

Ride the Lightning

<i>Ride the Lightning</i>		
Studio album by Metallica		
Released	July 27, 1984	
Recorded	February 20 - March 14, 1984 at Sweet Silence Studios, Copenhagen, Denmark	
Genre	Thrash metal	
Length	47:23	
Label	Megaforce	
Producer	Metallica, Flemming Rasmussen	
Metallica chronology		
<i>Kill 'Em All</i> (1983)	<i>Ride the Lightning</i> (1984)	<i>Master of Puppets</i> (1986)
Singles from <i>Ride the Lightning</i>		
1. "Creeping Death" Released: November 23, 1984		

Ride the Lightning is the second studio album by American heavy metal band Metallica. The album was released on July 27, 1984, through the independent record label Megaforce Records. It was certified 6× platinum by the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) in 2012, having shipped six million copies in the United States.

Background

On July 25, 1983, Metallica released their debut studio album, titled *Kill 'Em All* through Megaforce Records. Shortly afterwards, they began composing new material and during the fall, the songs that would comprise *Ride The Lightning* started being performed at concerts. On February 20, 1984, the band began work on recording them at Sweet Silence Studios, Copenhagen, Denmark. The album was produced under Flemming Rasmussen, founder of Sweet Silence Studios, who also went on to produce the band's following two albums: *Master of Puppets* and *...And Justice for All*. Metallica finished recording *Ride the Lightning* on March 14, 1984, and it was released through Megaforce on July 27. On September 12, Metallica signed with major label Elektra Records who re-released the album on November 19.

Ride the Lightning is the last Metallica album to credit former lead guitarist, Dave Mustaine, with co-writing any songs. He was kicked out of the band on April 11, 1983, prior to the recording of *Kill 'Em All*. He is credited on the title track, "Ride the Lightning", and instrumental track "The Call of Ktulu". The album also represents the first time that the lead guitarist, Kirk Hammett, is given writing credits.

Reception

Critical

Professional ratings	
Review scores	
Source	Rating
Allmusic	★★★★★
<i>Chicago Tribune</i>	★★★★☆
<i>Encyclopedia of Popular Music</i>	★★★★☆
<i>Q</i>	★★★★☆
<i>The Rolling Stone Album Guide</i>	★★★★☆
Sputnikmusic	5/5

Q - 4 stars out of 5 - "Reaffirms their status as the pre-eminent metal band of the modern era....They broke with the conventions of thrash metal to record the genre's first power ballad in 'Fade to Black'."

Kerrang! (p. 50) - "The album included melody, maturity and musical intelligence. It was these traits which helped them broaden metal's scope."

Accolades

Chad Bowar of About.com ranked *Ride the Lightning* as the second best Metallica album. He said that the band's sophomore record was another big step forward from their groundbreaking debut album. Steve Peake, also writing for About.com, named "Ride the Lightning", "For Whom the Bell Tolls", "Fade to Black" and "Escape" in his list of the "Top 10 Metallica Songs of the '80s". The album was placed at number five by IGN Music on their "Top 25 Metal Albums" list.

Bernett's misprint

In 1984, the French record label Bernett Records misprinted the color of the album cover in green, rather than blue. 400 copies with the green cover were pressed. Because of their rarity, this misprint caused these green albums to become a collectors' item.

Songs

Fight Fire with Fire

The introduction to "Fight Fire with Fire" displays Metallica's evolving towards a more harmonically complex style of songwriting. The song encourages the eye for an eye *approach*, and its lyrical themes focus on revenge and Armageddon, resulting in the end of the world.

The song was covered by Apocalyptica on their album *Cult*, Therion on the 'Tribute to The Four Horsemen' tribute album, as well as by Polish death metal band Vader, released as a bonus track on their album *Necropolis*. Black metal band Abigail Williams also covered "Fight Fire with Fire" as a bonus track to their 2010 album *In the Absence of Light*.

The song is featured in the indie film *Hesher* and in the video game *Guitar Hero: Metallica*, along with "For Whom the Bell Tolls", "Fade to Black" and "Creeping Death".

In bassist Flea's Rock and Roll Hall of Fame inductee speech for Metallica, he cited this as being the first Metallica song he heard.

