



# METALLICA

## MASTER OF PUPPETS

**METALLICA**  
**'MASTER OF PUPPETS'**  
(Elektra/Music For Nations)

**RELEASED:** 1986

**LINE-UP**

**JAMES HETFIELD** – rhythm guitar, vocals  
**LARS ULRICH** – drums  
**CLIFF BURTON** – bass, backing vocals  
**KIRK HAMMETT** – lead guitar

**PRODUCED BY**  
Flemming Rasmussen and Metallica

**MIXED BY**  
Michael Wagener

**RECORDED IN**  
Sweet Silence Studios, Denmark

**TRACK LISTING**  
**Battery** (James Hetfield, Lars Ulrich)  
**Master Of Puppets** (James Hetfield, Lars Ulrich, Cliff Burton, Kirk Hammett)

**The Thing That Should Not Be**  
(James Hetfield, Lars Ulrich, Kirk Hammett)

**Welcome Home (Sanitarium)**  
(James Hetfield, Lars Ulrich, Kirk Hammett)

**Disposable Heroes** (James Hetfield, Lars Ulrich, Kirk Hammett)

**Leper Messiah** (James Hetfield, Lars Ulrich)

**Orion** (James Hetfield, Lars Ulrich, Cliff Burton)

**Damage, Inc.** (James Hetfield, Lars Ulrich, Cliff Burton, Kirk Hammett)

# THE PUPPET MASTERS

As **Metallica** release their 11th studio album, *'72 Seasons'*, *Rock Candy Mag* goes all the way back to 1986 to re-examine what many fans consider to be their most important work, *'Master Of Puppets'*, with an in-depth interview with guitarist **Kirk Hammett** and a forensic investigation of the enormous 2017 *'Master...'* box set.

**METALLICA'S THIRD ALBUM, 'MASTER Of Puppets'**, was released worldwide on 3 March 1986 and it's fair to say that it not only changed the band's fortunes, but also drove the metal sub-genre of thrash squarely into the rock mainstream. It was the San Francisco band's first album since signing with major label Elektra on 12 September 1984 and, equally significantly, their first after being taken on by Cliff Burnstein and Peter Mensch from top management company Q Prime.

The signs had already been there that Metallica could be a game-changing act when their second album *'Ride The Lightning'* appeared on 27 July 1984. Despite being released by indie label Megaforce, the record's surprisingly sophisticated content had shown critics and fans alike that thrash could offer much more than just crushing power and relentless speed. *'Ride The Lightning'* eventually made the Top 100 in the US with precious little airplay, convincing vocalist and guitarist James Hetfield, drummer Lars Ulrich, guitarist Kirk Hammett, and bassist Cliff Burton that they really were on to something with their developing musical style.

**WRITING FOR 'Master Of Puppets'** began in the spring of 1985, with Hetfield and Ulrich starting the process at the band's rented house in El Cerrito, 16 miles from San Francisco, piecing together riffs and notions until there were at least the bare bones of song structures. Hammett and Burton then came on board as Metallica worked the ideas up as a band.

The major label signing meant that for the first time the group had at least something resembling proper money available to make *'Master Of Puppets'*. Ulrich spent quite a bit of time with Flemming Rasmussen looking for a studio on the US West Coast to record in. Rasmussen had produced *'Ride The Lightning'* at Sweet Silence studio in his and Lars's native Denmark, and had been chosen to work on the new Metallica album after a half-formed idea to use Rush bassist and vocalist Geddy Lee failed to materialise. The band originally wanted to record closer both to home and to their management team, but finding a place that compared favourably with the recording room at Sweet Silence proved impossible.

Working at night, Metallica recorded at Sweet Silence in Copenhagen between 1 September and 27 December 1985. Rasmussen recalls the whole process as being "a walk in the park", primarily because by the time they were in Denmark Metallica had already put a huge

amount of effort into the meticulous preparation of their new songs.

Rasmussen was supposed to mix *'Master Of Puppets'* but recording of the album overran and he had other projects he needed to attend to at the start of 1986. Hetfield, Hammett, and Burton left Denmark to return home to the States on Christmas morning 1985, and after making some last-minute changes Ulrich headed back for a San Francisco gig with the band on New Year's Eve. The album was eventually mixed by Michael Wagener.

**WHEN IT** was finally made available, *'Master Of Puppets'* was received rapturously by fans and critics alike, and has subsequently enjoyed a 148-week run on the *Billboard* 200 album charts in the US. It sold a staggering 300,000 copies in the first three weeks after release. The band bagged a four-month run of US shows opening for Ozzy Osbourne that began on 27 March and firmly implanted Metallica in the minds of the US metal public, before headlining their own *Damage, Inc.* tour from September through to February of 1987. The band's star was rising – and rising fast. A skateboarding accident suffered by Hetfield meant that he couldn't play guitar between 27 July and 26 September and roadie John Marshall filled in, but this didn't halt the group's progress. Tragedy struck a day later, though, on 27 September 1986, when Cliff Burton was killed after being thrown from his bunk and out of the window of the band's tour bus when it skidded off the road in Sweden.

On 8 November, Metallica unveiled new bassist Jason Newsted, formerly of Flotsam And Jetsam, at a gig at the Country Club, Reseda, California. Ironically, the last date of the *Damage, Inc.* tour took place in Gothenburg, Sweden, the country where Cliff Burton had died not five months previously.

**IN THE** 37 years since *'Master Of Puppets'* first appeared, the album has gone on to sell over six million copies in the US alone, and in 2015 was the first metal album ever to be selected by the prestigious US Library Of Congress for preservation in the National Recording Registry on account of being "culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant." Not bad for a record where the band "didn't set out to do anything, really," according to Kirk Hammett. "We were just trying to make the best album we possibly could and that's what came out. We were very, very fortunate that the outcome was what it was." 🦓