

THE IDES OF MARCH MISTERY

Considering that the idea for the song title 'The Ides of March' and its physical – conceptual – connection to 'Wrathchild' can only be guessed at until the author of the song decidedly confirms the idea behind the song and its motifs, this chapter is about the term 'the Ides of March' only. To be sure, we're also talking about the song's inception and its similarity to Samson's 'Thunderburst', released a year before 'Killers' on their 1980 album 'Head On'.

According to Wikipedia, 'the Ides of March is the 74th day in the Roman calendar, corresponding to 15 March. It was marked by several religious observances and was notable for the Romans as a deadline for settling debts. In 44 BC, it became notorious as the date of the assassination of Julius Caesar which made the Ides of March a turning point in Roman history. The Romans did not number each day of a month from the first to the last day. Instead, they counted back from three fixed points of the month: the Nones (the 5th or 7th, nine days inclusive before the Ides), the Ides (the 13th for most months, but the 15th in March, May, July, and October), and the Kalends (1st of the following month). Originally the Ides were supposed to be determined by the full moon, reflecting the lunar origin of the Roman calendar. In the earliest calendar, the Ides of March would have been the first full moon of the new year.

In modern times, the Ides of March is best known as the date on which Julius Caesar was assassinated in 44 BC. Caesar was stabbed to death at a meeting of the Senate. As many as 60 conspirators, led by Brutus and Cassius, were involved. According to Plutarch, a seer had warned that harm would come to Caesar no later than the Ides of March. On his way to the Theatre of Pompey, where he would be assassinated, Caesar passed the seer and joked, "The Ides of March are come", implying that the prophecy had not been fulfilled, to which the seer replied "Aye, Caesar; but not gone." This meeting is famously dramatized in William Shakespeare's play Julius Caesar, when Caesar is warned by the soothsayer to "beware the Ides of March." The Roman biographer Suetonius identifies the 'seer' as a haruspex named Spurinna.

Whatever the motive for the song's title and its physical connection to 'Wrathchild' on the 'Killers' album, we can be certain that it wasn't written either during or just before the recording sessions, but dates from 1977 at the latest, possibly even earlier. An obvious example is, say, 'Metal for Muthas', a compilation album of NWOBHM tracks, where 'Wrathchild' is featured alone, without 'The Ides of March' as its intro. A second piece of evidence is that the song was used as the intro to Iron Maiden's concerts in early days, but also played before 'Drifter' according to a 1978 set list, and 'Sanctuary' in 1979, meaning it was not initially the intent to conceptually tie it in to 'Wrathchild'. However, how do we know the song came about no later than 1977? Namely, when Samson released their album 'Head On' in 1980 and featured their song 'Thunderburst' on it, Steve Harris wasn't too pleased. Although the liner notes on the vinyl name Steve Harris as the co-author of the song, together with all the members of Samson, it is clear to listeners today that what we hear in that song is what the general public knows as 'The Ides of March'.

Samson have a long history of sharing and swapping band members with Iron Maiden, and all fans are well aware of the fact that both Clive Burr and Bruce Dickinson (known then as Bruce Bruce) defected from Samson to Maiden, while Barry Graham Purkis, known as Thunderstruck, left Iron Maiden for Samson. Barry's tenure in Iron Maiden was short-lived, from their beginning to mid-1977. He then moved to Samson, with Clive Burr arriving in Maiden as a kind of exchange in early 1980, following the departure – for health reasons – of Barry's replacement Doug Sampson. There is audio evidence today that 'The Ides of March' was played live as early as 1978 and statements claiming it was even played in 1977, consisting of several different instrumental parts that the band played separately from the get-go. Work on the complete song in the final form we know today was finished in late 1977 or early 1978 and it then became the intro for Iron Maiden's early concerts. I'll explain how I came to this conclusion later in this chapter.