Ride the Lightning

"Ride the Lightning" is Metallica's first song which directly highlighted the misery of the criminal justice system; the lyrics are written from the perspective of someone who is anticipating death by electrocution. The song is one of two on the album that credits Dave Mustaine. It was also released as downloadable content for the music video game *Rock Band*. A relatively infrequent part of the band's live setlist, the album title track was first played live in San Francisco in November 1983. Following Cliff Burton's death, it largely vanished from Metallica concerts until the 2000s. According to James Hetfield, the song "was not a criticism of capital punishment, which I'm actually a supporter of. Rather, it's simply about a man who faces death in the electric chair for a crime he didn't commit." [citation needed]

For Whom the Bell Tolls

The lyrics of "For Whom the Bell Tolls" are based on the Ernest Hemingway novel by the same name; said novel is about the horror and dishonor of modern warfare.

The chromatic introduction, which was written by bassist Cliff Burton before joining Metallica, is often mistaken for an electric guitar; actually, it is Burton's bass guitar augmented with distortion and a wah-wah pedal. For Whom The Bell Tolls became a live favorite, and one of Metallica's most recognizable songs.

"For Whom the Bell Tolls" has been covered by several bands; most notably, by punk rock band Shotgun Remedy on the album *A Punk Tribute to Metallica*, by Apocalyptica on the album *Inquisition Symphony* and by Sunn O))) on its album *Flight of the Behemoth*. It was also the opening song for the 2009 movie *Zombieland*. At WWE's pay-per-view *Wrestlemania XXVII*, Triple H used it as his theatrical entrance music, but on the DVD, it was replaced with an in-house rendition of the song due to copyrights.

Fade to Black

"Fade to Black" is a power ballad. The lyrics suggest a man's contemplation of his eventual suicide. Musically, the song begins with a 12 string acoustic guitar introduction and becomes progressively heavier and faster, similar to Metallica's future ballads, "Welcome Home (Sanitarium)", "One" and "The Day That Never Comes". The acoustic intro was something that had not been seen in metal songs before, and it surprised and upset some fans. Fade To Black became a live staple of the band, having been played over 1000 times since the album's release.

Kirk Hammett's guitar solo on the song was ranked #24 on the 100 Best Solos Ever Reader's Choice in the September 1998 issue of *Guitar World*.

Many notable bands have covered "Fade to Black", including Apocalyptica, Apoptygma Berzerk, Disturbed, Sonata Arctica, Steel Prophet, The Lemonheads, and Iron Horse. NOTE: "Fade to Black", at least in a conventional sense, has no chorus.

Trapped Under Ice

"Trapped Under Ice" is about a person who wakes from a "cryonic state". Realising there is nowhere to go, and no one will come to the rescue, the person helplessly awaits the impending doom in terror. It is based upon a demo song of Hammett's former band Exodus entitled "Impaler", which was later released on its album *Tempo of the Damned* (2004). This song has only been played live 21 times as of 2013 and was completely ignored between 1985 and 1999.

The song is a playable track in *Guitar Hero: World Tour*. "Trapped Under Ice" was covered by parody metal band Austrian Death Machine on its 2009 album *Double Brutal*.

Escape

Originally entitled "The Hammer", the track has only been performed live, in its entirety, one time. It was first played at the first Orion Music + More music festival at Bader Field, Atlantic City, New Jersey on June 23, 2012, while performing *Ride the Lightning* in its entirety, though it was previously jammed during the encore at the last concert of the World Magnetic Tour.

"Escape" was covered by the American heavy metal band Hatebreed on its 2009 album *For the Lions* and also by French progressive death metal band Gojira.

Creeping Death

"Creeping Death" describes the Plague of the Death of the Firstborn (Exodus 12:29). The lyrics deal with the ten plagues on Egypt, and throughout the song, four of them are mentioned as well as the Passover. With over 1400 plays as of 2013, Creeping Death is the second most performed live Metallica song after Master Of Puppets.

The bridge of the song (with the recognizable lyrics "Die, by my hand!") was written by Hammett in Exodus for the song "Die by His Hand". The song was recorded and released by Exodus as a demo, but never featured on a studio album.

"Creeping Death" was covered by Welsh glam metal band Tigertailz for a b-side in 1990, Welsh metalcore band Bullet for My Valentine on *Kerrang!'s 25th Anniversary Higher Voltage* compilation disk, the Italian black metal band Stormlord as a live track on its extended play *The Curse of Medusa*, and by rock band Drowning Pool on the *Ozzfest 2002* live album. The intro was interpolated by ska band, The O.C. Supertones on the title track of their second album, *Supertones Strike Back*.

