

SONG OF THE DAY XCII

While the last SOTD was a track that was full of doom and possessed an eerie quality to it, today's song takes us right to the graveyard. A dark, foreboding song that harkens back to the early 1920's yet was turned into a majestic tale of woe by the mighty Led Zeppelin.

From the album that has more **EPIC** songs on it than any other, dig out your copy of Physical Graffiti, side one, track three, clocking in at a stunning 11:05, making it the longest studio track ever recorded by Zep, the ominous "In My Time Of Dying."

Jimmy starts this one off with some demonic sounding slide guitar in an open "A" tuning. When Bonham joins in, it is with a thunderous roar. Three heart-pounding beats on the kit, echoing Jimmy's ferocious riff, which repeats three times and then things kick in for real. The trio of Page/Jones/Bonham forges ahead like a wild tiger turned loose on an unsuspecting public as the song just explodes. And then... an eerie pause as Jimmy's guitar rings out... patiently waiting for Robert's arrival.

In my time of dying
Want nobody to moan
All I want for you to do
Is take my body home

Well, well, well
So I can die easy
Well, well, well
So I can die easy
Jesus got to make up
'Cha know-oh...
Jesus got to make up
Jesus gonna make up my dyin' bed

We return to the very beginning as Page's guitar gives the impression of a snake slithering through the grass in search of its next prey. As his guitar and Robert's voice play off of each other, the effect is extremely scintillating. When the verse sections kick in with the full band, they are so beautifully orchestrated behind Plant, giving the implied perception of a bomb that is ticking down the seconds until it ignites and destroys everything in its path.

Meet me Jesus, meet me
Ooh meet me in the middle of the air
If my wings should fail me, Lord
Please meet me with another pair

Well, well, well
So I can – die easy
Oh-oh
Well, well, well
So I can die easy
Jesus gonna make up

{Somebody}
{Somebody}
Oh ... oh...
Jesus gonna make up
Jesus gonna make up my dying bed

At this point Jimmy turns everything loose with a rapid-fire riff that is a barre-chord on the fifth fret, his pinky finger playing the top two strings on the 8th fret and sliding down to the 7th fret. It is one of Page's most intense and most recognizable riffs and considering his catalog; that is quite a statement.

He then kicks into another riff and the interplay between Page and Bonham is absolutely spectacular here. Bonham defines the sound of the hammer of the gods on this song; his drumming a furious blend of raw emotion and brute force. What John Paul brings to the song on the bass is yet again another example of just how tight these three were as a unit. Jonsey is constantly

making subtle changes throughout, adding bits here, accentuating things there; it is an absolute marvel at how beautifully he constructs his parts on this song and how perfectly in sync he is with Bonham.

As Page dives back into the barre-chord riff, Plant re-enters with the plea of a desperate soul.

Oh – Saint Peter

At the gates of Heaven

Won't you let me in?

I never did no harm

I never did no wrong

Ah – Oh Gabriel

Let me blow your horn

Let me blow your horn

Whoa...

I never did no harm

Did no harm

I only can be young once

I never - thought I'd do anybody no wrong

No – no wrong, so...

Ohhh do it...

Jimmy lets loose with a ripping slide guitar solo that is simply extraordinary. The chemistry between the band is shining through and it seems as if they are on a completely different plane now. The pace is quite frenetic and yet each of them - Page/Jones/Bonham - hold everything together even when it seems that in a moment's notice it could suddenly derail. Led Zeppelin, and particularly Jimmy, had a saying that the band was always "Tight... but loose." Nowhere is that better displayed than on this track right now.

And as much as I hate to keep repeating myself; this is another track that you just cannot fathom any other band doing and pulling it off as well as Zeppelin did. This... **THIS** is what set them apart from all others.

As Page's slide solo reaches its apex, we are back to another vocal plea from the tortured soul of Robert Plant.

Oh – I did somebody some good

Somebody some good yeah

So...

Oh – did somebody some good yeah

I must have did somebody some good yeah

Oh – I believe I did

I see the smiling faces

I memorize the lipstick traces

Ohh...

Jimmy takes off on another solo, this one much more frenzied than the first as the notes are flying off his guitar at a crazed rate as Bonham/Jones keep things moving forward at a breakneck pace. Then we get to one of my favorite moments in the song where the band plays the start-stop, battering ram riff and Bonham's drums sound like cannon blasts going off!

