

## SONG OF THE DAY XCVI

I've been sitting here at my keyboard pondering exactly how to begin writing about this next song. I don't know if there are enough superlatives in the world to capsulize it and I know that nobody has the patience for me to expound on the many varying versions of said song, as it transformed itself over the years into one of their most impressive live numbers and has thrilled audiences for decades.

Suffice to say that this is a song that, in many minds, spawned the term "Heavy Metal," something that never properly described Zeppelin and a term they detested vehemently, yet it also took them as a group from being a band of great promise to putting them on the proverbial rock & roll map.

It is a song of lust - pure and simple - and it even has an orgasm right smack dab in the middle of it! And with that said, everyone knows the song of which I am referring to. So, whip out your Brown Bomber {"Led Zeppelin II"} and drop the needle on track one, clocking in at just 5:33, the massive and enduring epic, "Whole Lotta Love."

Some say the beginning is Robert coughing... and if that's the case then Led Zeppelin has to hold the record for most songs with recorded coughing on them. To my ears it sounds like a laugh. Like somebody made a funny face or did something behind the glass of the control room and Robert just couldn't contain himself. But... what do I know?

I know this much... the next sound you hear is only one of the most famous riffs in rock & roll history. This song came out over 42 years ago and is as famous today as it ever was. Jimmy's riff is simple to play... but it's the attitude and the groove that he coaxes out of his guitar that make this simple riff so legendary and timeless.

Allegedly Jimmy played this on his Telecaster, and as a guitarist and one who owns a Tele {Telecaster Plus circa 1991} I like the fact that one of the most renowned songs in rock

history was played on a guitar that many associate with country music. There's great humor in there but it's also a great testament to just how wonderful and versatile the Tele is as a guitar.

Soon after Jimmy's riff, doubled by John Paul's bass, which really adds a tremendous amount of thickness to the overall sound and gives this riff an added oomph, Robert enters the picture.

You need coolin'

Baby I'm not foolin'

I'm gonna send ya

Back to schoolin'

Way down inside

Honey you need it

I'm gonna give you my love

I'm gonna give you my love

On the second "my" Bonzo joins in and his drums sound like a lumberjack climbing up a flight of stairs.

Oh - wanna whole lotta love

Wanna whole lotta love

Wanna whole lotta love

Wanna whole lotta love

Page adds some pick slides down the guitar neck for an added effect and it sounds like this section might also employ the use of backwards echo as well, something Page used a lot of on this particular song. With Bonham's furious pounding, the song trudges on as Robert uses more sexual innuendo in his lyrical delivery.

You've been learnin'  
Baby I been learnin'  
All them good times  
Baby, baby I been ah yearnin'  
Way-way down inside  
Ah honey you need ah...  
I'm gonna give you my love - ah  
I'm gonna give you my love - ah

Oh - whole lotta love  
Wanna whole lotta love  
Wanna whole lotta love  
Wanna whole lotta love

And now we reach the famous middle section. If this were released today, in 2011, it would probably raise a few eyebrows, but coming out in 1969... this had to freak a lot of people out!

Bonzo keeps a steady groove going on the high-hat with the occasional cymbal being used for dramatic effect. It also sounds like he overdubbed drums through this section and they sound distinctly like he's playing with his bare hands; something he would do in "Moby Dick" quite often.

Then Jimmy brings out all the guns; guitars, the Theremin, echo, as Bonham keeps a steady beat and Robert enters into his orgasmic faze. There is just so much going on in this section that to describe it is nearly impossible. It simply must be heard to be believed. As Eddie Kramer, the engineer on the album said: "The famous Whole Lotta Love mix, where everything is going bananas, is a combination of Jimmy and myself just flying around on a small console twiddling every knob known to man."

The result is pure brilliance! I will never forget playing this in my room when I was all of 13 years young; the stereo cranked up, my mother running into my room, a look of absolute horror on her face. She was aghast, but to me, it was musical heaven.

Jimmy's Theremin gets a good workout here and at the time, none of us - me, or my friends - could figure out what the heck he was doing or using to get those sounds. It wasn't until "The Song Remains The Same" began its run at the Midnight Movies that we finally learned how he did it, though none of us had a clue as to what that box was!

Bonham plays with the skill of a jazz drummer throughout this entire segment, adding little fills here and there, but never treading on Page or Plant.