As Barry was a member of Iron Maiden in the first half of 1977, it's obvious that the song 'The Ides of March' had to date from at least then, as Barry and Steve Harris hung out at rehearsals and, like any other bands, worked on perfecting their songs. This is the direction Barry's comments lead in about his co-authorship of the song and the reasons for its inclusion on Samson's album.

During the 80s, indeed as soon as 'Head On' was released, it was clear to fans following both bands that something was up, because those in the UK remembered Iron Maiden performing or playing 'The Ides of March' as the intro, yet here it was, suddenly, on Samson's album. An even bigger surprise was in store just a year later when Iron Maiden released the track on their own new album. UK fans at the time knew well that the song was what they had been hearing Maiden perform, but with the advent of the Internet 20 year later, known history was rediscovered and fans the world over began to notice the same thing. This gave rise to countless discussions and debates, even involving former Iron Maiden members and Barry Graham Purkis himself, attempting to clear up who authored the song and what things happened the way they did.

Namely, on Samson's album, Steve Harris is named as the song's co-author – but on Iron Maiden's album, Harris is the only one to get a credit, all of which was duly registered with their regional copyright agency. So how did it happen, and how was it even possible?

Neither Steve Harris nor Rod Smallwood have really spoken about this question to the media, so fans officially have only one side of the story, but it's still a story much can be learned from, as well as some conclusions drawn. Given the fact that Iron Maiden's first two albums were mostly compiled of songs from the band's early days, watching recordings of early Maiden gigs from 1976 and 1977 we can notice that Steve Harris was being especially prolific as an author at the time. Most bands have a few original songs in the first year or so of their career. Iron Maiden had so many they were able to play a full concert using just their original material, which is exactly what they did in most cases. Considering they played a lot of pubs and clubs around London and later across the UK, and they played often, the fans quickly memorised their original songs and began to react to them. Mind you, songs like 'Wrathchild', 'Sanctuary', 'Charlotte the Harlot', 'Prowler', 'Floating' and the rest were played more slowly, with different arrangements and solutions, but structurally and compositionally, they were the same songs then that we know today as Maiden classics. It's not hard, then, to imagine a situation where Barry, on joining Iron Maiden, found Steve with a bunch of ideas, or that he also worked on them, as did the other band members. It's easy to

assume that 'The Ides of March' was among them, as yet nameless, composed with the intent of playing it as the band's live intro and possibly with no plans to include it on an album release. It was indeed used as an intro well before the first album came out, as intended.

In interviews he has given about joining Iron Maiden, Barry has repeatedly mentioned that he was chosen through an audition, but elsewhere, he told a slightly different story: *"Steve Harris was very directional with what he wanted. He used to come to my house and we'd sit in the bedroom going over the bass and drum parts and stuff like that. That was it. Then they just phoned me up and said, 'Yeah, you've got the gig', so I started playing with them."*



Iron Maiden 1977: Barry Purkis, Terry Wapram, Tony Moore, Steve Harris & Dennis Wilcock.

He continued with an explanation of why his tenure didn't last long: *"It didn't work out because they, at that stage, were going through a transient stage trying to find themselves, they couldn't find the formula. It was great, but you could see that Steve had a direction and he was the driving force. Some rehearsals sounded great, absolutely great, I've got some on reel-to-reel at home, they're probably worth a bit. We've got the whole set with 'Prowler', 'Sanctuary', 'Wrathchild', 'Iron Maiden', all of the early stuff."*

Barry elaborated on this interview for bookofhours.net/Samson in 2017, in another interview for knac.com, when he was asked what kind of music Iron Maiden played while he was in the band: *"The music was exactly as the material on the first two albums. I mean we would be doing stuff like 'Sanctuary', 'Charlotte the Harlot', 'Transylvania', 'Prowler' and other songs. The band was still trying to find itself and by that, I mean that Steve had not really formulated the definitive line-up he wanted. In actual fact, when I was with Iron Maiden, we also had a keyboard player. It was very much work in progress. The things that stood out for me about Steve was that I had quite obviously been used to rehearsing with bands in getting a band ready for gigs, etc. But I had never just worked out purely the bass and drums and that's what Steve used to do. He used to come to my house where the kit was and we would run through bass and drum parts and make them really tight and precise. And that was the first time I had ever come across that kind of working and I would imagine that's very much the way that he and Nicko work these days."*

