

## One (1989) Metallica

### LISTEN FOR

- Anti-war lyrics
- Prog-rock influences (complex form, taped sounds, dramatic arc)
- Virtuoso guitar soloing
- Instrumental interlude develops each time it appears

### CREATION

---

*Songwriters* James Hetfield, Lars Ulrich

*Album* ... *And Justice for All*

*Label* Elektra 69329

*Musicians* James Hetfield (lead vocals, backing vocals, rhythm guitar), Kirk Hammett (lead guitar), Jason Newsted (bass), Lars Ulrich (drums)

*Producer* Flemming Rasmussen, Metallica

*Recording* One on One Recording Studios (Los Angeles); 1988; stereo

*Charts* Pop 35

---

### MUSIC

---

*Genre* Thrash metal

*Form* Two parts

A = contrasting verse-chorus with instrumental interludes

B = simple verse

*Key* G major to E minor

*Meter* Variable (4/4, 3/4, and 2/4)

---

## LISTENING GUIDE

Time	Form	Lyric Cue	Listen For
0:00	A Intro I		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Taped war sounds: machine-gun fire, helicopter sounds establish the mood.</li> </ul>
0:20	Intro II (8+8+17)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rhythm guitar enters with subdued, rocking figure with occasional, pointed dissonances (0:28) creating an unsettled feeling.</li> </ul>
0:38			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lead guitar enters with lyrical melody and pointed, unsettling dissonance (0:47).</li> </ul>
0:55			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Drums enter and lock in. Occasional dissonances and punctuations.</li> </ul>
1:31	Instr. interlude (8)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Music remains quiet, but takes on more affirmative tone.</li> <li>The music returns as refrain several times.</li> </ul>
1:46	Verse 1 (16)	"I can't remember"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lead vocal enters, as mood turns back to quiet and mysterious.</li> </ul>
2:13	Chorus (4)	"Hold my breath"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Music contrasts strongly with verse, turning much heavier and more aggressive, using distorted guitar sounds and backup voices.</li> </ul>
2:20	Instr. interlude (8)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Affirmative, quiet music from the first interlude returns.</li> </ul>
2:23	Verse 2 (16)	"Back to the world"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mysterious, as before.</li> </ul>
3:02	Chorus (4)	"Hold my breath"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Heavy and aggressive, as before.</li> </ul>
3:09	Instr. interlude (16)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Twice through the recurring affirmative interlude, with a hint of shredding at end in lead guitar.</li> </ul>
3:37	Chorus (10)	"Now the world"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The heavier and more aggressive 4-bar chorus is repeated once and then extended by 2 bars.</li> </ul>
3:54	Instr. interlude (27)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mostly in 3/4 and in 4-bar phrases, based on the earlier interlude but now much heavier, though still melodic.</li> </ul>
4:20			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A machine-gun rhythm begins in the drums, preparing the way for the next section, while also recalling the taped sounds that began the track.</li> </ul>

Time	Form	Lyric Cue	Listen For
4:38	<b>B</b> Instr. transition (8)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Machine-gun" rhythm now played by entire band. This is the most aggressive and angular music so far in the track, and it sets up the mood for the second half of the song.</li> </ul>
4:55	Verse 1 (8)	"Darkness imprisoning me"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead vocal enters, as the mostly pastoral mood of the first half of the song is shattered by angry aggression.</li> </ul>
5:13	Verse 2 (4)	"Landmine has taken"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As before.</li> </ul>
5:22	Instr. finale (57)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mostly 4/4, this long section can be broken into sections of 12, 13, 14, and 19 measures. Note the extremely tight playing among band members.</li> <li>• Virtuoso shredding-style lead guitar.</li> <li>• Tight guitar duet (cf. forms of "Hotel California" and "Free Bird," which end with extended guitar solos) .</li> </ul>
5:46			
6:36			

## LYRICS

I can't remember anything  
Can't tell if this is true or dream  
Deep down inside I feel to scream  
This terrible silence stops me

Now that the war is through with me  
I'm waking up, I cannot see  
That there is not much left of me  
Nothing is real but pain now

Hold my breath as I wish for death  
Oh please, God, wake me

Back to the world that's much too real  
In pumps life that I must feel  
But can't look forward to reveal  
Look to the time when I'll live

Fed through the tube that sticks in me  
Just like a wartime novelty  
Tied to machines that make me be  
Cut this life off from me

Hold my breath as I wish for death  
Oh please, God, wake me

Now the world is gone, I'm just one  
Oh God, help me  
Hold my breath as I wish for death  
Oh please, God, help me

Darkness imprisoning me  
All that I see  
Absolute horror  
I cannot live  
I cannot die  
Trapped in myself  
Body my holding cell

Landmine has taken my sight  
Taken my speech  
Taken my hearing  
Taken my arms  
Taken my legs  
Taken my soul  
Left me with life in hell

## SOURCES

- John Covach and Andrew Flory, *What's That Sound*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 2015), 445–46.