

They had a discussion the other day of what the best song ever written is. They had the usual suspects based on the usual silliness. Of course the whole discussion was subject to personal taste and therefore pretty much a waste of time. As a writer the measuring stick is always to ask what emotion the song was designed to ignite and has nothing to do with ANY commercial response.

But it got me thinking.

Certainly for me there is only one song in this discussion: "Take Me Out To The Ballgame" is clearly the greatest song ever created! A very simple song with a warm melody that anyone can sing. And at baseball games across the country, people stand in the middle of the 7<sup>th</sup> inning to sing this wonderful song. Regardless of what's happening on the field, this song perfectly reminds us of how baseball is the best way to spend a nice summers evening. Win or lose this song always anchors us and reminds us of why we love this game so much.

None of the other sports have a song that does that. Only baseball.

But there's another song that has my vote. It's a song that pretty much breaks every rule of songwriting. If I pitched this song on Music Row, the publishers would laugh me out of Nashville.

Most people can't sing the song. A lot of people want to replace the song with another one that's easier to sing.

Of course I'm talking about our national anthem, the Stars Spangled Banner.

One of the perks of living here in Nashville is that you can go to any sporting event and you'll never hear the Star Spangled Banner sung poorly. That's what makes us Music City USA. Every season, every sport has auditions for people who want to sing the national anthem before their games. The lines are always long with recording artist wantabes anxious to stamp their resume with this challenging opportunity. And don't kid yourself – singing the national anthem in front of thousands of spectators at a sporting event is not a bad item to have on your resume, that's for sure.

While choppy and poorly structured, the lyrics remind us of our infant struggles and how, even in our darkest hour, our flag was still there. The music, though melodically difficult, creates a feeling of hope, pride and loyalty. Together, the lyrics and music of our national anthem reflects perfectly what our country is all about; it's a difficult song to sing, but when performed right, it's full of pride built on a strong foundation of hope.

When you watch the Olympics, most of the other countries have national anthems that reflect a sense of strength and loyalty. They almost all have a military feel to them designed to build loyalty through strength.

Not ours. We build our loyalty through hope by standing tall in our darkest hour. By waving our flag majestically in the face of terrible odds. By refusing to let adversity destroy our spirit.

I always sing loud and proud at the 7<sup>th</sup> inning stretch at a baseball game. I never sing the Star Spangled Banner- I don't want to ruin a good thing.

But in many respects, that's a good thing; if you quietly let those who can handle it sing our national anthem with the strength and skills God gave them, it's the kind of song that can draw you inward to reflect on how fortunate we all are to be Americans. I always have tears in my eyes at the beginning of sporting events.

Now that's the perfect national anthem.

And that's what makes it the best song ever.

Just A Thought