

= Angel of Death (Slayer song) =

" Angel of Death " is the opening track on the American thrash metal band Slayer 's 1986 album Reign in Blood . The lyrics and music were written by Slayer guitarist , Jeff Hanneman and are based on Nazi physician Josef Mengele , who conducted human experiments at the Auschwitz concentration camp during World War II . " Angel of Death " led to the band facing accusations of Nazi sympathizing and racism throughout their career .

Despite the controversy surrounding the song and its contribution to the delay in the release of Reign in Blood , " Angel of Death " is featured on all of Slayer 's live albums and DVDs and has appeared in several movies . The song was well received by critics ; Steve Huey of AllMusic described it as a " classic " .

= = Composition and origins = =

Slayer guitarist Jeff Hanneman wrote " Angel of Death " after reading books about Nazi physician Josef Mengele while on tour with the band : " I remember stopping someplace where I bought two books on Mengele . I thought , ' This has gotta be some sick shit . ' So when it came time to do the record , that stuff was still in my head ? that 's where the lyrics to ' Angel of Death ' came from . "

The lyrics detail Mengele 's surgical experiments on patients at the Auschwitz concentration camp during World War II . Mengele 's explorations were conducted on such groups as dwarfs and twins , and included both physical and psychological examinations . Among the tests he performed that are mentioned in " Angel of Death " are experimental surgeries performed without anesthesia , transfusion of blood between twins , isolation endurance , gassing , injections with lethal germs , sex change operations , the removal of organs and limbs , and abacination .

" Sewn together , joining heads . Just a matter of time ' til you rip yourselves apart " , a line from the penultimate verse , is a reference to the allegation Mengele stitched together twins , one of them deformed ; " the hunchback was sewn to the other child , back to back , their wrists back to back too . " This claim was first made by Auschwitz survivor Vera Alexander at the 1961 trial of SS @-@ Hauptscharführer Adolf Eichmann the " architect of the Holocaust " , where it was asserted that Mengele " sewed the veins together " and turned " them into Siamese twins . " This allegation became more widely known when Vera Alexander was featured in the 1985 documentary The Search for Mengele , which has been cited by several authors including Gerald Posner , an expert on Mengele .

Towards the end of the song , there is a line " Feeding off the screams of the mutants he 's creating " , which was taken from the film The Boys from Brazil in which Dr. Mengele was the villain .

= = Controversy = =

The lyrical content of " Angel of Death " contributed to the delay of the release of Slayer 's 1986 album Reign in Blood . The band were signed to Def Jam Records whose distributor , Columbia Records , refused to release the album due to lyrical themes and artwork concerns , deeming the artwork " too graphic " . Reign in Blood was eventually distributed by Geffen Records on October 7 , 1986 . However , due to the controversy , Reign in Blood did not appear on Geffen Records official release schedule .

" Angel of Death " caused outrage among survivors of the Holocaust , as well as their families and the general public . The controversy led to accusations of Nazi sympathizing which have followed Slayer throughout their career . People took Hanneman 's interest in Nazi history and his collection of Nazi medals as evidence of sympathizing ? his most prized item being a German Knight 's Cross . Hanneman counteracted asserting :

" I know why people misinterpret it ? it 's because they get this knee ? jerk reaction to it . When they read the lyrics , there 's nothing I put in the lyrics that says necessarily he was a bad man , because to me ? well , isn 't that obvious ? I shouldn 't have to tell you that . "

According to guitarist Kerry King : " Yeah , ' Slayer are Nazis , fascists , communists ' ? all that fun

shit . And of course we got the most flak for it in Germany . I was always like , ' Read the lyrics and tell me what 's offensive about it . Can you see it as a documentary , or do you think Slayer 's preaching fucking World War II ? ' People get this thought in their heads ? especially in Europe ? and you 'll never talk them out of it . "

The song drew accusations of racism , which the band has denied . The band members are often asked about the accusations in interviews , and have stated numerous times that they do not condone racism and are merely interested in the subject .

