

= Kill ' Em All =

Kill ' Em All is the debut studio album by the American heavy metal band Metallica , released on July 25 , 1983 , by the independent label Megaforce Records . Kill ' Em All is regarded as a groundbreaking album for thrash metal because of its precise musicianship , which fuses new wave of British heavy metal riffs with hardcore punk tempos . Its musical approach and lyrics were markedly different from rock ' s mainstream of the early Eighties and inspired a number of bands who followed in similar manner . The album did not enter the Billboard 200 until 1986 , when it peaked at number 155 , following Metallica ' s commercial success with its third studio album Master of Puppets ; the 1988 Elektra reissue peaked at number 120 . Kill ' Em All was critically praised at the time of its release and in retrospect , and was placed on a few publications ' best album lists . It was certified 3 × platinum by the Recording Industry Association of America ( RIAA ) in 1999 for shipping three million copies in the United States . The album generated two singles : " Whiplash " and " Jump in the Fire " .

Metallica began by playing shows in local clubs in Los Angeles . They recorded several demos to gain attention from club owners , and eventually relocated to San Francisco to secure the services of bassist Cliff Burton . The group ' s No Life ' til Leather demo ( 1982 ) was noticed by Megaforce label head Jon Zazula , who signed them and provided a small budget of \$ 15 @, @ 000 for recording . The album was recorded in May with producer Paul Curcio at the Music America Studios in Rochester , New York . It was originally intended to be titled Metal Up Your Ass , with cover art featuring a hand clutching a dagger emerging from a toilet bowl . The band was asked to change the name because distributors feared releasing an album with such an offensive title and artwork would diminish its chances of commercial success . Metallica promoted the album on the two @-@ month co @-@ headlining Kill ' Em All for One tour with Raven in the United States . Although the initial shipment was 15 @, @ 000 copies in the US , the album sold 60 @, @ 000 copies worldwide by the end of Metallica ' s Seven Dates of Hell European tour in 1984 .

= = Background and recording = =

Metallica was formed in 1981 in Los Angeles by drummer Lars Ulrich and vocalist James Hetfield . Before settling on a definitive lineup , Metal Blade Records owner Brian Slagel asked Metallica to record a song for the first edition of his Metal Massacre compilation . Hetfield and Ulrich chose " Hit the Lights " from Hetfield ' s previous band Leather Charm , and recorded it with Hetfield ' s childhood friend Ron McGovney on bass , and temporary guitarist Lloyd Grant . The band ' s first lineup featured Hetfield , Ulrich , McGovney , and guitarist Dave Mustaine , who was acquired through a newspaper advertisement . The band practiced in McGovney ' s garage and inquired to play gigs at local clubs . Metallica ' s first show was on March 14 , 1982 , at the Radio City in Anaheim . The nine @-@ song setlist consisted of two originals ( " Hit the Lights " and an unfinished version of " Jump in the Fire " from Mustaine ' s earlier band Panic ) and covers of new wave of British heavy metal ( NWOBHM ) bands such as Diamond Head , Blitzkrieg , Savage , and Sweet Savage . The gig was notorious because Mustaine had problems with the guitar distortion pedal and broke a string during a song . Metallica ' s second gig was March 27 at Hollywood ' s Whisky a Go Go , opening for Saxon . Although Mötley Crüe was originally scheduled to open the show , the group canceled because of its growing popularity . Metallica recorded a three @-@ song demo to persuade the venue ' s management to allow the band to open for Saxon . Metallica ' s third concert was in April , at which was premiered " The Mechanix " , written by Mustaine during his tenure with Panic . Mustaine interacted with the fans at Metallica ' s earliest shows because Hetfield was shy .

