

## SONG OF THE DAY LXXX

Alright, let's get back to some good old fashioned rock as only Led Zeppelin could deliver it. Today's tune was born out of a moment of inspiration and jamming and as soon as it was released it became an instantly recognizable song for the band. So pull out your copy of the fourth album; track two, clocking in at 3:40 of pure ecstasy; "Rock & Roll."

The band were in the studio working on "Four Sticks" when drummer John Bonham began banging out the intro to Little Richard's "Keep A-Knocking" and Page improvised the riff... or at least part of the riff that we now know... and after a few bars the song ground to a halt, but it was on tape and the band knew they had something good.

Many times over their illustrious career Zeppelin gave odd names to their songs, names that on the surface appeared to have absolutely nothing to do with what the song was about; but that is far from the case here. This may be their most aptly titled song in their catalog because just looking at the album; you know with this track exactly what you are getting.

Bonzo's drum intro blows away the Little Richard drummer and after a few seconds Page comes flying in with his 12-bar riff and you are suddenly catapulted into a speeding car blazing down the interstate breaking all kinds of speed laws.

When Robert enters, it is with a classic line that was just begging to be a show opener:

**It's been a long time since I rock and rolled**

**It's been a long time since I did the stroll**

**Ooh Let me get it back, let me get it back, let me get it back**

**Baby where I come from**

**It's been a long time, been a long time**

**Been a long lonely, lonely, lonely, lonely, lonely time**

Yes it has...

And with that, we are only :55 seconds into the song. Bonham's great intro, Jimmy's ripping guitar riff, Plant's great vocal, Jonsey holding it all together and longtime Rolling Stone sideman Ian Stewart on the piano and we haven't even hit the one minute mark yet!

It's been a long time since the book of love

I can't count the tears of a life with no love

Carry me back, carry me back, carry me back

Baby where I come from

Whoa - whoa - whoa -oh

It's been a long time, been a long time

Been a long lonely, lonely, lonely, lonely, lonely time

Ahhhhhhhhh-Ahhhhhh-Ahhhhhh

And at this point Jimmy seems to be teasing us as to what's to come, which is simply one of his most fiery and ripping solos ever. Jimmy was - and still is - one of the great masters in the studio. His "Guitar Army" is on full display here as he builds up to the actual solo and when he gets to it he doesn't disappoint. It may be a simple solo over a standard 12-bar blues progression, but the intensity and passion with which the notes fly from his fingers is jaw-dropping.

Ohhh it seems so long since we walked in the moonlight

Making vows that just can't work right

Ahh yeah, open your arms, open your arms, open your arms

Baby, let my love come running in

Yeah

It's been a long time, been a long time

Been a long lonely, lonely, lonely, lonely, lonely time

Yeah – Hey! Yeah – Hey! Yeah – Hey! Yeah – Hey!

Ooh yeah, Ooh-oooh yeah

Ooh yeah, Ooh-oooh yeah

It's been a long time, been a long time

Been a long lonely, lonely, lonely, lonely, lonely time

And just as he begins the song, Bonzo ends it with a terrific mini-solo before Jimmy joins him for the big finish. Now this is what made Led Zeppelin so special. The ability to take a standard 12-bar blues progression and turn it into something this amazing and hot and they do all this in just under four minutes. Proving my point that the long, drawn out solos they favored in their live shows were completely unnecessary.

After the release of the fourth album, Rock & Roll became a staple at just about every single show they did from then on out. Sometimes it was used as an encore medley with Whole Lotta Love, other times it was its own encore, during various tours it was, appropriately, used as the opening number and at times it was used in the main set.

At Live Aid in 1985, the reformed Zeppelin, with Tony Thompson and Phil Collins on drums, played this as their first of three songs to support Bob Geldof's plea to "Feed The World." Jimmy Page played this song in Japan on the Coverdale/Page tour in December 1993, then again with Robert in the Page/Plant days. Heart has long used this as a showcase for Ann Wilson's vocal range and the fact that Nancy just adores Zeppelin.

On 10 December 2007, when Led Zeppelin reunited for one final full length performance with Jason Bonham behind the kit, they again played this popular track. Then, in 2008, Jimmy and John Paul joined the Foo Fighters on stage at Wembley Stadium

and played "Rock & Roll" as well as "Ramble On" in a performance that was simply electrifying. On Rock & Roll, Foo drummer Taylor Hawkins took over the vocal duties whilst Dave Grohl played drums. And Hawkins also sang the third verse second and the second verse third, just as Plant typically did live.

"Rock & Roll" is one of those songs that everybody recognizes the instant it comes on, thanks to the amazing skill of John Bonham and it has long been one of their most popular tracks.

Until the next time,

Jeff