In 2006 , the song " Jihad " from Slayer 's 2006 album Christ Illusion drew comparison to " Angel of Death " . " Jihad " deals with the September 11 , 2001 , attacks , and tells the story from a terrorist 's perspective . Vocalist Araya was expecting the subject matter to create a similar backlash to that of " Angel of Death " , although it did not materialise , in part , he believes , due to peoples ' view that the song is " just Slayer being Slayer " .

= = Music and structure = =

" Angel of Death " is the longest track on the album Reign in Blood , spanning 4 minutes and 51 seconds , where the total duration of the album is 29 minutes . Additionally , it has one of the most conventional song structures on the album , featuring prominent verses and choruses , where most tracks on the album eschew them . Hanneman and King deliver their ' intricate riffs ' , which offer the few hints of melody on the album according to PopMatters reviewer Adrien Begrand , and Araya bursts out his piercing scream , with Lombardo performing beats of 210 beats per minute .

When drummer Lombardo left Slayer in 1992 , the band hired a full @-@ time replacement in Forbidden drummer Paul Bostaph . Bostaph made one mistake out of the nine songs the band trialled him with , on " Angel of Death " . Before the " big double bass part " there is a lead section , which Bostaph could not understand , as he had to learn from live records recorded with Lombardo . Bostaph could not tell how many revolutions the guitar riff goes before the bass sequence . The band members told him there were eight , " perfecting " the song afterwards .

= = Reception = =

Although " Angel of Death " did not enter any charts , it received strong praise from critics in reviews for Reign in Blood . Clay Jarvas of Stylus Magazine noted that the song " smokes the asses of any band playing fast and / or heavy today . Lyrically outlining the horrors to come , while musically laying the groundwork for the rest of the record : fast , lean and filthy . "

Adrien Begrand of PopMatters remarked that " There 's no better song to kick things off than the masterful ' Angel of Death ' , one of the most monumental songs in metal history , where guitarists Kerry King and Jeff Hanneman deliver their intricate riffs , drummer Dave Lombardo performs some of the most powerful drumming ever recorded , and bassist / vocalist Tom Araya screams and snarls his tale of Nazi war criminal Josef Mengele . "

Capitalizing on the publicity generated by the controversy , the band utilized Nazi imagery by adapting a logo to one similar to the eagle atop swastika , during the Seasons in the Abyss period . Hanneman placed SS stickers on his guitar , and wrote " SS @-@ 3 " a song about Reinhard Heydrich , the second in command in the Schutzstaffel organization .

= = Appearances = =

" Angel of Death " has appeared in several movies and TV shows including Gremlins 2 : The New Batch in a scene when the gremlin Mohawk is turning into a spider , Jackass : The Movie during a car stunt , the 2005 Iraq War documentary Soundtrack to War , which details the role of music on the contemporary battlefield , and on an episode of The Leftovers when Nora asks a female escort to shoot her .

The half @-@ time riff was sampled by Public Enemy in their 1988 song " She Watch Channel Zero ? ! " , sampled by M.O.P. in their song " Raise Hell " , which appeared in the Breaking Bad episode "

Thirty @-@ Eight Snub " , and sampled by KMFDM on their 1990 single " Godlike " , and featured in the multi @-@ platform video game Tony Hawk 's Project 8 . Nolan Nelson , who selected the soundtrack for the game asserts the song is " one of the greatest heavy metal songs ever recorded . Don 't know who Slayer is ? I feel sorry for you . "

A Slayer tribute band called Dead Skin Mask released an album with eight Slayer tracks , " Angel of Death " being one of them . The death metal bands Debauchery and Monstrosity covered the song , and the track was featured on cello metal band Apocalyptica 's 2006 album Amplified / / A Decade of Reinventing the Cello . Sgt. Discharge , a thrash metal band with members from Morbid Saint , has also covered this song . Al Sur del Abismo (Tributo Argentino a Slayer) , a Slayer tribute album compiled by Hurling Metal Records , featured sixteen tracks covered by Argentina metal bands , Asinesia covered " Angel of Death " . The song was once again covered by deathcore band Carnifex and appears on their third album Hell Chose Me as a bonus track included on the vinyl and iTunes editions .

A compilation album of bands that have been featured in the Ozzfest line @-@ up , of which Slayer have headlined multiple times , features " Angel of Death " .

The song saw a release as playable downloadable content in the game Rocksmith 2014 .