## **🎧 How to write Podcast Theme Music**

**By Yung Spielburg**

*Grammy-winning producer • Themes for All-In, Acquired, Not Boring, A16Z*

### **🔍 Discovery Phase**

The goal of this phase is to become a fan — to understand the temperament of the hosts, the material, the delivery style, and how the hosts and fans feel about each element.

* Listen to 10–20 hours of episodes
* Join the show’s community (Slack, Discord, etc.)
* Read fan interactions across socials

### **🎨 Creative Exploration**

**MAKE SURE ALL DECISION MAKERS ARE AT THIS MEETING**

The goal of this phase is to understand the feeling the host wants to invoke with their intro.

You can start by asking outright, but oftentimes words are insufficient, generic, and you’d be surprised how different the associations and feelings are that people have for the same words. A much better strategy is to ask questions that get them to illustrate the answer.

**These are my golden questions:**

* If you were to host a live event, what musical guest would you have and why?
* Why are the fans in the audience? What bonds them to each other and to you?

I give 2 examples here:

* *Florence and The Machine*: I go to their concert to put my soul through the washing machine.
* *Diplo in Ibiza*: If you were 25, you might go to this show to take stimulants and let off some steam.
* Have the hosts make a playlist of music they like and that is relevant to the show
* If they have references, make sure to get extremely specific about what exactly they like about each one.  
    
    
   The last thing you want is to take inspiration from a melody when what they really liked was “that sparkly sound at 1:47.”

My longtime mentor, legendary producer Howard Benson, used to ask bands:

“What songs come on before and after you on the radio?”

This question is again very useful for getting a demonstration of what world the show lives in. I’ve adapted this by asking:

* What other shows do your fans listen to?
* What might they listen to before or after?

### **✍️ Songwriting Process**

When it comes down to the actual song, I have two approaches: **Direct and Serendipitous**.

The theme for *The All In Podcast* is a great example of the **direct method**. The very first thing you hear is:  
  
  
 “I’m going All In.”

This method believes the most important thing is name recognition, and so my job is to find *the* single catchiest, most powerful way to deliver the title of the show.

I’ve had a songwriting belief and philosophy throughout my career that words or phrases have a single best melody. When you think of the all-time great songs, those writers have found that singular greatest pairing.

Sometimes hosts want to be less “on the nose” — either personality-wise or because the title of the show doesn’t lend itself to that method. In that case, we turn to the Serendipitous method where we drill down into the essence of the show and genuinely write a song about it. It feels as though there is this incredible song that just so happens to exactly reflect the show’s values.

For *Acquired*, we actually composed a theme where I sang the title of the show at first, but upon hearing it, Ben and David realized it was not the right direction. In a subsequent conversation, they kept speaking about *the truth*.

And so, I came up with the phrase:

“Who got the truth?”

I reached out to the iconic Mike Taylor, and we wrote the song that you all know and love today.

### **🔁 Iterative Collaboration**

Be ready to deliver exactly what a client asked for and have them realize it’s actually not what they wanted.

That’s okay.

This is iterative and collaborative — enjoy the process!