

= Master of Puppets =

Master of Puppets is the third studio album by American heavy metal band Metallica, released on March 3, 1986 by Elektra Records. Recorded at the Sweet Silence Studios with producer Flemming Rasmussen, it was the first Metallica album released on a major label. Master of Puppets was the band's last album to feature bassist Cliff Burton, who died in a bus crash in Sweden during the album's promotional tour. The album peaked at number 29 on the Billboard 200 and became the first thrash metal album to be certified platinum. It was certified 6 × platinum by the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) in 2003 for shipping six million copies in the United States. The album was eventually certified 6 × platinum by Music Canada and gold by the British Phonographic Industry (BPI).

Master of Puppets was released to critical acclaim and has been included in several publications' best album lists. Its driving, virtuosic music and angry, political lyrics drew praise from critics outside the metal community. The album is considered the band's strongest effort of the period and is one of the most influential heavy metal albums. Critics credit it for consolidating the American thrash metal scene with its atmospheric and meticulously performed songs. Many bands from all genres of heavy metal have covered the album's songs, including tribute albums. Master of Puppets was deemed "culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant" enough for preservation in the National Recording Registry by the United States Library of Congress in 2016. Only 450 recordings have earned this distinction, with Master of Puppets being the first metal selection.

The cover was designed by Metallica and Peter Mensch and painted by Don Brautigam. It depicts a cemetery field of white crosses tethered to strings, manipulated by a pair of hands in a blood-red sky. Instead of releasing a single or video in the US to promote Master of Puppets, Metallica embarked on a five-month American tour in support of Ozzy Osbourne. The European leg was canceled after Burton's death in September 1986, and the band returned home to audition a new bassist. Metallica honored the album's 20th anniversary on the Escape from the Studio '06 tour, by playing it in its entirety.

= Background and recording =

Metallica's 1983 debut Kill 'Em All laid the foundation for thrash metal with its aggressive musicianship and vitriolic lyricism. The album revitalized the American underground scene, and records by contemporaries followed in similar manner. The band's second album Ride the Lightning extended the limits of the genre with its more sophisticated songwriting and improved production. The album caught the attention of Elektra Records representative Michael Alago, who signed the group to an eight-album deal in the fall of 1984, halfway through the album's promotional tour. Elektra reissued Ride the Lightning on November 19, and the band began touring larger venues and festivals throughout 1985. After parting with manager Jon Zazula, Metallica hired Q Prime executives Cliff Burnstein and Peter Mensch. During the summer, the band played the Monsters of Rock festival at Castle Donington, alongside Bon Jovi and Ratt in front of 70,000 fans. Metallica was motivated to make an album that would impress critics and fans, and began writing new material in mid-1985. Drummer Lars Ulrich and frontman James Hetfield were the main songwriters on the album, already titled Master of Puppets. The two developed ideas at a garage in El Cerrito, California, before inviting bassist Cliff Burton and guitarist Kirk Hammett for rehearsals. Hetfield and Ulrich described the songwriting process as starting with "guitar riffs, assembled and reassembled until they start to sound like a song". After that, the band came up with a song title and topic, and Hetfield wrote lyrics to match the title. Master of Puppets was Metallica's first album not to feature songwriting contributions from former lead guitarist Dave Mustaine. Mustaine claimed he had co-written "Leper Messiah", based on an old song called "The Hills Ran Red". The band denied this, though admitting that a section incorporated ideas of Mustaine's.

The band was not satisfied with the acoustics of the American studios they considered, and decided to record in Ulrich's native Denmark. Ulrich took drum lessons, and Hammett worked with

Joe Satriani to learn how to record more efficiently . Ulrich was in talks with Geddy Lee to produce the album , but the collaboration never materialized because of different schedules . Metallica recorded the album with producer Flemming Rasmussen at Sweet Silence Studios in Copenhagen , Denmark , from September 1 to December 27 , 1985 . The writing of all the songs except " Orion " and " The Thing That Should Not Be " was completed before the band 's arrival in Copenhagen . Rasmussen stated that the band brought well @-@ prepared demos of the songs , and only slight changes were made to the compositions in the studio . The recording took longer than the previous album because Metallica had developed a sense of perfectionism and had higher ambitions for this one . Metallica eschewed the slick production and synthesizers of contemporary hard rock and heavy metal albums by Bon Jovi , Iron Maiden , and Judas Priest . Despite a reputation for drinking , the band stayed dry on recording days . Hammett recalled that the group was " just making another album " at the time and " had no idea that the record would have such a range of influence that it went on to have " . He also said that the group was " definitely peaking " at the time and that the album had " the sound of a band really gelling , really learning how to work well together " .

