

I'm Sittin' on Top of the World (1953)

Les Paul and Mary Ford

LISTEN FOR

- 2/4 meter
- AABA form with two full reprises, the first instrumental, then vocal
- Switch to four beats a measure in A7 and A8, making it seem as if time slows down
- Technological innovations
 - echo effect on the guitar
 - multi-track layering of guitars and voices
 - highest guitar voices recorded at half speed and then sped up

CREATION

Songwriters Ray Henderson (music)
Sam M. Lewis, Joe Young (lyrics)

Label, Record Capitol F2400

Musicians Les Paul (electric guitars), Mary Ford (lead vocals)

Producer Les Paul

Recording 1953

Charts Pop 10

MUSIC

Genre Pop

Form AABA with two full reprises

Key G major (ends in A-flat major)

Meter 2/4 (A 7 and A 8 in 4/4)

"I'm Sittin' on Top of the World" (Les Paul and Mary Ford, 1953)

LISTENING GUIDE

Time	Form	Lyric Cue	Listen For
0:00	Intro (8)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Layered guitar melody Paul's trademark guitar echo
0:09	A1 (8)	"I'm sittin' on top"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multitrack harmony vocals, all sung by Mary Ford High guitar fills recorded at half tempo, then sped up, creating a "Chipmunk" quality
0:17	A2 (8)	"I'm quittin' the blues"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As before
0:25	B (8)	"Glory, hallelujah"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Harmony vocals continue, layered guitars create a descending cascade effect
0:34	A3 (8)	"I'm sittin' on top"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As before
0:43	A4 (8)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guitar solo adapted from music of earlier verses Les Paul's skill as a jazz soloist comes to the fore throughout this solo
0:51	A5 (8)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guitar solo continues
0:59	B (8)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guitar solo continues, high and fast "Chipmunk" guitar lines
1:08	A6 (8)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guitar solo continues
1:16	A7 (8)	"I'm sittin' on top"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As before, but now in 4/4 times, creating a sense that the music has slowed down Additional vocal backing
1:33	A8 (8)	"I'm quittin' the blues"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continues in 4/4
1:50	B (8)	"Glory, hallelujah"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Back to 2/4 meter, creating a sense that the music has sped up for the "hallelujah"
1:58	A9 (8)	"I'm sittin' on top"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The key modulates up a half step to A-flat major, increasing the energy and drive to the end of the song
2:06	Coda (8)	"I'm sittin' on top"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Showy ending adapted from last verse.

"I'm Sittin' on Top of the World" (Les Paul and Mary Ford, 1953)

LYRICS

I'm sitting on top of the world,
Just rolling along
Just rolling along.

I'm quitting the blues of the world,
Just singing a song
Just singing a song.

Glory, hallelujah, I just phoned the parson,
"Hey, Par, get ready to call!"
Just like humpty dumpty
I'm ready to fall.

I'm sitting on top of the world,
Just rolling along
Just rolling along.

I'm quitting the blues of the world,
Just singing a song
Just singing a song.

SOURCES

- John Covach and Andrew Flory, *What's That Sound*, 4th ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 2015), 52–53.
- http://www.aldielyrics.com/lyrics/les_paul_and_mary_ford/im_sitting_on_top_of_the_world.html