

= Ride the Lightning =

Ride the Lightning is the second studio album by American heavy metal band Metallica , released on July 27 , 1984 , by the independent label Megaforce Records . The album was recorded in three weeks with producer Flemming Rasmussen at the Sweet Silence Studios in Copenhagen , Denmark . The artwork , based on a concept by the band , depicts an electric chair in the midst of a thunderstorm . The title was taken from a passage in Stephen King 's novel The Stand . Although rooted in the thrash metal genre , the album showcased the band 's musical maturity and lyrical sophistication . This was partly because bassist Cliff Burton introduced the basics of music theory to the rest of the band and had more input in the songwriting . Instead of relying strictly on fast tempos as on Kill ' Em All , Metallica broadened its approach by employing acoustic guitars , extended instrumentals , and more complex harmonies . The overall recording costs were paid by Metallica 's European label Music for Nations because Megaforce was unable to cover it . It was the last album to feature songwriting contributions from former lead guitarist Dave Mustaine .

Ride the Lightning received positive response from music critics , who saw it as a more ambitious effort than its predecessor . Metallica promoted the album on the Bang That Head That Doesn 't Bang European tour in late 1984 , and on its North American leg in the first half of 1985 . The band performed at a few major music festivals , such as Monsters of Rock and Day on the Green later that year . Two months after its release , Elektra Records signed Metallica to a multi @-@ year contract and reissued the album . Ride the Lightning peaked at number 100 on the Billboard 200 with no radio exposure . Although 75 @,@ 000 copies were initially pressed for the American market , the album sold half a million by November 1987 . It was certified 6 × platinum by the Recording Industry Association of America ( RIAA ) in 2012 for shipping six million copies in the United States . Many rock publications have ranked Ride the Lightning on their best album lists , saying it had a lasting impact on the genre .

= = Background and recording = =

Metallica released its debut studio album Kill ' Em All on the independent label Megaforce Records in July 1983 . The album was seen as the birth of thrash metal , a heavy metal subgenre defined by its brisk riffs and intense percussion . After finishing its promotional tour , Metallica began composing new material and from September began performing the songs that were to make up Ride the Lightning at concerts . Because the band had little money , its members often ate one meal a day and stayed at fans ' homes throughout the tour . Frontman James Hetfield felt uneasy about performing vocals so the band offered the job to Armored Saint singer John Bush , who turned down the offer because Armored Saint was doing well at the time . Metallica started recording on February 20 , 1984 at Sweet Silence Studios in Copenhagen , Denmark . The album was produced by Flemming Rasmussen , founder of Sweet Silence , who went on to produce the band 's next two albums . Drummer Lars Ulrich chose Rasmussen because he liked his work on Rainbow 's Difficult to Cure ( 1981 ) and was keen to record in Europe . Rasmussen , who had not heard of Metallica , agreed to work on the album , even though his studio employees questioned the band 's talent . Rasmussen listened to Metallica 's tapes before the members arrived and thought the band had great potential . Metallica rehearsed the album 's material at Mercyful Fate 's practice room in Copenhagen .

Before entering the studio , Metallica collected ideas on " riff tape " recordings of various jam sessions . Hetfield and Ulrich went through the tapes and selected the strongest riffs to assemble into songs . Instruments were recorded separately , with Hetfield playing only rhythm guitar . Rasmussen , with the help of drum roadie Flemming Larsen , taught Ulrich the basics of timing and beat duration . Although four tracks were already arranged , the band members were not used to creating songs in the studio , as they had not done so for Kill ' Em All . Lead guitarist Kirk Hammett took the album 's name from a passage in Stephen King 's novel The Stand . The cover art , displaying an electric chair in the midst of lighting bolts , was conceived before recording began . Metallica initially had sound problems because its gear was stolen three weeks before the band

arrived in Copenhagen . Band members slept in the studio by day and recorded by night . Because the group was looking for a major label deal , several A & R people were visiting the studio . Metallica was apparently going to sign with Bronze Records , but the deal fell through because Bronze executive Gerry Bron wanted the US edition to be remixed by engineer Eddie Kramer , which Metallica declined .

Metallica had to record quickly because of European shows scheduled 29 days after it entered the studio . Recording finished on March 14 and Megaforce released the album on July 27 . Although the original album budget was \$ 20 @,@ 000 , the final expense was above \$ 30 @,@ 000 . Metallica 's European label Music for Nations paid the studio costs because Megaforce owner Jon Zazula could not afford them . Metallica was unhappy with the lack of promotion by Megaforce , and decided to sever ties with Zazula . Major label Elektra Records employee Michael Alago noticed Metallica at The Stone gig in San Francisco and invited Elektra 's chairman and the head of promotion to see the August show in New York . The performance at Roseland Ballroom , opening with Anthrax and Raven , pleased the Elektra staff and the band was offered a contract the following morning . On September 12 , Metallica signed with Elektra , who re @-@ released the album on November 19 . Ride the Lightning was the last Metallica album to feature co @-@ writing contributions from former lead guitarist Dave Mustaine , who received credit on the title track and the instrumental " The Call of Ktulu " . The album also represented the first time Hammett was given writing credits .

