

# Luna Guitars' Blog

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## Songwriting in Character

November 12, 2012 by [lunaguitars](#)



(<https://lunaguitars.files.wordpress.com/2012/11/mary-amato-1.jpg>)

### **Tip from Mary Amato: Try Character-Based Songwriting**

Mary Amato has multiple personalities. She is an award-winning novelist and songwriter who often takes on the roles of her characters. Her books *Guitar Notes* (<http://thrumsociety.com/>) and *The Naked Mole-Rat Letters* both feature music and a forthcoming novel will include original songs on uke. In her book *Guitar Notes*, the main character, Lyla, picks a Luna as her first guitar. Mary plays her Luna Safari on book tours. Here she talks with Luna about her process.

## **How does writing fiction influence your songwriting?**

You have to get “into character” to write fiction. I do it with songwriting, too. It’s liberating to shed your own ego, dive into the soul of another person, and see the world from that point of view.

How do you get started writing a character-based song?

First, imagine a character. This can be someone you have invented, or you could be inspired by a stranger or a person in a photograph or painting. Next, make a choice about whether you’re going to write in “first person” or “third person.” If you pretend you are the person and you are using “I,” then you’re writing in first person. If you’re singing about the character and use “she” or “he,” then you’re writing in third person.



(<https://lunaguitars.files.wordpress.com/2012/11/ego.jpeg>).

## **Can you give examples?**

Sure. John Prine put himself in a woman’s shoes to write “Angel from Montgomery” which has been covered often. “I am an old woman named after my mother...” That’s a first-person, character-based song. Paul McCartney chose third person to write about the Eleanor Rigby in his classic song. “Eleanor Rigby picks up the rice in the church where a wedding has been...”

You can read the full lyrics to both of these songs at the end of this blog.

## **What tips do you have for songwriters who want to try writing character-based songs?**

Try one of these brainstorming ideas and then use the raw material that you come up with to craft your song.

- Write a diary entry as if you are the character.
- Interview yourself as the character. Ask all kinds of questions: What do you love? What are you afraid of? What makes you smile?
- Take a walk, imagining that you are the character and allow yourself to think the thoughts of that character. Jot down all your thoughts when you return.

Let go of any inhibitions you might have and enjoy!

**Angel from Montgomery video and lyrics**



*I am an old woman named after my mother  
My old man is another child that's grown old  
If dreams were lightnin' and thunder were desire  
This old house would've burned down a long time ago*

*Make me an Angel that flies from Montgomery  
Make me a poster of an old rodeo  
Just give me one thing that I can hold onto  
To believe in this livin' is just a hard way to go*

*When I was a young girl, well, I had me a cowboy  
Weren't much to look at just a free ramblin' man  
But that was a long time and no matter how I try  
The years just flow by like a broken down dam*

*Make me an Angel that flies from Montgomery  
Make me a poster of an old rodeo  
Just give me one thing that I can hold onto  
To believe in this livin' is just a hard way to go*

*There's flies in the kitchen, I can hear 'em in there buzzin'  
And I ain't done nothin' since I woke up today  
How the hell can a person go to work in the mornin'  
And come home in the evenin' and have nothin' to say?*

*Make me an Angel that flies from Montgomery  
Make me a poster of an old rodeo  
Just give me one thing that I can hold onto  
To believe in this livin' is just a hard way to go  
To believe in this livin' is just a hard way to go*

**Eleanor Rigby Lyrics Video**



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## One Response

**[Try Character-Based Songwriting | Guitar Notes](#)** on *[November 13, 2012 at 4:54 pm](#)* | [Reply](#).  
[...] Check out this Luna blogpost with my tips for character-based songwriting. [...]

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