

MAKE THE MOST OF THE DIGITAL AGE

*An Interview With Songspace.com Founder
Robert Clement*

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by Allison Malafronte



Are you a songwriter who is looking to get your lyrics, music, and recordings organized in one place and heard by important people in the music industry? Are you someone in need of collaborators and co-writers during the creative process? Or maybe you're a label or producer looking to find the perfect lyrics or music for a specific project. Songspace is an online community built to bring everyone from the independent songwriter to the major corporate label together to make the music-publishing process easier and more effective.

The way our culture consumes content is changing constantly, and technol-

ogy seems to present new ways of accessing, researching, and adopting information and inspiration almost daily. What's changing almost as quickly is the manner in which artists create and share content, as they can now avail themselves to numerous avenues of online connection and collaboration and then reach a far-broader audience with the finished results than ever before. For songwriters in particular, there is a whole new world of websites, social networks, apps, and programs designed to help connect them to other important players in the music-publishing industry—musicians, vocalists, producers, labels, publish-

ers, and copyright and royalty lawyers—making the creative process more streamlined and successful for all.

As a songwriter, it can be difficult to know where to begin when diving into the digital music space, or for that matter which tools are truly helpful. That's because the songwriting and publishing process varies by individual. Some have advanced musical training and degrees and are extremely precise and particular about composing each note into structured sheet music. Others are more intuitive and could be anywhere when they hear or observe something that inspires them. There are several songwriters who prefer privacy and solitude when writing and aren't ready to share the story until it's fully finished. Others have a lyric or melody in mind and then search for collaborators, needing that missing voice, musician, or producer to bring the song to life.

The team at Songspace understands this process from all angles, and they have built a company and an online community based on first-hand understanding of what songwriters and musicians really want. Robert Clement, the CEO of Songspace, created the Nashville-based company after eight years as the co-owner and publisher of *American Songwriter* magazine. He interacted with, listened to, and observed an international community of top singer-songwriters and industry professionals before realizing that the culture was changing and that there was an opportunity to bring aspects of the new Digital Age into the music industry for everyone's benefit. He is a songwriter himself, a music connoisseur, and a genuine lover of great music. In this Q&A, Clement describes some of the ways Songspace can benefit you.

Please give us a little background on how, when, and why Songspace was created. What need did you notice in the songwriter industry that you felt Songspace could fulfill?

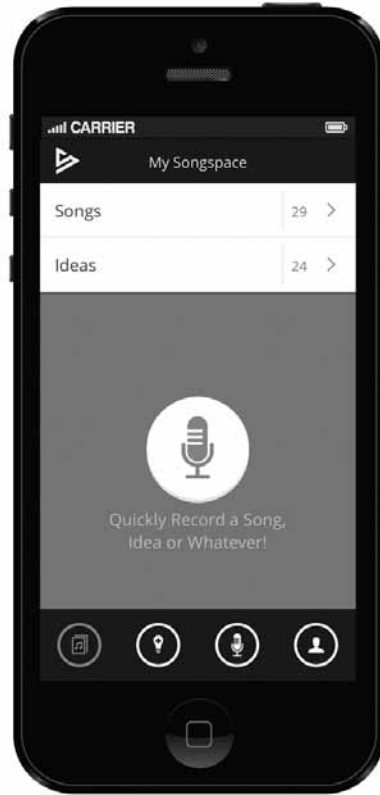
The idea for Songspace came from my background in media and technology around the songwriting community. I ran the Nashville-based *American Songwriter* magazine for about eight years, and during that time I realized (from people telling me repeatedly) that songwriters didn't have many tools to organize all their songs. When I say "all their songs," I'm referring to everything an artist, musician, or writer uses in the creative process, such as demos, works in progress, ideas, lyrics, melodies, recordings, all the way to the finished songs and keeping track of who wrote what (in the case of songs with multiple contributors).

At the same time, I noticed that many songwriters use voice memos on their phones to capture ideas, lyrics, or melodies on the go. I started out building a simple Smartphone app for songwriters and as I got into it I realized there

was an opportunity to simplify other parts of the creative process as well, like song splits and publishing rights. When I started meeting with music publishers about this product for songwriters the light bulb went off that Songspace could really help everyone from the independent writer to large music labels and enterprises.

