

= Interstellar Overdrive =

" Interstellar Overdrive " is an instrumental psychedelic rock song written and performed by Pink Floyd . The song was written in 1966 , and is listed on their debut album , The Piper at the Gates of Dawn , released in 1967 , clocking in at almost ten minutes in length .

The song originated when guitarist Syd Barrett heard the band 's manager Peter Jenner humming a song , which Barrett tried to interpret by playing it on his guitar . Musically sharing the same theme with " Astronomy Domine " , the piece was recorded in several takes between March and April 1967 . An earlier , longer recording of the song can be heard on the soundtrack to the film Tonite Lets All Make Love in London , which was recorded at Sound Technique Studios in early 1967 , and was released in the same year . Other versions of the track appear on various bootleg recordings . The piece has been covered by acts such as T. Rex , Pearl Jam , Hawkwind , the Melvins , and Simon House .

= = Composition and music = =

" Interstellar Overdrive " was one of the first very psychedelic instrumental improvisations recorded by a rock band . It was seen as Pink Floyd 's first foray into space rock (along with " Astronomy Domine ") , although band members would later disparage this term . " Interstellar Overdrive " originated when early Pink Floyd manager Peter Jenner was trying to hum a song he could not remember the name of (most commonly identified as Love 's cover of " My Little Red Book ") . Guitarist and vocalist Syd Barrett followed Jenner 's humming with his guitar and used it as the basis for the principal melody of " Interstellar Overdrive " . Bassist Roger Waters once told Barrett that the song 's riff reminded him of the theme tune from Steptoe and Son (by Ron Grainer) . Around the time the song was written , Barrett was also inspired by AMM and its guitarist Keith Rowe , who had a pattern of moving pieces of metal along his guitar 's fretboard . The free @-@ form section (and also , " Pow R. Toc H. ") was inspired by Frank Zappa 's free @-@ form freak @-@ outs and The Byrds ' " Eight Miles High " .

" Interstellar Overdrive " shares an emphasis on chromaticism with " Astronomy Domine " . The main theme descends chromatically from B to G , before resolving to E , all chords major . The opening hook of the piece is a distorted , descending guitar riff , played by Barrett , its composer , with Waters on bass and Richard Wright on organ . Nick Mason 's drums then kick in , and after the riff repeats itself a bit , the track turns into improvisation , including modal improvisations , flourishes on the Farfisa organ , and quiet interludes . The song gradually becomes almost structureless and in free @-@ form tempo , punctuated only by strange guitar noises . Eventually , however , the entire band restates the main theme , which is repeated with decreasing tempo and more deliberate intensity . Waters once called the song " an abstract piece " . A bass riff in the song later evolved into another Pink Floyd song , " Let There Be More Light " , which was written by Waters .

= = Recording = =

The stereo version of the song has an organ moving from speaker to speaker ; the effect is lost on the mono version of the song , where it simply gains an extra organ and guitar sound . Five takes of the song were originally recorded on 27 February 1967 , with a sixth later recorded on 16 March 1967 , in an attempt to create a shorter version , with overdubs in June of that year , the Piper version also appears on the official compilation albums Relics and A Nice Pair . Despite Smith trying to bring the rest of the album 's tracks from a jam @-@ long length to something more manageable , Smith relented for " Interstellar Overdrive " , as Jenner recalled : " It was definitely the deal that ? hey , here you can do ' Interstellar Overdrive ' , you can do what you like , you can do your weird shit . So ' Interstellar Overdrive ' was the weird shit . . . and again , hats off to Norman for letting them do that . " A delay effect was created by producer Norman Smith by superimposing a second version of the song over a previous version . Smith played the drum roll on the song .

= = Alternative versions and live performances = =

The studio recording on *The Piper at the Gates of Dawn* is the one that most listeners are familiar with , yet several other versions survive from both the recording studio and the stage . It was first recorded as a demo on 31 October 1966 , recorded live @-@ in @-@ studio at Thompson Private Recording Company . This version was used as the audio sound to the film *San Francisco* , which was made by a friend of Barrett 's , Anthony Stern . While film @-@ maker Peter Whitehead and his secondhand Stern were having a discussion , the topic about Pink Floyd was brought about by Stern , to which Whitehead told him , " Yeah , terrible music " . Stern said that " they 're successful now " , and suggest the pair go watch Pink Floyd , at their gig at the Royal College of Art . Whitehead recalled that they " went to UFO and I liked them . Not connected to pop music , a long improvisatory quality , ideal for what I wanted . " Whitehead convinced Pink Floyd to record " *Interstellar Overdrive* " for a film he was working on . Before turning up at the recording studio , the band held a rehearsal , and the next day , 11 January 1967 , went to Sound Techniques studios . The studio , which was originally a dairy factory , was run by engineers Geoff Frost and John Wood .