To get attention from club owners , Metallica recorded the Power Metal demo which featured " Motorbreath " in addition to the already @-@ performed originals . The logo , displaying the band ' s name with the first and last letter drawn larger with sharp serifs and italicized , was designed by Hetfield . The No Life ' til Leather demo was recorded in July 1982 , and it created a buzz in the underground tape trading circles . No Life ' til Leather featured a re @-@ recorded version of " Hit the Lights " , which appeared on the second pressing of Metal Massacre , in addition to new songs

such as " Phantom Lord " , " Seek & Destroy " , and " Metal Militia " . The recording and mastering was financed by Kenny Kane , owner of the punk label High Velocity , and distributed by Ulrich and his friend Pat Scott . Because of tensions with Mustaine , McGovney left the band in December . Ulrich was impressed by Cliff Burton 's performance with Trauma at The Troubadour and offered to let him join the group . Burton joined on the condition that Metallica would relocate to the San Francisco area . Moving to El Cerrito in February 1983 , the band stayed and rehearsed at Exodus manager Mark Whitaker 's house , which they called the " Metallica Mansion " . Metallica intended to record its debut in Los Angeles on Slagel 's independent label on an \$ 8 @, @ 000 budget . Slagel could not afford the record , and Ulrich contacted Jon Zazula , a New Jersey record store owner and promoter of heavy metal bands on the East Coast who had already heard No Life ' til Leather . Metallica took a bus to New Jersey in late March , and upon arrival , allowed Zazula to sell copies of No Life ' til Leather to help him found Megaforce Records , because no label wanted to finance the album 's recording .

Hetfield and Ulrich fired Mustaine on the morning of April 11 , after a gig in New York , because of his drug and alcohol problems , overly aggressive behavior , and clashes with bandmates . On Whitaker 's recommendation , Metallica recruited Kirk Hammett , who played in Exodus and was a one @-@ time student of Joe Satriani . Hammett learned the songs on his flight to New York , and started recording the album with Metallica barely a month later . Metallica met producer Paul Curcio at Music America studios in Rochester , New York , and recorded the album in two weeks . Unable to afford a hotel during the recording sessions , the band members lived in people 's houses in Rochester and at the Music Factory in Jamaica , Queens , where Anthrax held rehearsals . Curcio had set the studio equipment as if he were recording an ordinary rock band . He thought the initial tapes sounded very distorted and tried to compensate by turning down the knobs . Metallica resented Curcio 's involvement because he seemed uninterested and had little impact on the sound . Although Zazula wanted Hammett to replicate Mustaine 's solos , Hammett 's guitar solos on the album were partially based on Mustaine 's original solos , with the first four bars of most solos written by Mustaine before his departure . Despite their differences , Mustaine 's contributions to the early years of Metallica were still acknowledged and he received four co @-@ writing credits on Kill ' Em All . Zazula was not satisfied with the initial mix because he thought the drums were too loud and the guitars were too low in the mix . The remix was done by sound engineer Chris Bubacz , according to Zazula 's instructions .

The final cost for the record was \$ 15 @, @ 000 , which nearly bankrupted Zazula . " This was mortgage money I 'm spending , not something I 've got put by I 'm going to invest , " he said later . Zazula had a hard time finding a distributor for the record , but he eventually convinced Relativity Records to distribute the album in the US and Canada , and Music for Nations in Europe . The band initially intended to title the album Metal Up Your Ass with the cover featuring a hand clutching a dagger emerging from a toilet bowl . However , Zazula convinced them to change this as he thought distributors would not stock it . The final cover featured the shadow of a hand letting go of a bloodied hammer . Burton was credited with coming up with the name Kill ' Em All ? referring to timid record distributors , saying , " Those record company fuckers ... kill ' em all ! " ? as a response to the situation . Ulrich thought Kill ' Em All was a good name , and Zazula agreed . Even though the original title was unused , the band did later release a " Metal Up Your Ass " T @-@ shirt with the proposed artwork . A live bootleg recording of a 1982 performance at the Old Waldorf , titled Metal Up Your Ass ( Live ) , featured the original cover artwork . Original pressings of the album came with an inner sleeve that included pictures and lyrics as well as a silver label on the vinyl . Subsequent pressings had a blank white sleeve and standard album label . The 1988 reissue re @-@ introduced the lyrics and photos . The original release can be distinguished by the words " Bang That Head That Doesn 't Bang " at the top of the back cover . This was dropped from the reissue . The phrase " Bang That Head That Doesn 't Bang " was dedicated to San Francisco fan Ray Burch , known for his headbanging at the band 's early shows .