I'm assuming part of the reason you were able to recognize and identify this need is because it resonated with you personally on some level. What is your background in the music industry, and why you are passionate about this topic in particular?

A friend and I purchased *American Songwriter* magazine in 2004. I'm a songwriter and a huge fan of great songs in general. Running the magazine put me in contact with thousands of phenomenal songwriters from all over the world, and I felt like I was the right guy to tackle this technology issue, to build something that would make the creative process better and more streamlined for songwriters and the people they work with. My passion for music bleeds over into a passion for the people who create it. My goal is to create a great product and company that makes a meaningful impact in as many people's lives as possible, first for our customers and partners and then for our employees and owners of the company.



What specific tools and resources do you offer your members to meet this goal? Who is your typical customer?

Our mission is to make music publishing more efficient. We offer songwriters a simple creative app that helps them collaborate with other writers and makes sure all of the files and data that go into creating a song—lyrics, recordings, copyright splits, etc.—are in one place and accessible to everyone involved. For publishers, we offer the same resource, just on an enterprise level. The key is linking everyone together—songwriters, artists, publishers, and labels—so everyone is on the same page when it comes to

the process of creating and monetizing songs. Our typical customer is any songwriter who wants to better manage his or her professional career. We make that easy to do.

Tell us a little bit more about the Songspace GO app. How does it integrate with the other data and information members have saved in their Songspace account?

The Songspace GO app naturally supports the existing creative process of millions of songwriters worldwide. You can quickly record melodies or lyric ideas on the go, tie them to existing works or ideas, and share them with collaborators. And then everything is synced to the cloud in your account and accessible from any phone or computer. It's pretty cool because you never know when inspiration is going to strike. The Songspace GO app is designed to make sure you're ready wherever that happens.

In what ways does Songspace allow independent singer-songwriters to get their music, ideas, and lyrics in front of important and influential people in the industry? How does the online community and networking actually work?

We partner with music companies and brands to run contests (songspace.com/contests) that we believe are real, legitimate, and genuine opportunities to get your music heard. We also run a feature every day on AmericanSongwriter.com called the Daily Discovery, where we showcase great Songspace songwriters.

Can you give some examples of songwriters or publishers who are current customers of Songspace so readers can better understand the caliber and range of clients participating in your company?

A great example is the company Secret Road, a leading LA-based publisher that represents a lot of the music you hear on commercials, TV shows, and movies. They have about ninety writers who use Songspace every day to keep track of their work and co-writes. When they're ready to submit their music to the business folks at Secret Road, they turn their songs in via Songspace, which means the Secret Road team has everything they need to start pitching the music immediately.

I know that Songspace collaborates with important leaders in the songwriting industry on various projects and is a partner company with *American Songwriter* magazine. In what ways do you work together to offer opportunities for songwriters to get their music noticed and published?

Because of my history with *American Songwriter* magazine, we still have strong ties. We're a partner company of the magazine and work closely with them in a number of areas, including contests to help discover and give exposure to new talented songwriters, in addition to online collaborations.

How has the Nashville songwriting scene responded to this online community and resource? Do some of the more traditional labels and songwriters still pre-

fer in-person meetings and collaborations, or have you seen them embrace the concept that Songspace and similar companies are promoting?

So far the response has been great. A big part of what we're trying to do is naturally adapt to how songwriters and music business folks work. In-person meetings and co-writes are always going to be hugely important, but there's a lot of e-mailing and backtracking that slows down the process. Songspace supports the way people already work, and the industry response has been really positive.

What are some of the projects Songspace is currently working on, and what tools and resources do you plan to offer customers in the future?

Right now we're really focused on making our existing platform as fast and easy as possible, but we're also planning on making it easier for independent songwriters to self-publish their songs. Technology gives us the opportunity to help people work better together, and that's what Songspace is all about. We're not trying to tell people how to create music, just trying to make it easier to connect and collaborate with songwriters and music businesses.

For more information on Songspace, visit www.songspace.com.

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