Also, for bookofhours.net, Barry tried to convey his version of how 'Thunderburst' came about and the reason for two versions of the same song being released on two different albums, by two different bands, and with different authors credited: *"I came up with a drum pattern that did that constant rolling. I would have ideas and Steve would then transpose that, because I don't play guitar. It was the same with Samson... I'm unable to pick a guitar up and show my idea, I have to sit there and go 'du-du du-du du, no that's the wrong note' and we'd go through it like that. So that's how it came about. And I had a drum pattern and I was trying to explain the chords to go down on the drum pattern 'cause the whole thing goes around the drum pattern. I think we played it a couple of times with Iron Maiden as an opening track. Just an intro, it was a throwaway thing, not really a track. The story behind that was that after we'd recorded 'Head On' and they'd recorded*

'Killers', Clive Burr went round to Paul's [Samson] house to listen to the new Samson album and in turn took the new 'Killers' album with him. So Paul put on side one and they were 'Yeah, it's great stuff,' turned it over and up came 'Thunderburst' and Clive nearly fell off his seat and went, 'Fuck, that's 'The Ides of March', '. Paul was like, 'What the hell is he talking about?' So anyway, long story short, I got summoned to EMI and there was Rod Smallwood and Steve Harris sitting there and a lawyer, solicitor, and an EMI representative and just me sitting there. So, what was decided in the end was that Steve Harris would share 50-50 the publishing rights on the Samson version of it, but I never got sweet F.A. on the Iron Maiden version..."

What's our conclusion from this interview? Judging by Barry's words, the song was being performed as early as the first half of 1977, while Barry was still in Iron Maiden, and was created when Barry came up with a specific way of playing the drums: constant rolling over all the drum elements that, liberally interpreted, can be imagined as the echo of thunder (a possible inspiration behind Samson's title for the song, 'Thunderburst'). He also says that in spite of not knowing how to play a guitar, he tried to explain the chords he imagined for the song to Harris, and that Steve later implemented this and built the song as we know it today. Since Harris and Smallwood have never told their story of the song in public barring the bare legal details, with respect to Barry and his creative processes, we should note the following:

1. If Barry claims the song was played live in 1977, but we know it wasn't completed until early 1977, this means that the only part that was played live originally was the section recorded by Samson. The second part of the song, where the solo begins was added later.
2. Given that both in the band's early days and later, Harris was the primary author, while Barry collaborated on writing Samson songs mostly because the whole band co-signed as authors on all the songs, the more likely version is that Barry collaborated on the song by playing the famed drum rolls over Steve's chords, creating the section of the song that would become disputed later on.
3. When Barry was invited to EMI and, according to him, was confronted by Steve Harris, Rod Smallwood and their *lawyer*, the natural response in such important matters – if he indeed co-wrote 'Thunderburst' – would have been to call in a lawyer of his own, and

- only then sit down and begin and discussions or negotiations about credits and copyright.
4. If an agreement was reached that Barry and the rest of the band were merely co-authors of half the material contained in Samson's song, rather than equal parts, while Steve Harris is the full author of 'The Ides of March', then the question is really *which* part of the song did they write? Namely, Samson's version has a light intro that is not present on Iron Maiden's version, and an attempt at a choir-like sound that sounds more like vocal wallpaper with no real lyrics, just the vowel 'a'.
 5. If all the members of Samson are the co-authors of the song, why was only Barry called in to a meeting and why did none of the other members – co-authors? – complain?
 6. If Barry stands by his claim that he co-wrote the song, which he obviously does considering he talks about it to the media, how and why did he agree to the final arrangement?
 7. Why didn't he contact Steve Harris before 'Thunderburst' was released, since he was fully able to and had the opportunity? Co-writing credits are not the only way for a collaborative work to be released. It would have been more natural for Barry to call Harris before the release and ask him if Samson could release the song and credit him. Also, if the song was mainly composed by him and Harris, why are the other members of Samson also credited for it?