= = Music and lyrics = =

Kill ' Em All features intricate riffing reminiscent of the NWOBHM bands played at high velocity . The album is considered crucial in the thrash metal genesis because it introduced fast percussion , low @-@ register chords , and shredding leads to the genre . Hammett played some pentatonic patterns in addition to his breakneck solos . Ulrich adopted a double time snare pattern that would become a mainstay on Metallica 's subsequent albums . Hetfield 's vocals evolved from the melodic wail on No Life ' til Leather to a rough @-@ edged bark and the entire band played faster and more accurately on Kill ' Em All . Music writer Joel McIver said Burton 's and Hetfield 's performances were nearly virtuosic , because of the smooth @-@ sounding bass of the former and the precise picking skills of the latter . According to journalist Chuck Eddy , the juvenile lyrical approach to topics such as warfare , violence and life on the road gives the album a " naive charm " . The musical approach on Kill ' Em All was in contrast to the glam metal bands who dominated the charts in the early Eighties . Because of its rebellious nature and Metallica 's street appearance , it appealed to fans who were not into the mainstream of hard rock .

" Hit the Lights " was based on an unfinished Leather Charm song written by Hetfield and Hugh Tanner . Hetfield had brought the majority of the song to Ulrich and the two worked out different arrangements . Performed at 160 beats per minute , " Hit the Lights " opens with fade @-@ in distorted guitars and a short shriek by Hetfield . The song is driven by the 16th note repeated main riff and the continuous eighth note snare drum hits . The lyrics celebrate heavy metal itself and are sung with short and high pitched vocals . The song ends with several lengthy guitar solos by Hammett , who performed cleaner and more melodic version of Mustaine 's leads . " The Four Horsemen " is a revamp of the Mustaine @-@ penned " The Mechanix " , which originally had lyrics about having sex at a gas station . A modified version of his composition with the original lyrics appeared on Megadeth 's debut Killing Is My Business ... and Business Is Good ! ( 1985 ) . Although Mustaine told Metallica not to use any of his music , Hetfield wrote lyrics about the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse and added a bridge and cleanly picked guitar solo in the middle . Mustaine said the bridge was inspired by the main riff in Lynyrd Skynyrd 's " Sweet Home Alabama " .

" Motorbreath " was written by Hetfield during his time in Leather Charm and tells about life on the road . The song is based on a four @-@ chord verse and a stop @-@ and @-@ start chorus . The most recognizable parts are Ulrich 's drum rolls in each chorus and the riff that accompanies Hammett 's solos . Because of its speed , the song requires fast picking by the bassist . " Jump in the Fire " was originally written by Mustaine , with lyrics about teenage sexual experience . Hetfield 's revised lyrics for the album were written from Satan 's point of view , describing how the devil watches people killing each other , and is sure they will go to hell for their actions . " Jump in the Fire " was released as a single in the UK in February 1984 to promote a UK tour with Venom . The single featured " Phantom Lord " and " Seek & Destroy " as live tracks , although they are actually studio recordings with fake crowd noise dubbed over them . The single 's cover art features an oil painting titled The Devils of D @-@ Day , created by artist Les Edwards in 1978 .

" ( Anesthesia ) - Pulling Teeth " is a bass solo by Burton , accompanied on drums by Ulrich . A staple of Burton 's live performances since his high school days in the band Agents of Misfortune , the instrumental track featured Burton 's distinctive " lead @-@ bass " style of playing , incorporating heavy distortion , use of wah @-@ wah pedal and tapping . Bubacz introduces the track as " Bass solo , take one " , informing listeners that the song was recorded in one take . " ( Anesthesia ) - Pulling Teeth " was the bass solo that Burton was playing when Hetfield and Ulrich first saw him at a gig . Hetfield stated : " We heard this wild solo going on and thought , ' I don 't see any guitar player up there . ' We were both counting the strings and I finally turned to Lars and said , ' Dude , that 's a bass ! ' Cliff was up there on stage with his band Trauma with a wah @-@ wah pedal and his huge mop of red hair . He didn 't care whether people were there . He was looking down at his bass , playing . " " Whiplash " was the album 's first single , issued on August 8 , 1983 . It features a swift rhythm line of straight 16th notes played at about 200 beats per minute . Hetfield and Burton performed with palm muted technique and precise metronomic control . The lyrics celebrate crowd energy and headbanging . Rock journalist Mick Wall wrote that " Whiplash " signified the birth of thrash metal , stating : " If one wishes to identify the very moment thrash metal arrived spitting and snarling into the world , ' Whiplash ' is indisputably it . "