And I see them in the streets

And I see them in the field, yeah

And I hear them under my feet

And I know it's got to be real

Oh Lord, deliver me

All the wrong I've done

Ooh, you can deliver my Lo-ord

I only wanted to have some fun

Oh – hear the angles marching

Marching

Hear them marching

Hear them marching

Marching

Oh my Jesus
Oh my Jesus
Oh my Jesus
Oh my Je-ee-sus
Oh my Jesus
Oh my Jesus
My Jesus
Oh my Jesus
Oh my Jesus
Oh my Je-ah-oh
Ah my Je-hey, yeah,
That's got to - be my Jesus, whoa-whoa
It's got to be
It's got to be my Jesus
It's got be
Oh...
It's got to be my Jesus
Oh-ah, take me home...

During the entire "It's got to be my Jesus" section, Bonham is just stunningly amazing. He's constantly adding new things in, little fills, amazing drum segments that one might overlook if they're focused on the vocals, but it simply must be stated how incredible he is here. Check out his playing at 8:41-8:44 and 8:49-8:52 and 8:57-8:58 and 9:00-9:02. After Robert sings "Oh-ah, take me home" Bonham plays an absolutely spine-tingling fill that just builds and builds.

Come on, come on
I can hear the angels singin'
Oh - here they come, here they come, here they come
Bye-bye, bye-bye, bye-bye, bye-bye, bye-bye
Oh, it feels pretty good up here, pretty good up here
Oh my Jesus Oh my Jesus Oh my Jesus Oh my Jesus Oh my Jesus
Oh, Oh, Oh, Oh, Oh, Oh, Oh, yeah
Oh, I see Him
Come on, take, take

Ooh, yes, come on,

Ah, oh yeah

Oh, going to make it my dyin', dyin', dyin'

Cough...

One thing that has always set Zeppelin apart from any other band is their sense of humor; leaving things on their recordings that most bands would cringe at. Like ringing telephones, squeaky bass pedals and now... a coughing attack, presumably by John Bonham, and Plant, being quick-witted, sings "Cough."

I just crack up every time I hear the end of this magnificent song. And... not only is that on the track, but you also get some great conversation between Bonham and Andy Johns, the engineer on the album, when Bonham says: "That's gotta be the one, hasn't it?" To which Johns replies: "Come have a listen then." And Bonzo, being the polite Englishmen says: "Oh yes, thank you."

This is the kind of priceless stuff that sadly, record companies and most bands today would be too afraid to actually release. But there again, the humor of Led Zeppelin trumps all. I've been listening to this song for over 30 years and I still laugh when I hear that part. It's just classic and I am so thankful that the band weren't too proud to leave things like this off their records. It reveals a human side to their rock-star; god-like status and I truly believe that fans like it so much because they can relate to it.

Editor's Note: In regards to the * beside the lyric near the end where Robert repeats the phrase: "Oh my Jesus" I have to admit that I hear something different and I know this has long been a discussion amongst Zeppelin fans. What I hear is: "Oh Georgina." Whilst writing this SOTD, if you knew how many versions of "In My Time Of Dying" that I have listened to, your head would probably explode. There were numerous live Zeppelin versions... both from my own bootleg collection as well as You Tube, several Outrider versions and several Coverdale/Page versions as well as several Black Crowes/Page versions. Never once did I hear "Oh Georgina" in any live version. I always heard "Jesus." But I have to give credit to Tangerine Man, a member on FBO, for responding that it is in fact "Jesus" on the

album version and since I can't be certain, I will take his word for it.

It should also be noted that if you want to hear the best representation of this song live as it relates to the album version lyrically, then look no further than any Outrider shows, because John Miles sings the lyrics that Robert sang on the album whilst still doing some improvisation at times. There are lyrics that are difficult to understand, places where Robert just doesn't sing clearly enough, but Miles does a great job filling in those gaps. One line in particular is after the "I see the smiling faces..." That next line is difficult to discern on the record, but Miles clearly sings: "I memorize the lipstick traces."

That line, following the "smiling faces" line, makes sense too. It could be a not-so-subtle metaphor for Plant's seeking absolution for his time spent in company with the groupies. And as much as I have defended David Coverdale in the past and in the SOTD series, he was absolutely no help at all in the live setting, because he just mumbles sections that are difficult to hear on record, proving to me that Coverdale didn't even know what was being sung.