In his analysis of 'Thunderburst', Henrik Johansson of bookofhours.com states that the song was written in different keys and adds that *"one chord in the riff pattern is altered in 'Thunderburst' and a choir-like thing is added on the end of the song"*. He also spotted another interesting thing. Namely, in most countries, musical copyright works through a 50-50 split for music with lyrics, so Henrik asked Barry if that was why he added lyrics to one part of the song. Barry asked in surprise *'are there???'* to which the answer was yes, and they say *'Aaaa, Aaaa'* and exclaimed *"That's me! That's just me going 'Aaaaaa', just me doing the singing mask."* Henrik Johannsson's conclusion is that since 'The Ides of March' has no lyrics, it doesn't have Barry credited as the co-author. Barry's response was *"It's just that I wanted to put some backing vocals behind it. It was actually going to be credited on the sleeve as 'the singing mask'."*

In investigating all of the above, I even spoke to Barry himself and he stands by his story, but summing up and analysing much of the information I came across led me to conclude that, after collaborating with Harris on, let's call it arranging the early Iron Maiden songs, Barry took the idea of this song with him to Samson, being of the opinion that he also had the right to continue working on it. It does appear, however, that Steve Harris found out about the intent to release 'Thunderburst' – specifically, he heard the already recorded but as yet unreleased song. Barry was therefore summoned to the big meeting at EMI, where he was told legal action would ensue against him and agreeing to the terms, I've mentioned was a compromise of sorts to get the situation more or less resolved. This version of events seems more likely for many reasons, and in fact answers many of the questions:

1. This is why, for example, all of (soon to be credited) Samson weren't invited to the EMI meeting, only Barry.
2. This is why there were no big media controversies about the case in the 1980s.
3. This is why Barry didn't retain a lawyer and embark on a lawsuit.
4. This is why Steve Harris released his own version in 1981 and credited only himself.
5. This is why Barry never contested Steve's exclusive authorship of 'The Ides of March'.
6. This is why things were handled without too much fuss or polemics, until wider use of the Internet led some fans to rediscover old, stale stories.

'The Ides of March' hasn't really been played live since the 'Killers' release, but it was played as a recording during the intro to the 'Eddie Rips Up the World Tour' in 2005. It has been covered by bands like Arch Enemy, Bloodsucker, Disharmonic Fields, Elder Gods, Katechon, Steel Prophet and the projects Metal Allegiance and Metal Masters 2014.

Thirty-odd years on, when Maiden had become truly big, while on the other hand the music industry began to implode, various accusations of co-opting authorship of many of their early songs began to fly around. Paul Mario Day, the band's first singer, publically announced that he had written the music and lyrics to 'Strange World', while Barry Graham Purkis piggybacked on his

online explanation with the following: *"I've never met you Paul... but man can I sympathise with you... This is exactly how I feel about the co-written 'Thunderburst' and Iron Maiden's 'Ides of March'... I was instructed to give Mr Harris songwriting (therefore publishing) on 'Thunderburst' on the Samson album by EMI Representation, Iron Maiden management and legal team... whereas I was told in no uncertain terms that should I push for a songwriting credit on Iron Maiden version... I should prepare for a highly contested legal wrangle... Nice... My one question is... if Steve Harris insists that he wrote the composition, regardless of the arrangement, (they are in reality exactly the same song) why the fuck did he not push for TOTAL songwriting credit on both Samson and Iron Maiden versions. Instead of settling for half..? It sure as hell wasn't out of the kindness of his heart.... So, like I said I SO sympathise with all of the other ex-Maidens that didn't ever get to see their TRUE input into this band at the time it mattered most... the early days without money, a deal, or even a firm fan base... that's when as a working musician you have to be dedicated and true... making sure you can borrow enough money to be able to get enough petrol in the car to make rehearsals... Only to be written out of the equation years later... 'Up the Irons'... indeed."*