= = Music and lyrics = =

Ride the Lightning exhibited greater musical maturity , with sonically broader songs , than Metallica 's debut Kill ' Em All , which was noted for its one @-@ dimensional sound . This was partially because of bassist Cliff Burton 's knowledge of music theory . He showed Hetfield how to augment core notes with complementary counter @-@ melodies and how basic guitar harmony worked , which reflected on the song compositions . Hetfield developed more socially aware lyrics , as well as ominous and semi @-@ philosophical references . Ulrich explained that Metallica opted not to rely strictly on fast tempos as on the previous album , but to explore other musical approaches that sounded powerful and heavy . Grinder magazine 's Kevin Fisher summarized the album as " ultimate thrash , destruction and total blur " that reminded him of the speed and power of Kill ' Em All . Music journalist Martin Popoff observed that Ride the Lightning offered " sophistication and brutality in equal measure " and was seen as something new at the time of its release .

The major @-@ key acoustic introduction to " Fight Fire with Fire " displayed Metallica 's evolving towards a more harmonically complex style of songwriting . The fastest Metallica song in terms of picking speed , it is driven by nimble tremolo @-@ picked riffs in the verses and chorus . The extended solo section at the end dissolves in a sound effect of a vast nuclear explosion . The song discourages the " eye for an eye " approach , and its lyrical themes focused on nuclear warfare and Armageddon . " Ride the Lightning " was Metallica 's first song to emphasize the misery of the criminal justice system . The lyrics were written from the perspective of someone who is anticipating execution by the electric chair . The song , one of the two album tracks that credited Mustaine , begins in a mid @-@ tempo which gradually accelerates as the song progress . It features an instrumental middle section highlighted by Hammett 's soloing . According to 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 " , as in the opening lyrics : " Guilty as charged / But Damn it / It ain 't right " .

" For Whom the Bell Tolls " begins with a bell tolling , followed by a marching riff and high @-@ register bass melody . The chromatic introduction , which Burton wrote before he joined Metallica , is often mistaken for an electric guitar ; it is actually Burton 's bass guitar augmented with distortion and a wah @-@ wah pedal . The lyrics were based on Ernest Hemingway 's novel of the same name , which explores the horror and dishonor of modern warfare . " For Whom the Bell Tolls " was released as a promotional single in two versions , an edit on side A and the album version on side B . " Fade to Black " is a power ballad whose lyrics contemplate suicide . Hetfield wrote the words

because he felt powerless after the band 's equipment was stolen before the January 1984 show in Boston . Musically , the song begins with an acoustic guitar introduction overlaid with electric soloing . The song becomes progressively heavier and faster , ending with multi @-@ layered guitar solos . The song 's structure foreshadows later Metallica ballads , " Welcome Home ( Sanitarium ) " and " One " . " Fade to Black " was released as a promotional single in 1984 , in glow in the dark green .

" Trapped Under Ice " is about a person who wakes from a cryonic state . Realizing there is nowhere to go , and no @-@ one will come to the rescue , the person helplessly awaits impending doom . The song is built on a fast @-@ picked galloping riff , reminiscent of the album 's opener . It was inspired by a track Hammett 's former band Exodus had demoed called " Impaler " , which was later released on that band 's album Tempo of the Damned ( 2004 ) . " Escape " was originally titled " The Hammer " and was intended to be released as a single due to its lighter riffs and conventional song structure . The intro features a counterpoint bass melody and a chugging guitar riff that resolves into a standard down @-@ stroked riff . Metallica performed " Escape " live only once , at the 2012 Orion Music + More festival , while performing Ride the Lightning in its entirety .

" Creeping Death " describes the Plague of the Death of the Firstborn ( Exodus 12 : 29 ) . The lyrics deal with the 10 plagues visited on Ancient Egypt ; four of them are mentioned throughout the song , as well as the Passover . The bridge , with its chant " Die , by my hand ! " , was originally written by Hammett for the song " Die by His Hand " while he was playing in Exodus , who recorded it as a demo but did not feature it on a studio album . " Creeping Death " was released as a single with a B @-@ side titled Garage Days Revisited made up of covers of Diamond Head 's " Am I Evil ? " and Blitzkrieg 's " Blitzkrieg " . " The Call of Ktulu " , tentatively titled " When Hell Freezes Over " , was inspired by H. P. Lovecraft 's book The Shadow over Innsmouth , which was introduced to the rest of the band by Burton . The title was taken from one of Lovecraft 's key stories featuring Cthulhu , The Call of Cthulhu , although the original name was modified to " Ktulu " for easier pronunciation . The song begins with D minor chord progression in the intro , followed by a two @-@ minute bass solo over a rhythmic riff pattern . Michael Kamen rearranged the song for Metallica 's 1999 S & M project and won a Grammy Award for Best Rock Instrumental Performance in 2001 .