For the session , which was booked for two hours , Wood and Joe Boyd operated the mixing desk , while Whitehead and Stern were filming . This recording of the song lasted nearly 16 @-@ minutes in length , recorded onto a 4 @-@ track recorder in one take , as the band didn 't want to have to play through the song again . The band then played another original instrumental , titled " *Nick 's Boogie* " . While 5 seconds of the band playing was included in Whitehead 's *Tonite Lets All Make Love in London* film , edits of the recording was included on the film 's respective soundtrack . The soundtrack (released in 1968) includes an edited version of the song and two reprises of it . The full version is available on the album *London ' 66 ? ' 67* . While attempting to get the band a record deal , Joe Boyd returned (and produced) with the group to Sound Techniques studios . There , the band recorded a demo tape which was to be given to various record labels , one of the songs that features on the tape was " *Interstellar Overdrive* " . An early , unoverdubbed , shortened mix of the album 's " *Interstellar Overdrive* " was used for a French EP released in July 1967 . The 40th anniversary edition of *The Piper at the Gates of Dawn* contains two different , five @-@ minute @-@ long versions of the song , one of them being take 6 from 16 March .

Despite its encapsulation of their concert repertoire under the leadership of guitarist and composer Barrett , the long , improvisational , freeform structure of the piece is not particularly representative of the group 's recorded output . As drummer Mason states in his book *Inside Out : A Personal History of Pink Floyd* , live versions of the song featured many sections that did not appear on the album , and would often last more than 20 minutes . During the band 's days playing in residence at London underground clubs such as the UFO (*Underground Freak Out*) , the song usually opened their show . It occupied other positions , including the encore , until it was retired from the band 's setlist in 1970 . The song had first appeared in live performances in the autumn of 1966 . During one performance of the song , at a gig organized by Hoppy Hopkins , Pink Floyd managed to blow out the power of a venue . Hopkins called it " Very cold , very dirty but very nice . " After recording session for *Piper* were over , Pink Floyd played a 30 @-@ minute version of " *Interstellar Overdrive* " . Pink Floyd were filmed performing the song for Granada Television 's *Scene Special* documentary , in January 1967 at the UFO Club . A late @-@ Barrett era rendition was recorded live in Rotterdam in November 1967 , at the Hippy @-@ Happy Fair . The song was later replaced by " *Set the Controls for the Heart of the Sun* " as the main part of the band 's set lists , after Barrett left the band . A version of " *Interstellar Overdrive* " was cut from the *Ummagumma* live album .

= = Covers and legacy = =

" *Interstellar Overdrive* " has been covered by many artists , including Teenage Fanclub and Kylesa .

Tyrannosaurus Rex percussionist Steve Peregrin Took played a few bars of the lead riff of the song at a concert at the Lyceum , just before the band played " *Do You Remember ?* " . The incident can

be heard on Midnight Court at the Lyceum .

The Mars Volta incorporated a cover of the song into their live shows as a tribute to Syd Barrett .

The cover version by The Melvins appears on their album Electroretard .

Pearl Jam have played snippets , which have appeared on their live albums , 8 @-@ 18 @-@ 00 - Indianapolis , Indiana , 10 @-@ 27 @-@ 00 - Fresno , California , and 11 @-@ 15 @-@ 13 - Dallas , Texas .

moe. covered the song in its entirety on their live album Dr. Stan 's Prescription , Volume 1 .

Hawkwind covered the song and the recording appears on their box set , Hawkwind Family Box .

Camper Van Beethoven covered the song on their studio album Camper Van Beethoven .

A disco version by Rosebud on their tribute album to Pink Floyd , Discoballs : A Tribute to Pink Floyd .

Spiral Realms covered it on a tribute album , Saucerful of Pink : A Tribute to Pink Floyd and on their studio album Solar Wind .

Death Grips sampled the main riff on their track " I Want it I need it (Death Heated) " , from their Exmilitary mixtape .

The album version was ranked number 36 on " Rolling Stone " magazine 's list of the 100 greatest guitar songs of all time . While the song did feature on their compilation Relics , it was under consideration for ? but ultimately left off ? their career @-@ spanning " best of " retrospective , Echoes : The Best of Pink Floyd .

= = Personnel = =

Syd Barrett ? guitar

Roger Waters ? bass guitar

Rick Wright ? organ

Nick Mason ? drums

with :

Norman Smith ? drum roll