Rasmussen and Metallica did not manage to complete the mixtapes as planned . Instead , the master tapes were sent in January 1986 to Michael Wagener , who finished the album 's mixing . The cover was designed by Metallica and Peter Mensch and painted by Don Brautigam . It depicts a cemetery field of white crosses tethered to strings , manipulated by a pair of hands in a blood @-@ red sky . Ulrich explained that the artwork summarized the lyrical content of the album ? people being subconsciously manipulated . The original artwork was sold at Rockefeller Plaza , New York City for \$ 28 @,@ 000 in 2008 . The band mocked the warning stickers promoted by the PMRC with a facetious Parental Advisory label on the cover : " The only track you probably won 't want to play is ' Damage , Inc . ' due to the multiple use of the infamous ' F ' word . Otherwise , there aren 't any ' shits ' , ' fucks ' , ' pisses ' , ' cunts ' , ' motherfuckers ' , or ' cocksuckers ' anywhere on this record " . The album was recorded with the following equipment : Hammett 's guitars were a black 1974 Gibson Flying V , a black Jackson Randy Rhoads , and a black Fernandes Stratocaster nicknamed " Edna " ; Hetfield used a Jackson King V played through a Mesa Boogie Mark C + amplifier modified as a pre @-@ amp ; Burton played an Aria Pro II SB1000 through Mesa Boogie amplifier heads and cabinets ; Ulrich played Tama drum equipment , and borrowed a rare S.L.P. Black Brass from Def Leppard drummer Rick Allen , who had lost his arm in a car accident .

= = Music and lyrics = =

Master of Puppets features dynamic music and thick arrangements . Metallica delivered a more refined approach and performance compared to the previous two albums , with multilayered songs and technical dexterity . This album and its predecessor Ride the Lightning follow a similar track sequencing : both open with an up @-@ tempo song with an acoustic intro , followed by a lengthy title track , and a fourth track with ballad qualities . Although both albums are similarly structured , the musicianship on Master of Puppets is more powerful and epic in scope , with tight rhythms and delicate guitar solos . According to music writer Joel McIver , Master of Puppets introduced a new level of heaviness and complexity in thrash metal , displaying atmospheric and precisely executed songs . Hetfield 's vocals had matured from the hoarse shouting of the first two albums to a deeper , in @-@ control yet aggressive style . The songs explore themes such as control and the abuse of power . The lyrics describe the consequences of alienation , oppression , and feelings of powerlessness . Author Ryan Moore thought the lyrics depicted " ominous yet unnamed forces of power wielding total control over helpless human subjects " . The lyrics were considered perceptive and harrowing , and were praised for being honest and socially conscious by writer Brock Helander . Referring to the epic proportions of the songs , BBC Music 's Eamonn Stack stated that " at this stage in their careers Metallica weren 't even doing songs , they were telling stories " . The compositions and arrangements benefited from Burton 's classical training and understanding of harmony .

" Battery " is about anger and refers to the term in the sense of " assault and battery " . Some critics contended that the title actually refers to an artillery battery , and interpreted it as " Hetfield [singing

] of a war tactic as the aggressor " personifying destruction . The song begins with bass @-@ heavy acoustic guitars that build layer by multitracked @-@ layer until they are joined by a wall of distorted electric guitars . It then breaks into fast , aggressive riffing featuring off @-@ beat rhythms and heavily distorted minor dyads where root @-@ fifth power chords might be expected . Hetfield improvised the riff while relaxing in London . " Master of Puppets " consists of several riffs with odd meters and a cleanly picked middle section with melodic solo . The song shares a similar structure with " The Four Horsemen " from the band 's first album : two verse @-@ chorus sets lead to a lengthy interlude to another verse @-@ chorus set . The opening and pre @-@ verse sections feature fast downstroked chromatic riffing at 220 beats per minute . The persistent and precise eight @-@ note riffing of the verse is made more intense by switching to an off @-@ kilter 58 time signature on each fourth bar . A lengthy interlude follows the second chorus , beginning with a clean , arpeggiated section over which Hetfield contributes a melodic solo ; the riffing becomes distorted and progressively more heavy and Hammett provides a more virtuosic solo before the song returns to the main verse . The song closes with a fade @-@ out of sinister laughter . The theme is cocaine addiction , a topic considered taboo at the time .