= = Reception = =

Ride the Lightning received positive reviews from music critics . According to Q magazine , the album confirmed Metallica 's status as the leading heavy metal band of the modern era . The magazine credited the group for redefining the norms of thrash metal with " Fade to Black " , the genre 's first power ballad . Kerrang ! stated that the album 's maturity and musical intelligence helped Metallica expand heavy metal 's boundaries . Greg Kot of the Chicago Tribune described Ride the Lightning as a more refined extension of the group 's debut . In a retrospective review , Sputnikmusic 's Channing Freeman named it as one of the few albums that can be charming and powerful at the same time . He praised Hetfield 's vocal performance and concluded that Metallica was " firing on all cylinders " . AllMusic 's Steve Huey saw the album as a more ambitious and remarkable effort than Kill ' Em All . He called Ride the Lightning an " all @-@ time metal classic " because of the band 's rich musical imagination and lyrics that avoided heavy metal cliches . The Rolling Stone Album Guide viewed the album as a great step forward for the band and as an album that established the concept for Metallica 's following two records . Colin Larkin , writing in the Encyclopedia of Popular Music , singled out " For Whom the Bell Tolls " as an example of Metallica 's growing music potential . Popoff regards Ride the Lightning as an album where " extreme metal became art " .

Megaforce initially printed 75 @, @ 000 copies of the album for the US market , while Music for Nations took care of the European market . By the autumn of 1984 , Ride the Lightning had moved 85 @, @ 000 copies in Europe , resulting in Metallica 's first cover story for British rock magazine Kerrang ! in its December issue . After signing Metallica , Elektra released the single " Creeping Death " in a sleeve depicting a bridge and a skull painted grey and green . The album peaked at number 100 on the Billboard 200 with no radio exposure . In 1984 , the French record label Bernet Records misprinted the color of the album cover in green , rather than blue , and 400 copies with the

green cover were pressed . Because of their rarity , these green albums have become collectors ' items . Ride the Lightning went gold by November 1987 and in 2012 was certified 6 × platinum by the Recording Industry Association of America ( RIAA ) for shipping six million copies in the US . Many rock publications have ranked Ride the Lightning on their best album lists . The album placed fifth on IGN Music 's " Top 25 Metal Albums " list . Spin listed it as a thrash metal essential , declaring it " the thrashiest thrash ever " . According to Guitar World , Ride the Lightning " didn't just change the band 's trajectory ? it reset the course of metal itself " . Corey Deiterman of the Houston Press considers Ride the Lightning the most influential Metallica album , saying it had a lasting impact on genres such as crossover thrash and hardcore punk .

= = Touring = =

To promote Ride the Lightning , Metallica commenced the Bang That Head That Doesn't Bang European tour on November 16 , 1984 , in Rouen , France , with British NWOBHM band Tank as support . The tour continued with dates in Belgium , Italy , Germany , and the Nordic countries . After a Christmas break , the group embarked on a US tour , firstly as a co-headlining act with W.A.S.P. and then as headliners with Armored Saint supporting . At a gig in Portland , Oregon , Metallica covered " The Money Will Roll Right In " by Fang , with Armored Saint onstage . The American leg ended in May , and the band spent the following two months working on the next studio album , Master of Puppets , whose recording sessions were scheduled to begin in September . Metallica performed at the Monsters of Rock festival held at Castle Donington in England on August 17 in front of 70 ,000 fans . The band was placed between Ratt and Bon Jovi , two glam metal groups whose sound and appearance were much unlike Metallica 's . At the start of the set , Hetfield pronounced to the audience : " If you came here to see spandex , eye make up , and the words ' oh baby ' in every fuckin ' song , this ain't the fuckin ' band ! " Two weeks later , Metallica appeared on the Day on the Green festival in Oakland , California , before 90 ,000 people . The last show Metallica played before recording began was the Loreley Metal Hammer festival in Germany , headlined by Venom . Metallica finished 1985 with a show at the Sacramento Memorial Auditorium on December 29 opening for Y & T , and a New Year 's Eve concert at the Civic Auditorium in San Francisco on a bill with Metal Church , Exodus , and Megadeth , the first time Metallica and Megadeth shared a stage . At this gig , Metallica premiered " Master of Puppets " and " Disposable Heroes " , songs from the then-upcoming third studio album .

= = Track listing = =

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

= = Personnel = =

Credits are adapted from the album 's liner notes .

= = = Metallica = = =

James Hetfield ? lead vocals , rhythm guitar , acoustic guitar

Kirk Hammett ? lead guitar

Cliff Burton ? bass guitar , backing vocals

Lars Ulrich ? drums

= = = Production = = =

Flemming Rasmussen ? production , engineering

Metallica ? production , cover concept

Mark Whitaker ? executive production

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  
Q Prime Inc . ? management  
Michael Alago ? A & R coordinator  
Peter Paterno ? legal representation  
Marsha Vlasic , Neil Warnock ? booking agents for The Agency Group

= = = Packaging = = =

AD Artists ? cover design  
Fin Costello , Robert Hoetink , Pete Cronin , Rick Brackett , Harold Oimoen - photography  
Anthony D. Sommella - tour / live photography

= = Charts = =

= = Certifications = =