The origins of this song date back a long time, as I stated previously, and one of the earliest known recordings is from Blind Willie Johnson in 1927. Blind Willie was a preacher and musician and his music was steeped in blues, but sung from a gospel approach. His version of this song, titled "Jesus Make Up My Dyin' Bed" is vastly different from Zeppelin's in that Johnson's is sung from the perspective of a Christian who knows that death is soon approaching and he believes that Christ is preparing a place in Heaven for him. {Jesus, Make Up My Dyin' Bed}

Zeppelin's version however, is from the depths of a soul who is begging for forgiveness and salvation, as evidenced by lyrics like: 'Oh Lord, deliver me, all the wrong I've done... Ooh, you can deliver me Lord; I only wanted to have some fun.'

It was after Robert's car crash whilst on vacation with his family that this song became a bit disconcerting for him. The overall vibe of the song hit a little too close to home perhaps

and he wasn't very excited about singing the song in concert. While the band played it throughout the 1975 tour, preceding Robert's crash, on the 1977 tour, after his crash, it was used only occasionally, with "Over The Hills & Far Away" taking its place in the set.

Since the 1977 tour, the only time Robert has sung it was at the O2 reunion in 2007. The song has long been a favorite of Jimmy's however and he has played it on his Outrider Tour in 1988 as well as the 1993 Japan tour with David Coverdale in the Coverdale/Page project and during his brief time touring with The Black Crowes.

Some notes about Page's post Zeppelin performances of this song: On the Outrider Tour he would always play "Midnight Moonlight" with "White Summer/Black Mountain Side" included and this was played on his famous Danelectro guitar. He would then play "In My Time Of Dying" and would typically introduce it by saying, 'Even though I've got the same guitar, we're not going to do the same song.' This was actually a false statement by Page, as the Danelectro used for "In My Time Of Dying" in 1988 had a shorter pick-guard. Also, the tuning for the two songs - "Midnight Moonlight" and "Dying" - are completely different.

As discussed in prior SOTD's, the tuning for "Midnight Moonlight" is D-A-D-G-A-D and when playing "In My Time" live, he played in Open G tuning. There's a famous video bootleg from Page's show in Arizona in 1988 and when he introduces "Dying" and says the bit about 'having the same guitar' he's actually plugging in the chord for the new guitar while he says he's using the same one.

On the Outrider Tour, singer/keyboardist John Miles did an exemplary job singing the song. In fact, Miles was outstanding on all of Page's songs, covering Plant and Paul Rodgers {The Firm} equally well.

On the Coverdale/Page tour the song took on a whole new level of chaos... and I mean that in the best possible way. The song was actually played slightly faster than in Zeppelin or on the Outrider Tour and Coverdale used it as a vehicle to show off his incredible vocal range and Page seemed to thrive on Coverdale's vocal prowess as the 1993 versions are some of the

most intense I've ever heard. While he remained mostly faithful to the original lyrics, David did change one line when he sang: 'And I see them in Osaka...' and he also included lines from "Gallows Pole" toward the end of the song. This was not uncommon though, as Plant would sometimes add lines from "You Shook Me" in as well, or, "Honeybee" as he did at the 2007 reunion show.

While Page typically played his Danelectro on this number live, in 2007 at the O2 reunion, he employed a Gibson ES-350 Electric Archtop for that performance.

This was also another number that Page brought out in the movie "It Might Get Loud" as Jack White and The Edge played along with him.

On a totally unrelated note; when Grant Burgess held the 1997 Led Zeppelin Convention in Buffalo, New York, a group of us brought our instruments and played a night of Zeppelin tunes for the other fans that made the trip. The day before the show or maybe it was the day of the show, I'm not exactly sure now, but either way, we held a rehearsal and if I recall correctly it was at Ed Zeppelin's house.

There were a slew of us present and we all took turns jamming, rehearsing songs, and one of the songs we rehearsed, but sadly didn't play, was "In My Time Of Dying." I cannot recall why we didn't play it at the jam that night, but the rehearsals of it were a blast. Whether or not any recordings exist of said jam is beyond me.

Throughout their 12 years as an active recording and touring band, Led Zeppelin wrote/recorded and performed some of rock's most epic songs, and in the case of "In My Time Of Dying," this was certainly one of their most grandiose songs of all time. It signified everything good about Zeppelin and also kept that magnificent mystique intact as the lyrics and mood of the song are so indicative of.

It is a song that I never tire from hearing and one that will live on forever.

Until the next time,

Jeff