" The Thing That Should Not Be " was inspired by H. P. Lovecraft 's short story " The Shadow over Innsmouth " , whose protagonist battles unearthly forces . It is considered the heaviest track on the album , whose main riff emulates a beast dragging itself into the sea . The Black Sabbath @-@ influenced guitars are downtuned , creating slow and moody ambiance . " Welcome Home (Sanitarium) " was based on Ken Kesey 's novel One Flew Over the Cuckoo 's Nest and conveys the thoughts of a patient unjustly caged in a mental institution . The song opens with a section of undistorted single strings and harmonics . The clean , arpeggiated main riff is played in alternating 44 and 64 time signatures . The song is structured with alternating somber clean guitars in the verses , and distorted heavy riffing in the choruses , unfolding into an aggressive finale . This structure follows a pattern of power ballads Metallica set with " Fade to Black " on Ride the Lightning and was to revisit with " One " on ... And Justice for All .

" Disposable Heroes " is an anti @-@ war song about a young soldier whose fate is controlled by his superiors . With sections performed at 220 beats per minute , it is one of the most intense tracks on the record . The guitar passage at the end of each verse was Hammett 's imitation of the sort of music he found in war films . The syncopated riffing of " Leper Messiah " challenges the hypocrisy of the televangelism that had emerged in the 1980s . The song describes how people are willingly turned into blind religious followers who mindlessly do whatever they are told . The 136 beats per minute mid @-@ tempo riffing of the verses culminates in a descending chromatic riff in the chorus ; it increases to a galloping 184 beats per minute for the middle section that climaxes in a distorted scream of " Lie ! " . The title derives from the lyrics to the David Bowie song " Ziggy Stardust " . " Orion " is a multipart instrumental highlighting Burton 's bass playing . It opens with a fade @-@ in bass section , heavily processed to resemble an orchestra . It continues with mid @-@ tempo riffing , followed by a bass solo at half . The tempo accelerates during the latter part , and ends with music fading out . Burton arranged the middle section , which features its moody bass line and multipart guitar harmonies . " Damage , Inc . " rants about senseless violence and reprisal at an unspecified target . It starts with a series of reversed bass chords based on the chorale prelude of Bach 's " Come , Sweet Death " . The song then jumps into a rapid rhythm with a pedal @-@ point riff in E that Hammett says was influenced by Deep Purple .

= = Reception = =

Master of Puppets received widespread critical acclaim from music critics . Editor Tom King said Metallica was at an " incredible song @-@ writing peak " during the recording sessions , partially because Burton contributed to the songwriting . The album was hailed as a masterpiece by critics outside of the heavy metal audience and cited by some as the genre 's greatest album . In a contemporary review , Tim Holmes of Rolling Stone asserted that the band had redefined heavy metal with the technical skill and subtlety showcased on the album , which he described as " the sound of global paranoia " . Kerrang ! wrote that Master of Puppets " finally put Metallica into the big

leagues where they belong ". By contrast , Spin magazine 's Judge I @-@ Rankin was disappointed with the album and said , although the production is exceptional and Metallica 's experimentation is commendable , it eschews the less " intellectual " approach of Kill ' Em All for a MDC @-@ inspired direction that is inconsistent .

In a retrospective review , AllMusic 's Steve Huey viewed Master of Puppets as Metallica 's best album and remarked that , although it was not as unexpected as Ride the Lightning , Master of Puppets is a more musically and thematically consistent album . Greg Kot of the Chicago Tribune said the songs were the band 's most intense at that point , despite veering towards " the progressive tendency of Rush . " Adrien Begrand of PopMatters praised the production as " a metal version of Phil Spector 's Wall of Sound " and felt none of Metallica 's subsequent albums could match its passionate and intense musical quality . BBC Music 's Eamonn Stack called the album " hard , fast , rock with substance " and likened the songs to stories of " biblical proportions " . In a less enthusiastic review , Robert Christgau said the band 's energy and political motivations are respectable , but believed they evoke clichéd images of " revolutionary heroes " who are " male chauvinists too inexperienced to know better " .