" Phantom Lord " is a lyrical nod to devilry . The song begins with synthesized bass drone and contains a middle section with clean , arpeggiated guitar chords . Written by Mustaine , its central riff is in NWOBHM fashion . " No Remorse " is a mid @-@ tempo song which suddenly accelerates its tempo in the fifth minute . The song is about not feeling any remorse or sense of repentance during battle . " Seek & Destroy " was inspired by Diamond Head 's " Dead Reckoning " and is the first song Metallica recorded during the Kill ' Em All sessions . Hetfield wrote the main riff in his truck outside a Los Angeles sticker factory where he was working . Because of its simple , one @-@ line chorus , the song became a permanent setlist fixture and a crowd singalong . " Metal Militia " , one of the fastest songs on the album , is about heavy metal 's way of life and nonconformity . Mustaine composed the main riff , which emulates a marching army . The song ends with tramping feet and bullet ricochet in a fade @-@ out .

= = Reception = =

Kill ' Em All has received mostly positive reviews . Bernard Doe of Metal Forces described Kill ' Em All as one of the fastest and heaviest albums ever recorded , and remarked that the album is not for the faint @-@ hearted . Greg Kot of the Chicago Tribune acknowledged it as the " speed metal prototype " , but felt the lyrical replication of Judas Priest and the Misfits kept the album short from becoming a classic . In a retrospective review , Billboard praised Kill ' Em All for changing the face of popular music with its unique combination of punk and metal . AllMusic 's Steve Huey called it " the true birth of thrash " . He praised Hetfield 's highly technical rhythm guitar style and said that the band was " playing with tightly controlled fury even at the most ridiculously fast tempos " . Rob Kemp , writing in The Rolling Stone Album Guide , credited the album for consolidating the punk rock and heavy metal scenes , but felt that apart from " Seek & Destroy " and " ( Anesthesia ) - Pulling Teeth " , most of the album had the band " trying to look tough " over enthusiastic but unfinished riff @-@ based songs . Journalist Martin Popoff said Kill ' Em All differentiated from the debuts by Metallica 's Bay Area contemporaries because the fans could identify with Hetfield 's lyrics and the band 's appearance . Spin 's Chuck Eddy considered Kill ' Em All the inception of the " extreme metal mania " of the early 1980s . He noted the album did not receive much critical praise at the time of its release , but said it aged well and opened the doors for the less commercially successful bands . Although Mclver credits Venom 's Welcome to Hell ( 1981 ) as the first thrash metal album , he acknowledged Kill ' Em All as a major influence on the flourishing American heavy metal scene . Despite its " less @-@ than @-@ perfect " production , Loudwire 's Jon Wiederhorn said that Kill ' Em All sounds like an " influential slice of history " and stands on the same level as classic albums by Black Sabbath , Iron Maiden , and Judas Priest .

Kill ' Em All was released July 25 , 1983 , by Megaforce with an initial pressing of 15 @,@ 000 copies . Because of the label 's financial restrictions , the album was pressed in batches of 500 copies . Kill ' Em All had sold 17 @,@ 000 copies in the US by the end of the year . Similarly to punk rock acts , Metallica promoted its material through the tape trading network and independent music magazines such as Metal Forces in the UK and Metal Mania in the US . The album did not enter the Billboard 200 chart until 1986 , when it peaked at number 155 following Metallica 's commercial success with its third studio album Master of Puppets . The 1988 re @-@ issue on Elektra Records also charted on the Billboard 200 , peaking at number 120 . It was certified 3 × platinum by the Recording Industry Association of America ( RIAA ) in 1999 for shipping three million copies in the United States . Despite being the lowest selling Metallica studio album , it helped the band establish its image and build a fanbase in its inaugural years .

