

# Pulling Your Strings: Metallica's Master of Puppets, an Iconic Thrash Metal Anthem



## Pulling Your Strings: Metallica's Master Of Puppets

by Anthony Tommasini

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When Metallica released their third studio album, *Master of Puppets*, in 1986, they cemented their status as one of the most influential and iconic heavy metal bands of all time. The album's title track, "Master of Puppets," is a sprawling, complex, and utterly captivating thrash metal masterpiece that has become one of the most recognizable and beloved songs in the genre.

The song's lyrics, written by vocalist and rhythm guitarist James Hetfield, explore the dark and dangerous world of addiction and the loss of control it can bring. The narrator of the song finds himself trapped in a cycle of addiction, feeling like his life is being controlled by an unseen force. As the

song progresses, the lyrics become increasingly desperate and hopeless, reflecting the protagonist's struggle to escape his addiction.

Musically, "Master of Puppets" is a tour de force, showcasing Metallica's incredible technical skill and songwriting prowess. The song opens with a haunting, arpeggiated guitar riff that sets the tone for the rest of the song. The verse riff is heavy and crushing, driven by Lars Ulrich's relentless drumming. The chorus is slightly more melodic, but still retains the song's aggressive edge. The song's solo section is one of the most iconic in metal history, with Kirk Hammett unleashing a flurry of blistering lead guitar lines.

The combination of Hetfield's haunting lyrics and Metallica's masterful musicianship make "Master of Puppets" an unforgettable and timeless track. The song has been praised by critics and fans alike for its originality, technical proficiency, and emotional depth. It has been ranked as one of the greatest metal songs of all time by numerous publications, including *Rolling Stone* and *Kerrang!*.

Beyond its musical merits, "Master of Puppets" has also had a significant cultural impact. The song has been featured in numerous films and television shows, and has been covered by a wide range of artists, from thrash metal bands like Megadeth and Slayer to mainstream rock acts like the Red Hot Chili Peppers. The song's iconic artwork, featuring a skeletal puppetmaster controlling a group of marionettes, has become one of the most recognizable images in metal history.

Nearly four decades after its release, "Master of Puppets" remains a towering achievement in heavy metal. Its complex lyrics, masterful musicianship, and enduring cultural impact have made it one of the most

influential and iconic songs in the genre. Whether you're a lifelong Metallica fan or a newcomer to heavy metal, "Master of Puppets" is a song that deserves to be heard and appreciated by all.

## **The Making of "Master of Puppets"**

The genesis of "Master of Puppets" can be traced back to 1984, when Metallica were touring in support of their second album, *Ride the Lightning*. During a soundcheck, Hetfield began experimenting with a new riff that would eventually become the song's opening arpeggio. The band immediately recognized the potential of the riff, and they began working on the song in earnest.

The band spent several months writing and refining "Master of Puppets." They wanted to create a song that was both musically complex and emotionally resonant. Hetfield drew inspiration from his own struggles with addiction, and the lyrics reflect his feelings of powerlessness and despair. The band also experimented with different song structures and arrangements, eventually coming up with the final version that appears on the album.

The recording of "Master of Puppets" took place at Sweet Silence Studios in Copenhagen, Denmark, with producer Flemming Rasmussen. Rasmussen was known for his work with other metal bands, such as Mercyful Fate and King Diamond, and he brought a wealth of experience to the project. The band spent six weeks recording the album, and they were meticulous in their approach. They wanted to capture the song's full potential, and they spent countless hours working on the arrangements and performances.

The final mix of "Master of Puppets" was completed in February 1986, and the album was released in March. The song was an instant hit with fans and critics alike, and it helped to establish Metallica as one of the leading bands in the thrash metal scene. The song has remained popular over the years, and it is still considered one of the greatest metal songs of all time.

### **The Meaning of "Master of Puppets"**

The lyrics of "Master of Puppets" are open to interpretation, but they are generally thought to be about the dangers of addiction and the struggle for freedom. The narrator of the song finds himself trapped in a cycle of addiction, feeling like his life is being controlled by an unseen force. He tries to break free from his addiction, but he is unsuccessful. The song ends with the narrator feeling hopeless and defeated, resigned to his fate.

The song's lyrics can also be interpreted more broadly as a metaphor for any situation in which a person feels powerless and controlled. This could include situations such as being in an abusive relationship, being trapped in a dead-end job, or struggling with mental illness. The song's message is that it is important to fight for your freedom, even when it seems impossible. Even if you are unable to break free from your addiction or your situation, you can still maintain your dignity and your will to live.

### **The Enduring Legacy of "Master of Puppets"**

"Master of Puppets" has had a profound impact on the world of heavy metal. The song's complex lyrics, masterful musicianship, and enduring cultural impact have made it one of the most influential and iconic songs in the genre. The song has been praised by critics and fans alike, and it has been ranked as one of the greatest metal songs of all time by numerous publications.

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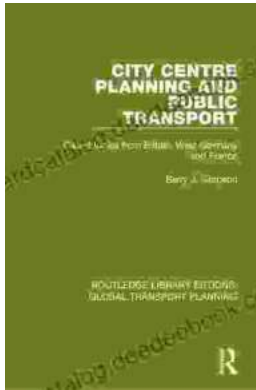
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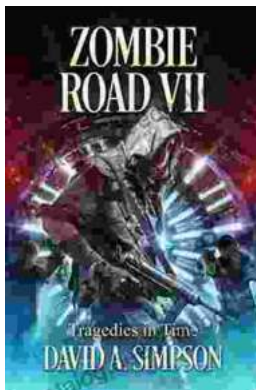
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