Released on March 3 , 1986 , the album had a 72 @-@ week run on the Billboard 200 album charts and earned the band its first gold certification . The album debuted on March 29 , 1986 , at number 128 and peaked at number 29 on the Billboard 200 chart . Billboard reported that the album sold 300 @,@ 000 copies in its first three weeks . Despite virtually no radio airplay and no music videos , the album sold more than 500 @,@ 000 copies in its first year . In 2003 , Master of Puppets was certified 6 × platinum by the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) , having shipped six million copies in the United States . Between the beginning of the Nielsen SoundScan era in 1991 and 2009 , the album sold 5 @,@ 050 @,@ 000 copies . The album was less successful on an international level , entering the top 40 on the German and Swiss album charts in its inaugural year . In 2004 , it peaked within the top 10 in Finland and into the top 15 in Sweden . In 2008 , the album reached the top 40 on the Australian and Norwegian album charts . Master of Puppets received 6 × platinum certification from Music Canada and a golden award from the British Phonographic Industry (BPI) for shipments of 600 @,@ 000 and 100 @,@ 000 copies , respectively .

= = Accolades and legacy = =

Master of Puppets has appeared in several publications ' best album lists . It was ranked number 167 on Rolling Stone 's list of the 500 greatest albums of all time . Time included the album in its list of the 100 best albums of all time . According to the magazine 's Josh Tyrangiel , Master of Puppets reinforced the velocity of playing in heavy metal and diminished some of its clichés . Slant Magazine placed the album at number 90 on its list of the best albums of the 1980s , saying Master of Puppets is not only Metallica 's best recording , but also their most sincere . The album is featured in Robert Dimery 's book 1001 Albums You Must Hear Before You Die . IGN named Master of Puppets the best heavy metal album of all time . The website stated it was Metallica 's best because it " built upon and perfected everything they had experimented with prior " and that " all the pieces come together in glorious cohesion " . Music journalist Martin Popoff also ranked it the best heavy metal album . The album was voted the fourth greatest guitar album of all time by Guitar World in 2006 , and the title track ranked number 61 on the magazine 's list of the 100 greatest guitar solos . Total Guitar ranked the main riff of the title track at number 7 among the top 20 guitar riffs . The April 2006 edition of Kerrang ! was dedicated to the album and gave away readers the cover album Master of Puppets : Remastered .

Master of Puppets became thrash metal 's first platinum album and by the early 1990s thrash metal successfully challenged and redefined the mainstream of heavy metal . Metallica and a few other bands headlined arena concerts and appeared regularly on MTV , although radio play remained incommensurate with their popularity . Master of Puppets is widely accepted as the genre 's most accomplished album , and paved the way for subsequent development . The album , in the words of writer Christopher Knowles , " ripped Metallica away from the underground and put them atop the metal mountain " . David Hayter from Guitar Planet recognized the album as one of the most

influential records ever made and a benchmark by which other metal albums should be judged . MTV 's Kyle Anderson had similar thoughts , saying that 25 years after its release the album remained a " stone cold classic " . Carlos Ramirez from Noisecreep believes that Master of Puppets stands as one of the most representative albums of its genre .

1986 is seen as a pinnacle year for thrash metal in which the genre broke out of the underground thanks to albums such as Megadeth 's Peace Sells ... but Who 's Buying ? and Slayer 's Reign in Blood . Anthrax released Among the Living the following year , and by the end of 1987 these bands , alongside Metallica , were being called the " Big Four " of thrash metal . Master of Puppets frequently tops critic and fan polls of favorite thrash metal albums ? the most frequent rival is Slayer 's Reign in Blood , also released in 1986 and also considered that band 's peak . The rivalry partially stemmed from a contrast in approaches on the two albums , between the sophistication of Master of Puppets and the velocity of Reign in Blood . Histories of the band tend to position Ride the Lightning , Master of Puppets , and ... And Justice for All as a trilogy over the course of which the band 's music progressively matured and became more sophisticated . In 2016 , the album was deemed " culturally , historically , or aesthetically significant " by the Library of Congress and was selected for preservation in the National Recording Registry .