The Call of Ktulu

"The Call of Ktulu" is the eighth and final track on the album. It is Metallica's second instrumental, following the first instrumental "(Anesthesia) Pulling Teeth" from *Kill 'Em All*. The song's working title was "When Hell Freezes Over".

The idea of the piece "The Call of Ktulu" is based upon H. P. Lovecraft's book *The Shadow Over Innsmouth* which was first introduced to the rest of the band by Cliff Burton. The piece's name was taken from one of H.P. Lovecraft's main stories featuring Cthulhu, *The Call of Cthulhu*, which was written in 1928 for the magazine *Weird Tales*. The name "Ktulu" is originally written "Cthulhu" by H.P. Lovecraft, though there are many other spelling variations.

"The Call of Ktulu" is also the last piece to include songwriting credit for Mustaine. He later recorded the song "When" for Megadeth's 2001 album *The World Needs A Hero* using a very similar idea. Both pieces have the same D minor chord progression in the intro.

The song was re-arranged by Michael Kamen for Metallica's 1999 *S&M* project and won a Grammy for the best rock instrumental performance in 2000.

Singles

- "For Whom the Bell Tolls" was released as a promo single with two versions of the song, an edited version on side A and the album version on side B.
- "Creeping Death" was released as a single, with the b-side also known as *Garage Days Revisited* (precursor to the extended play *The \$5.98 E.P.: Garage Days Re-Revisited*, released in 1987): covers of "Am I Evil?" (originally by Diamond Head) and "Blitzkrieg" (originally by Blitzkrieg). Both of the b-side cover songs were included as bonus tracks on the 1988 reissue of *Kill 'Em All*. They were later featured on the *Garage, Inc.* compilation.
- "Fade to Black" was released as a promo single in 1984, in black vinyl and glow in the dark green.

Track listing

All lyrics written by James Hetfield, except "Creeping Death" by Hetfield and Kirk Hammett.

No.	Title	Music	Length
1.	"Fight Fire with Fire"	Hetfield, Cliff Burton, Lars Ulrich	4:45
2.	"Ride the Lightning"	Hetfield, Dave Mustaine, Burton, Ulrich	6:36
3.	"For Whom the Bell Tolls"	Hetfield, Burton, Ulrich	5:09
4.	"Fade to Black"	Hetfield, Burton, Hammett, Ulrich	6:57
5.	"Trapped Under Ice"	Hetfield, Hammett, Ulrich	4:04
6.	"Escape"	Hetfield, Hammett, Ulrich	4:23
7.	"Creeping Death"	Hetfield, Burton, Hammett, Ulrich	6:36
8.	"The Call of Ktulu" (Instrumental)	Hetfield, Mustaine, Burton, Ulrich	8:53
Total length:			47:23

Digital reissue bonus tracks

No.	Title	Length
9.	"For Whom the Bell Tolls" (Live in Seattle, 1989)	5:34
10.	"Creeping Death" (Live in Seattle, 1989)	8:12
Total length:		61:09

Personnel

<p>Metallica</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • James Hetfield – lead vocals, rhythm guitar • Lars Ulrich – drums • Cliff Burton – bass guitar, backing vocals • Kirk Hammett – lead guitar 	<p>Technical personnel</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flemming Rasmussen – production, engineering • Metallica – production, cover concept • Mark Whitaker – executive producer • Q Prime Inc. - management • Tom Coyne; Frankford Wayne – mastering on Megaforce release • Bob Ludwig – mastering on Elektra release • George Marino – remastering on 1995 reissue • Mike Gillies – mixing of digital reissue bonus tracks • AD Artists – cover design • Fin Costello; Anthony D. Somella; Robert Hoetink; Pete Cronin; Rick Brackett; Harold Oimen – photography
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Chart positions

Chart	Peak position
Australian Albums (ARIA) ^[1]	38
Finnish Albums (Suomen virallinen lista) ^[2]	9
Norwegian Albums (VG-lista) ^[3]	40
Swedish Albums (Sverigetopplistan) ^[4]	22
UK Albums (OCC) ^[5]	87
US <i>Billboard</i> 200 ^[6]	100

Certifications

Region	Certification	Sales/shipments
Canada (Music Canada) ^[7]	4× Platinum	400,000 [^]
United States (RIAA) ^[8]	6× Platinum	6,000,000 [^]
* sales figures based on certification alone [^] shipments figures based on certification alone ^x unspecified figures based on certification alone		

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External links

- *Ride the Lightning* (<http://www.discogs.com/master/6440>) at Discogs (list of releases)

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