

SONG OF THE DAY LXXXIX

And now we come to what may well be my favorite Plant solo song ever. In the early 1990's Robert was becoming more aware of the damage that we, as humans, are inflicting on our planet. The title of the album, "Fate Of Nations," points this out, although you have to listen closely to this particular song to catch it. Throughout the album's artwork there are quotes about the many things that contribute to the destruction of our earthly home, such as 40 tons of radioactive waste left behind by the Allied Armies following the first Gulf War, the 1978 oil spill that released 230,000 tons of light crude oil as well as the 100km of beaches that were contaminated from that spill. There is mention of pollution released from burning coal, oil and gas that has been causing acid rain around the world for over a century and this was 18 years ago.

And, just as "Presence" with its black obelisk, we have a little boy, a little girl and a teddy bear in every picture overlooking the destructive path that our leaders and big companies are responsible for.

So pull out your copy of "Fate Of Nations" and turn to track ten, the very introspective and quite evocative "Great Spirit," clocking in at 5:27.

A loose groove opens this track while some funky guitar by Kevin Scott MacMichael resonates just under the surface. The music is very laid back and gives no warning of the depth that resides in the lyrics.

Great Spirit come...

Great Spirit come...

Who has chased away the moonbeams?

Who has pulled a blanket across the sky?

Who will sing in celebration?

Throughout this land that's bound to die?

Great Spirit come...

Great Spirit come...

These are some very intense questions that Plant is asking and unfortunately, there are no answers provided. However, before a problem can be fixed, questions must be asked and this song is one of the most explicit examples that Plant was, and is, more aware of his surroundings and the world he lives in than he is given credit for.

Who will put an end to all this sadness?

Who hears the earth that cries beneath the burning rain?

All truth reduced to piles of greed and madness

The accident remains the same

Always the same...

You can think of the greatest lyric writers of the past 50 years and I challenge you to find any that has penned what ails our world in one verse any more succinctly than Plant does here. Bob Dylan, Steve Earle and Bruce Springsteen are three of the most celebrated lyricists, despite what one may think of any of those artists, they have delivered some very gripping songs about the struggles of the common man and the plight of our world.

That Plant so decisively nails it all in just a few lines is something that I think is just fantastic. Sadly, that verse above rings truer and louder today than ever. The greatest line: "*All truth reduced to piles of greed and madness*" is just perfection! Greed... just take a look around the world today; what is the biggest problem? Greed. The world is filled with a few

people who are so extremely greedy that their way of life just boggles the mind of any sane person.

Look at the struggles going on right now in the States with the Occupy movements as the "99%" stand up and fight against the "1%" when all the rules favor those in that 1%. "*Piles of greed and madness...*" The big banks sold tons of derivatives that they knew were crap, then they bet against those derivatives and profited while many people across this country lost everything. Then those same banks asked for - no, demanded - a bailout. How can these people sleep at night? How can they look themselves in the mirror each morning?

It may sound quite hilarious, but I go back to the Adam Sandler movie "Mr. Deeds." At the end, when all the shareholders of his grandfather's company have to vote and decide the fate of thousands of people, it is Sandler, aka Deeds, who steps up to the microphone and begins asking these people one simple question: What did you want to be when you were a kid?

Eventually some of them start answering what their childhood dreams were. And you know what... none of them ever dreamed of owning a large company and laying off thousands of people to pad their own pockets. Though it's a comedy, that one scene is very telling and something that the people in Washington should examine as they look at the problems our country faces with unemployment, foreclosures and bankruptcy.

How do people get this way? What happens in their life that turns normal people into these greedy bastards out to destroy everything and anyone that gets in their way? These are the questions that Plant was asking in 1993 and they are still relevant today and probably even more so now.

Mmmm... said it's alright, it seems okay

Robbery and evil and the \$tealing

From the body and the mind for the healing

Of the Spirit and the pride and the will

And the will

And the will of the land

Will of the land

There's evil

There's evil

There's evil going on...

And that sums it all up so eloquently and so accurately. Evil is the only explanation for the things that people do to others, particularly when governments turn their backs on the vast majority of the people that they supposedly represent.

I don't know what events transpired that so captured Robert's attention to these things, but I do know that he delivers one helluva great message here and I find it sad that this song is largely forgotten about by people who claim to be his biggest fans. Over his career, from Zeppelin throughout his solo journey, Robert has been many things; thoughtful, sexual, silly, reflective... but this song is a side of him that we hadn't seen before. It just drips with cynicism and resentment for the way things are, and it should reverberate deep within everyone living on this planet, for it is all so very true.

I love my brother – I must share the seed

That falls through fortune at my feet

The fate of nations and of all their needs

Lies trapped inside these hearts of greed

And again, he absolutely nails it! The fate of nations – the things we, as humans need for survival – lies trapped inside the hearts of those in power who are consumed with greed for themselves and their select friends. How much more clearly can he spell it out for us?

I don't know if I can truly express how much this song means to me or how much it has moved me over the years, but it is, in my humble opinion, one of the greatest achievements Plant has ever had, in, or out of, Zeppelin.

As great as this song is on the album, the version he recorded with Rainer Ptacek is even more enthralling. Rainer's acoustic slide guitar adds a surreal and haunting quality to the song and Robert sings it with a passion that drives the point of the song home even more.

Some of the lyrics are altered in this version, one key change being the line: *'Who will put an end to all this madness'* instead of *'sadness.'*

This acoustic version harkens back to the Delta Mississippi blues and Robert's early roots, and nobody could play that style any better than Rainer. After hearing this song, as well as the others that Robert and Rainer recorded, I really wish, as I have stated prior, that the two would have made an entire album together. It's rather doubtful that it would have sold millions of copies, but I know it would have been one tremendous emotional ride and would have been one of the best albums of Robert's career. Sadly, with Rainer's passing, that is something that will never happen. I also doubt that they recorded anything that hasn't been released yet, so we'll have to settle for the few songs that they did record, but I can assure you, if you've never heard these, you will not be disappointed when you do.

It is Plant at his most emotional; pure, raw blues sung, and played, from the heart. It just doesn't get any simpler than that nor does it get much better.

There are two short videos on You Tube titled: "Rainer Ptacek and Robert Plant" and "Rainer Ptacek and Robert Plant 2" that shows them working together, and in the second one Robert says this: "The work that we did together, we used them as extra tracks and B-sides of singles and so on. But in truth, there's a version of "Great Spirit" that he played on that's... it's stunning." And that accurately sums up the version with Rainer and in my opinion, all the songs they worked on together.

So that concludes an all too brief look at "Fate Of Nations," my favorite solo album by any member of Led Zeppelin. And this now leads us to... the final ten songs. Over the course of this series I have written about every song that Led Zeppelin released officially, save for these final ten, and I saved these ten for last for a reason.

It isn't too difficult to figure out which ones they are, and as we cover these final ten numbers they won't be in any particular order. They are, in my humble opinion, the best ten songs they ever wrote, recorded and released. I will say this; each one of their albums that was released whilst they were a working band is represented in the final ten.

We will kick off the final ten in the next SOTD and it is a powerhouse of a number. It is a song that embodies everything great about Led Zeppelin; the power, the mystery and most certainly, the hammer of the gods!

Until the next time,

Jeff