

Ball 'n' Chain (1967)

Janis Joplin

LISTEN FOR

- Cross between electric blues and psychedelic rock
- Blues/gospel-inspired vocal inflections
- Frequent stop time
- Extended improvisation

CREATION

Songwriters Willie Mae Thornton

Album *Cheap Thrills* (1968)

Version for this guide is taken from *Janis Joplin's Greatest Hits* (1973)

Label Columbia

Musicians Big Brother and the Holding Company

Recording Calgary, Alberta (live); July 4, 1970); stereo

MUSIC

Genre Psychedelic rock; blues-rock

Form 12-bar blues

Key G Minor

Meter 12/8 (

LISTENING GUIDE

Time	Form	Lyric Cue	Listen For
0:00	Intro (1)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two pick-ups in band followed by vocalization.
0:09	Instr. Verse (12)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Slow 12/8 meter: 4 beats per measure and 3 eighth notes per beat. Cross between electric blues and psychedelic sound: heavy distortion, gospel-style organ (with lots of reverb), dense muddy textures.
1:04	Verse 1 (12)	"Sittin' down by my window"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vocals enter and immediately command center of attention. Band retreats to background, emphasizes backbeat. Momentum builds in final 2 bars.
1:58	Verse 2 (12)	"Say whoa honey"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frequent stop time. Blues/gospel-inspired vocal inflections like melismas and added vocalizations.
2:53	Instr. Verse (12)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Electric guitar solo.
3:44	Verse 3 (10)	"Say whoa honey"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blues/gospel inflections and stop time even more exaggerated. Verse broken off after 10 bars.
4:30	Improvisation		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suspension of time for extended vocal improvisation that parallels function of sermon in gospel tradition, but in conversational, hippie fashion.

LYRICS

Sitting down by my window
Looking at the rain
Send a bomb in my world of night air
All around I felt it

All I could see was the rain
Something grabbed a hold of me honey
Felt to me, honey like a ball and chain
You know what I mean

Say whoa honey, this can't be
Just because I got to want your love, please
leave me be
Whoa honey, this can't be just because I got
to need ya daddy
Please don't ya let me down now
Please here ya goin' today, but I wanted to
love you
I wanted to hold you till the day I did, yes I
did, heh

Say whoa honey, this can't be
Not everything I wanted from you daddy tell
me,
I say who honey this can't be, na-na-na-,
I wonder if someone if can tell me
Tell me why
Just because I got to want your love

Honey, just because I got to need, need,
need your love
I say, I don't understand
Honey, when I wanna try and say hi
Try, try, try, try, try, try, try

Honey, when everybody in the world wants
the same damn thing
When everybody in the world, who needs
the same lone thing
When I wanna work for your love daddy
When I wanna try for you love daddy

I don't understand, how come, you're gone,
man

I don't understand why half the world is still
crying, man
When the other half the world is still crying
too, man
I mean, if you gotta care for one day, man
Say, maybe, you wanna care for 365 days,
right?

You ain't got it for 365 days, man
You got it for one day, man
Well, I'll tell you that one day, man, better
be your life, man
Because you know, you can say
"Oh man, you can cry about the other 364"

But your gonna lose that one day, man
And that's all you got
You gotta call that love, man
That's what it is

If you got it today, you don't wear it
tomorrow
Cause you don't need it
As a matter of fact, as we discovered on the
train
Tomorrow never happens

It's all the same fucking day, man
So you gotta, when you wanna hold
somebody
You gotta hold 'em like it's the last minute
of your life
You gotta hold

Holy
Cause some day some weight
Gonna come on your shoulders babe
Ball and chain

SOURCES

- Roberta Freund Schwartz, Course Notes for MUSC-309 at the University of Kansas.
- <http://www.metrolyrics.com/ball-and-chain-lyrics-janis-joplin.html>.