= = Touring = =

Metallica opted for extensive touring instead of releasing a single or video to promote the album . Metallica spent March to August 1986 touring as the opening act for Ozzy Osbourne in the United States , the first tour Metallica played to arena @-@ sized audiences . The group used to play Black Sabbath riffs during sound checks , which Osbourne perceived as a mockery toward him . Referring to that occasion , Ulrich stated that Metallica was honored to play with Osbourne , who treated the band well on the tour . Metallica was noted by the media for its excessive drinking habit while touring and earned the nickname " Alcoholica " . The band members occasionally wore satirical T @-@ shirts reading " Alcoholica / Drank ' Em All " . The band usually played a 45 @-@ minute set often followed by an encore . According to Ulrich , the audiences in bigger cities were already familiar with Metallica 's music , unlike in the smaller towns they 've visited . " In the B @-@ markets , people really don 't know what we 're all about . But after 45 or 50 minutes we can tell we 've won them over . And fans who come to hear Ozzy go home liking Metallica . " Metallica won over Osbourne 's fans and slowly began to establish a mainstream following .

The tour , however , was notable for several incidents . Hetfield broke his wrist in a mid @-@ tour skateboarding accident , and his guitar technician John Marshall played rhythm guitar on several dates . The European leg of the Damage , Inc . Tour commenced in September , with Anthrax as the supporting band . After the September 26 performance in Stockholm , the band 's bus rolled over on a stretch of icy road the following morning . Burton was thrown through a window and killed instantly . The driver maintained that he hit a patch of black ice , but Hetfield disputed that . The driver was charged with manslaughter but was not convicted . The band returned to San Francisco and hired Flotsam and Jetsam bassist Jason Newsted to replace Burton . Many of the songs that appeared on the band 's next album , ... And Justice for All , were composed while Burton was still alive .

= = = Live performances = = =

All of the songs have been performed live and some became permanent setlist features . Four tracks were featured on the nine @-@ song setlist for the album 's promotional tour : " Battery " as opener , " Master of Puppets " , " Welcome Home (Sanitarium) " , and " Damage , Inc . " The title track , which was issued as a single in France , became a live staple and the most played Metallica song . When played live , the crowd fills in some of the vocal parts while the group performs the instrumentals . Loudwire 's Chad Childers characterized the band 's performance as " furious " and the song as the set 's highlight . Rolling Stone described the live performance as " a classic in all its eight @-@ minute glory " . While filming its 3D movie Metallica : Through the Never (2013) at the

Rogers Arena in Vancouver , crosses were rising from the stage during the song , reminiscent of the album 's cover art .

" Welcome Home (Sanitarium) " is the second @-@ most performed song from the album . The live performance is often accompanied by lasers , pyrotechnical effects and film screens . " Battery " is usually played at the beginning of the setlist or during the encore , accompanied by lasers and flame plumes . " Disposable Heroes " is featured in the video album Orgullo , Pasión , y Gloria : Tres Noches en la Ciudad de México (2009) filmed in Mexico City , in which the song was played on the second of three nights at the Foro Sol . " Orion " is the least @-@ performed song from the album . Its first live performance was during the Escape from the Studio ' 06 tour , when the band performed the album in its entirety , honoring the 20th anniversary of its release . The band performed the album in the middle of the set . " Battery " , " Welcome Home (Sanitarium) " , " Damage , Inc . " and the full @-@ length " Master of Puppets " were revived for the band 's concerts in 1998 and 1999 , after having been retired for a number of years .

= = Track listing = =

All lyrics written by James Hetfield .

= = Personnel = =

Credits are adapted from the album 's liner notes .

= = = Metallica = = =

James Hetfield ? lead vocals , rhythm guitar , co @-@ lead guitar on " Master of Puppets " and " Orion "

Kirk Hammett ? lead guitar

Cliff Burton ? bass , backing vocals

Lars Ulrich ? drums

= = = Production = = =

Flemming Rasmussen ? producer , engineer

Metallica ? producers , cover concept

Andy Wroblewski ? assistant engineer

Michael Wagener ? mixing

Mark Wilczak ? assistant mixing engineer

Mike Gillies ? mixing of digital reissue bonus tracks

George Marino ? mastering , remastering on 1995 reissue

Michael Alago ? A & R executive

= = = Packaging = = =

Peter Mensch ? cover concept

Don Brautigam ? cover illustration

Ross Halfin ; Rich Likong ; Rob Ellsi ? photography

= = Charts = =

= = Certifications = =