Kill ' Em All , as the first thrash metal album released in the US , had substantial impact on the emerging scene and inspired numerous bands with its aggression and austere seriousness . Guitarist Kerry King acknowledged Slayer was still finding its sound while Metallica had already determined its image and musical identity . Anthrax guitarist Scott Ian was impressed by the album 's heaviness and songwriting , and said it influenced him as much as the albums by Iron Maiden . Dream Theater 's drummer Mike Portnoy observed that Kill ' Em All surpassed the NWOBHM bands in terms of sheer velocity and cited Burton 's bass solo as the album 's peak . Guitarist Ulf

Cederlund of Swedish black metal band Morbid cited " Motorbreath " and " Metal Militia " as songs that influenced him as a young musician . Kill ' Em All was ranked at number 35 on Rolling Stone 's list of The 100 Greatest Albums of the ' 80s . Additionally , the album placed at number 54 on " The 100 Best Debut Albums of All Time " , a list compiled by the same magazine . Kerrang ! listed the album at number 29 among the " 100 Greatest Heavy Metal Albums of All Time " . In 2010 , Consequence of Sound ranked it number 94 among its " Top 100 Albums Ever " .

= = Touring = =

In late June 1983 , Metallica embarked on the two @-@ month Kill ' Em All for One tour with British co @-@ headliners Raven . The tour name melded the titles of the albums the two bands were promoting : Metallica 's Kill ' Em All and Raven 's All for One , both released on Megaforce . The two groups met in Zazula 's home two days before the tour began , and traveled in the same vehicle throughout the tour with five roadies and sound engineer Whitaker . The tour was set to conclude with three shows in San Francisco , thus Hetfield painted " No Life ' til Frisco " on the Winnebago tour bus . The tour had a few poorly attended gigs , such as a performance at the Cheers club in Babylon , New York , attended by some 50 people . After the conclusion of Kill ' Em All for One in early September , Metallica returned to El Cerrito to work on new material . Seven weeks after the tour ended , Metallica booked a number of performances at Bay Area clubs , the first a Halloween gig at the Keystone in Palo Alto . At the Country Club in Reseda , the group debuted " Fight Fire with Fire " and " Creeping Death " , along with an early version of " The Call of Ktulu " , then titled " When Hell Freezes Over " . Three days later , at a gig at The Stone in San Francisco , Metallica premiered " Ride the Lightning " , the title track from the upcoming album . In December , Metallica went on a short tour in the Midwest and eastern United States with a three @-@ man road crew : Whitaker , guitar technician John Marshall , and drum technician Dave Marrs . The January 14 , 1984 concert in Boston was canceled because the band 's equipment was stolen the night before .

In February , Metallica embarked on its first European trek with Twisted Sister , supporting Venom 's Seven Dates Of Hell tour . The tour was sponsored by Metallica 's UK distributor , Music For Nations , who released the " Jump in the Fire " EP for that occasion . The first show was at the Volkshaus in Zurich on February 3 . At the Aardschok Festival in Zwolle on February 11 , Metallica played in front of 7 @,@ 000 people , its largest audience at the time . The tour stretched through countries such as Italy , Germany , France , and Belgium , culminating in two sold @-@ out shows at the Marquee Club in London . After concluding the Seven Dates Of Hell tour , Metallica headed to Sweet Silence Studios in Copenhagen to record its sophomore album Ride the Lightning . By the end of the tour , Kill ' Em All had sold 60 @,@ 000 copies worldwide and Metallica began to gain international recognition .

= = 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  
Kirk Hammett ? lead guitar  
Cliff Burton ? bass guitar , backing vocals  
Lars Ulrich ? drums

= = = Production = = =

Jon Zazula ? executive producer  
Paul Curcio ? producer  
Chris Bubacz ? engineer  
Alex Perialas , Bob Ludwig ? mastering  
George Marino ? remastering  
Andy Wroblewski ? assistant engineer

= = Charts = =

= = Certifications = =