Finally we hear Bonham announce his presence with a mighty roar and then Page rips into another of his famous solos. The bass and drums play a start/stop pattern and Page answers with notes flying from the neck of his guitar in a call and response that rivals anything in rock history.

Jimmy's playing here is so perfect. He emphasizes certain notes; the bent note at 3:14 is superb, as he squeezes every ounce of emotion from them as was humanly possible until he reaches for the high notes at the end of the solo and Robert re-enters.

**You've been coolin'**

**Baby I've been droolin'**

**All the good times**

**Baby I've been misusing**

**Way-way down inside**

**I'm gonna give you my love**

**I'm gonna give you every inch of my love**

**Gonna give you my love**

**Yes - alright, let's go**

Wanna whole lotta love

Wanna whole lotta love

Wanna whole lotta love

Wanna whole lotta love

Now we reach the section where we get a happy accident. Eddie Kramer has explained that the vocal you hear in the background is actually bleeding from a previous take, and since they couldn't record over it, he just added echo to it and Page loved it and said: "Great! Just leave it!"

Way down inside

Woman!

You need it

Love...

As Robert carries "love" out, showing his extreme vocal prowess, Bonzo kicks into that massive drum pattern and Page re-enters with the main riff, the entire final minute plus of the song is basically a jazz-inspired free-form section for the band and Robert to just go off. Bonzo plays some amazing drums throughout the end and Plant's voice is just deliciously erotic. There's tons of stereo panning going on until the song quickly fades out leaving you, the listener, looking for a cigarette and a drink.

When the album was released radio stations felt that the middle section was unfit for air-play - imagine that! So they simply went in and created their own edited down version... and what shocks me about this is that they got away with it! Why did Peter Grant not take action? After all, editing a song that they had no copyrights to equates to copyright infringement, yes?

Of course, the song itself is a copyright infringement, lyrically, anyway. Robert "borrows" {ahem} from the Willie Dixon penned version recorded by Muddy Waters and also gets extremely close to Steve Marriott's version from The Small Faces version titled "You Need Loving."

This just gets too confusing after a while so I'll try to make it simple for anyone reading this; Plant later admitted he "nicked" the lyrics, Zeppelin settled with Dixon out of court and yet, everybody agrees that Zeppelin's "take" on this song is the be-all/end-all of all the versions. Whew. Now I need a cigarette. And a drink!

In the end, Atlantic Records, Zeppelin's label, released an edited down version for the American radio stations. The edited versions, sans the orgasmic mid-section, clocked in at 3:10 and was, obviously, a huge hit. In the UK however, Zeppelin refused to cater to the BBC and never released a single in their home country.

Once it found its way into the set-list, which was on the second US tour in April 1969 - some six months before the album was released - it was a staple in every live show from that point on. It's position in the set-list changed from time to time, sometimes used as a closing number, other times as an encore, and at times as an encore medley with "Black Dog" {1975} and "Rock & Roll" {1977}. In 1979 it was given a new arrangement but on the 1980 Over Europe Tour it was restored to its previous version from the 1973 era.

Over the course of their touring years, there were a plethora of other songs included within "Whole Lotta Love" and it also has a very odd distinction to it; this was the final song that Led Zeppelin played in front of an audience as it was the last song performed on 7 July 1980 in Berlin.

Live versions were typically long and featured Page's use of the aforementioned Theremin. Even though it looks like an old radio with just an antennae sticking out of it, the sounds Jimmy can coax out of this device are always fascinating.

Many extended jams arose during the performances of this song and this is one I never minded being so lengthy because the ability of the band to take the basic structure of this song and go to places never before imagined, and many times, never again repeated, was continually enthralling.

In 1985, at Live Aid, Page/Plant/Jones reunited with help from Plant's solo bassist Paul Martinez and both Phil Collins

and Tony Thompson on drums and they played the edited down version in front of the world. Sadly, there were no rehearsals with all of the musicians and the Live Aid show, while exciting to see Page/Plant/Jones together again, was an unmitigated disaster for anyone who knew the true power and majesty of Led Zeppelin.

As bad as Live Aid was, just three short years later at Atlantic Records 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary party, things were even worse. Jonsey's keyboards were lost in the television broadcast, rendering "Kashmir" nothing more than a demo-esque version, "Heartbreaker" was just a total failure and "Whole Lotta Love," which was back to its Knebworth-style form, wasn't much better. Jimmy included a cool riff that had been around since 1979, a riff that he would use on the Outrider Tour, but even that couldn't save the Atlantic Records show.

