. It sounds like a super book, I'd like to buy it!**

PAT & PETE: The top three wrongs: 1) fear and paranoia 2) lack of focus 3) not pitching your material. However, that's way too abbreviated. You can find "101 Songwriting Wrongs & How to Right Them" everywhere in stores, on the web and on our website! We will autograph a copy to you if you ask for that when you order it from us.

**Mark at NSAI: Pat & Pete, tell us a little about your latest book, "12 Steps To Building Better Songs."**

PAT & PETE: Our new book is a real workbook. We lead the writers through a thought process, a way of approaching writing a song that we developed in our L.A. workshops as a "learn-by-doing" exercise. We start from nothing and go from nebulous idea to title to structure to plotting, to lyric writing, to melody writing and so on until the song is finished.

**Katydid: If I record my own songs first, then try to pitch, is it better NOT to go for airplay?**

PAT & PETE: Katydid, any kind of airplay or exposure is great. Go for it!

**Katydid: What is the best way, in your opinion, to pitch -- to a publisher or an artist?**

PAT & PETE: The best way to pitch is any way you can. The closer you can get to the artist, the better the chances of being heard by someone who makes the decisions. Publishers are often easier to get through to, but other good routes are managers, A&R people at the labels, attorneys, producers, and publishers of songs previously cut by the artist, band members, and other writers who

have had cuts with the artist. We also know of an Oscar-winning writer who worked his way into a very lucrative song by getting to know the producer's barber, lawyer, dentist, etc. and actually becoming a client of those people!

**kendog: Do you think Nashville is a buyer's market, less favorable for the songwriter, and if so, do you think songwriters should still insist on a reversion clause in a single-song contract?**

PAT & PETE: Always insist on a reversion clause. Nashville is songwriter heaven, no matter how you cut it. The business side of songwriting is incidental to that. Songwriters are supported in the art form here in numerous ways that are more important than financial, but when it comes to money, it is a buyer's market.

**Katydid: Guitar/piano vocal demos vs. full-blown demos -- how do you decide which to do prior to pitching?**

PAT & PETE: It depends on the song. Some songs need that full-blown demo to fully express the "feel." A powerful ballad can be delivered with a great piano/vocal or guitar/vocal performance. The emphasis here is on the vocal. It's always the highest priority in a demo - get a great vocal.

**Beethoven: I suspect "song crafting" is a way that those in power use as an excuse to turn away better songs than what they have to offer. What do you think of that?**

PAT & PETE: We really believe that artists, publishers and producers are looking for the very best appropriate songs they can find. A person is known by the friends he or she keeps, and an artist is known by his or her songs. The artist really has to like them and identify with them.

**Jeff O'Kelley: What is the best way to spend your time pitching in Nashville if you only have a week every month or so?**

PAT & PETE: Check the tip sheets for who's looking and drop of CDs/tapes personally. Meet with people at the performance rights organizations and get advice and referrals. Perform at songwriter nights. We had a songwriter take one of our songs directly to an artist that he had a hit with because he liked it when he heard us sing it at the Bluebird. That isn't the only time that's happened to us.

**Nameless: Do you ever help anyone get heard like you wish that someone would have helped you?**

PAT & PETE: Yes, we have made contacts for songs we've heard and loved. Songwriters in Nashville do that for each other. We are putting our relationship with the referral on the line, so we would only do that if we felt very strongly about the song. Sometimes people come into our workshop here at the room above the Hanging Around Gallery (every Monday at 6 p.m.) and bring in killer songs. We refer them to people that we know would be interested.

**marissa: What is your opinion of Taxi? I've heard pros and cons, and I am trying to decide on whether to give it a try.**

PAT & PETE: We worked for Taxi when we were in L.A., so we can say from personal experience that it is run by very moral, caring and professional people. Some of the leads are very high level, and some are more accessible and open to newer talent. They are all legitimate, and the people at Taxi go way out of their way to do a great service for songwriters. The convention in November, the Road Rally, which is free to members, is worth the price of membership.

**Mookie: If someone isn't good at schmoozing, do they really stand a chance?**

PAT & PETE: You need to promote yourself and your material; otherwise, who will? There are books about how to schmooze. Get over your reticence! How bad do you want to be a professional writer?

**Nan: Do you think the Internet is going to be good for self-promoting singer/songwriters? What are your thoughts on mp3?**

PAT & PETE: We LOVE the Internet. It's a great research tool for songwriters. You can hear what the artists are doing, find connections and information on artists, and see what kinds of messages they'd like to deliver and how appropriate your song would be for them. Mp3 is a great promotion tool for new artists.

**Dave: Is there really a chance of networking by playing the songwriters clubs via open mic in Nashville?**

PAT & PETE: Oh, yes! It's a great way to meet people, collaborators, artists, and hear great songs that teach you how to write your next songs better. And you never know who might be in the audience who wants to cut your song or knows someone who they think would love it.

**gracie: What's your favorite thing to teach, and how has your teaching changed over the years?**

PAT & PETE: We love teaching what we want to learn. Our favorite workshop is the "12 Steps to Building Better Songs" because everyone participates, and ideas flow so fast, and it's such fun. The more we teach, the more we love it. We've become more

vulnerable and creative on the spot. We relish the idea that we don't know much, but we're happy to learn!

**gracie: You've done quite a bit of traveling. How would you compare the music scene in Nashville with other places you've been?**

PAT & PETE: There's no place like Nashville on the planet; maybe in the universe. The creative community, the songwriting culture, it's just amazing and wonderful. We love the support and encouragement we feel from all our friends here, and how everyone cheers everyone else on.

**Nameless: Any number 1 hits?**

PAT & PETE: No, but "I Wish He Didn't Trust Me So Much" cut by Bobby Womack, went to number 2 on the Black Charts. (Back when charts were Black and not Urban!)

**Nameless: Is open mic in Nashville really that big a deal, and have you heard of anyone being discovered from open mic?**

PAT & PETE: Open mics are a good place to hone your performance skills. That can lead to more prestigious spots where people who could make a difference in your career could be listening.

**Nan: Open mic humbles me very much, especially when I hear the great Nashville writers on stage. I am totally in awe!**

PAT & PETE: Yes, we are in awe, too. We cry, laugh, gasp and learn from every song we listen to. Like Stephen King says in his book, "On Writing" (which we recommend because it has loads of good information transferable to songwriting), you learn from

every song . . . what to do and what not to do. It's like becoming a wine expert! You have to do a lot of tasting to develop your buds.

**Mookie: What's the best way to find a co-writer?**

PAT & PETE: Songwriting workshops are good places, also songwriter nights at clubs. (We've been asked to co-write by people who saw us perform and vice versa.) FYI - we had four marriages out of our L.A. workshop!

**Mark at NSAI: Any parting thoughts or words of wisdom before we sign off tonight?**

PAT & PETE: Dear everyone, thanks so much for your appreciation and right back at you. We love songwriters! The world needs your songs. Write On! Please visit us on Monday Nights at our Sounding Board Workshop if you come to Nashville and we'll turn you on to some of our favorite clouds in songwriter heaven.