

When Annie and I had our first hits, instead of recording in a straightforward expensive recording studio in London or New York I would come up with crazy places to set up equipment and start making an album. These odd locations triggered different moods and helped keep our records sounding unusual and fresh.

The album *Be Yourself Tonight*, an album that included the number-one hit song 'There Must Be An Angel Playing With My Heart' (with Stevie Wonder on harmonica) and other hits like 'Would I Lie to You' and 'Sisters Are Doing It For Themselves' (a duet with Aretha Franklin), was mostly recorded in a small room in a youth club in the suburbs of Paris! The French teenagers hanging around the club didn't believe we were making an album until the BBC turned up to interview us for a TV show. So there we were, very famous at the time and could have been recording in luxury anywhere in the world; instead we made our way to the outskirts of Paris every day and up lots of stairs fighting our way through table-tennis matches and tip-toeing through ballet lessons into a tiny room that Annie decorated from the flea market, to start the day's recording experiments.



On the album *We Too Are One* we hired a suite in a legendary rock and roll hotel called the Mayflower overlooking Central Park (not as glamorous as you might think, it was at the time a very run-down hotel with lots of cockroaches). We set up our recording gear and started making an album in the hotel suite, every now and then going for walks down 8th Avenue or in Central Park and then back in the elevator up to our suite to record Annie's vocal or me playing a guitar track. Being in the hotel is a completely different thing from being in a sterile studio environment, and there are lots of things there to stimulate you – like the bar, for instance!

(It was the same bar years ago where I first met Madonna and, even though she was just starting her career, I could tell she had her head screwed on. And boy does she know how to play in the Business Playground!)

CHAOS THEORY

If creativity is about making connections between two seemingly unconnected things, then another way to throw something random into the mix is to use arbitrary words. Try this: grab

a dictionary and randomly pick out a word then force a connection between it and the problem you're trying to solve. We did it to see what would happen with the *traffic congestion in LA* problem. The word we randomly picked by speedily flicking through the pages and then plopping an ink-stained finger on a page was: 'donation'. Then we thought, 'Um, that's a hard one, maybe we should try again and pretend we hadn't found that one,' but then honesty kicked in. We realised if we did that it wouldn't be random, it would in fact be *cheating*, so decided to go with it and force ourselves to quickly come up with solutions for the traffic congestion in LA problem that, somehow or other, relate to the idea of donation.

After a couple of minutes of pondering this what we came up with:

- Drivers could be made to donate to charity every time they drive.
- People could be asked to donate their cars to charity and use other means of transport.
- There could be a donation drive to build a better form of transport.
- Companies could be encouraged to sponsor free bus passes to donate to commuters.
- Employers could be asked to donate one day a week of their employees' time to work that doesn't require them to travel.