In 1993, while on tour in Japan with David Coverdale, on their final date, which was 22 December 1993, Jimmy was using his Theremin routine during "Shake My Tree" as he had on the previous six dates, when the band suddenly kicked into "Whole Lotta Love." Jimmy continued with his Theremin solo as Coverdale shouted out "Keep a coolin' baby" and eventually Jimmy kicked into the main riff. The result was a totally off the cuff run through of the epic Zeppelin song and Coverdale seemed to love every second of it.

When they reached the section where the vocals are sung Acapella, after Coverdale belted out "loooooooooooooovvvvvvvveeeee" Jimmy kicked back into "Shake My Tree." Coverdale then said at the conclusion of the song: "Nice one JP. Sneaky bastard!"

Following the song the band left the stage prior to their first encore and when they returned, Coverdale told the crowd that this was a complete surprise to him as well as Jimmy. Despite the shock factor, Coverdale nailed the lyrics perfectly.

Also in 1993 Robert re-recorded this track with Rainer Ptacek, as was mentioned in a previous SOTD. With Rainer playing acoustic slide guitar and Robert playing harmonica and singing in a very raw, emotional manner, this version is one that is a must have for any Zeppelin fan. It is one of their hardest rocking songs taken back to its bluesy roots and the bond

between Plant and Ptacek is quite noticeable on the recording. This version clocks in at 3:29 and was only available, as far as I know, as the second track on the "29 Palms" CD single.

Edit: I just did a check on Amazon and I see that they have the Japanese CD single available that contains the following songs: 1: "29 Palms" 2: "21 Years" 3: "Dark Moon" 4: "Whole Lotta Love." They are selling it for less than seven bucks, which is an absolute steal for what you would receive and three of those songs are Robert with Rainer, and again, I must emphasize that you will love hearing Plant with this amazing guitarist.

On the 1995/96 and 1998 Page/Plant tours, "Whole Lotta Love" was once again brought out and this time Jimmy had a new toy; the Gibson Les Paul Gold Top that he first used on the Coverdale/Page project, which had the Transperformance Unit installed, essentially allowing him to store several hundred tunings into the guitar and change the tuning with the switch of a button.

During the Page/Plant versions he would use the Transperformance device to alter tunings and then he would get into his Theremin routine.

When Jimmy toured with The Black Crowes he played this number then as well, still using the Gold, Transperformance Les Paul.

In 2008, at the Olympic Games in Beijing, Jimmy was used in the closing ceremony with female singer Leona Lewis and they performed a version of this as well. Although I've never heard of her, apparently she's famous all over the world. Perhaps I need to venture out more! But... it was good to see Jimmy on a truly national stage playing one of his biggest hits. It was also a bit humorous to me... some 40 years prior the song was too risqué for radio, but now it's being played at the Olympics!

"Whole Lotta Love" has been a long-time fan favorite and has enjoyed much success and been performed by so many artists I won't even begin to try and list them all here. But, one notable moment for it outside of Zeppelin was during the 1970's and 80's

when it was used as the theme song for the British television program "Top Of The Pops."

And lastly, in 2007 at the O2 reunion gig with Jason Bonham, this was of course one of the songs implemented. The performance was one of the evening's highlights, and the first encore, as Jimmy worked the Theremin for all it was worth and Plant was in top shape vocally, providing some amazing moans and his typical "Ooh-Ooh" bits. He even hinted at the old "Let that boy boogie" section. Jason was outstanding as well, providing some thrilling beats throughout the entire song and particularly during the "middle section."

In the 2009 movie "It Might Get Loud," Jimmy played this song for Jack White and The Edge and the look on their faces was priceless to say the least, especially The Edge, who looked like any typical, star-struck fan in the presence of a legend as big as Jimmy Page.

"Whole Lotta Love" was written nearly 43 years ago and still stands today as one of the most defining hard rock songs of all time. It has been voted as one of the top songs in numerous magazines over the years and my feeling is that it will continue to live on for many years to come. It is a timeless classic and one of the top songs in the Led Zeppelin catalog.

Until the next time, keep a-coolin'...

Jeff