On the other side, another former band member – Paul Di'Anno – clearly stood by Harris in this case, although he hasn't spared Steve from criticism when he felt it was warranted, saying this, among other things: *"I mean, how can you come up with the idea of a song which you never written, and claim that it's yours? It was not - it was Steve Harris's, and I'll defend him until the death on that one. There's no bloody way, that's just total bullshit or fantasy. That's no 'The Ides of March,' which sounds nothing like any other Samson track - so how you would even come up with something like that is so alien. And to come out with that bullshit, I'm sorry, I just thought it was a load of crap. I get angry at that - it really makes me angry, because that's Steve's song. My boys also play that [live], to give me a breather, ha, ha..."*

To close the subject, here's a YouTube comment from a fan: *"From Harris' angle... all of these guys left the band/walked out and let Harris down, then years later 'I wrote that'. It's a bit like having a child and walking away when its 3 months old. Then, years later, when the kid is a multi-millionaire, saying 'This is my child, look how fantastic he is, all thanks to me!'"*

In spite of everything, every story has two sides and every side tells a dose of the truth. In my books, I strive to find the truth by looking at all angles, and I'm planning a separate book on this subject which will cover the period 1975-1979.

However, while the question of the exact timeline of 'The Ides of March' is resolved up to a point, at least its initial form, one thing has always been left out. From listening to certain bootleg recordings, it is clear that 'The Ides of March' was played as an intro over the sound system, implying it must have been recorded at some point, but no one seems to have been aware of this nor have Iron Maiden ever talked about it. You can tell it's a recorded track and not a live performance from the sound and volume in comparison to the later live concert, not to mention that it would be weird for the DJ to announce Iron Maiden while they play the song on stage. Namely, the DJ's voice announcing the show is heard while 'The Ides of March' is already playing – for example on the bootleg recorded at Wakefield Unity Hall on 07/02/1980.

At the 05/10/1979 Ruskin Arms concert, there is no DJ announcement, and although there are indications 'The Ides of March' was pre-recorded here too, it was in fact played live. Steve Newhouse, the Killer Krew's earliest member, claims they played it live until it was finally recorded for 'Killers', but several major bootleg collectors have expressed doubts about this. It is already known that Maiden spent time in the studio on several occasions before they recorded their debut album, not least to record the legendary 'Soundhouse Tape' in late 1978 – and that one does not contain 'The Ides of March', at least not officially. Considering the band signed a deal with EMI in late 1979, it logically follows that the album recordings did not take place before this, and the band had a hard time getting the money together for the 'Soundhouse Tape'.

We're also aware of the 'Metal for Muthas' compilation recorded in October 1979. From what we know, only 'Wrathchild' and 'Sanctuary' were recorded and released in February 1980, although there is of course the possibility 'The Ides of March' was also recorded and simply never mentioned. There are recordings from the 'Friday Rock Show' session in 1979, but four songs were recorded there and 'The Ides of March' was not one of them. What's left to us? Maiden had some recording sessions with Gary Edwards for the 'Axe Attack' compilation on 26 and 27 November 1979, and recorded 'Burning Ambition' and 'Running Free', but it's difficult to say whether Harris, Di'Anno, Murray and

Sampson recorded anything else. As Barry Purkis gave me some insights into the list of songs recorded during a band rehearsal in 1977, where 'The Ides of March' is again absent, the search narrowed down to two already mentioned recordings and a potential third. Namely, as several bootlegs exist with 'The Ides of March', dated June 1980, some months after the release of the band's debut album, we must remember that Iron Maiden entered the studio to record 'Sanctuary' in mid-1980, so it could be released and added to the US edition of the album that May. In theory, it's possible that 'The Ides of March' – or at least a version of it – was recorded then, although the bootlegs would have to be checked to identify a timeframe for when the live performance of the song was changed to playback on the live bootleg from 31/05/1980, made at Saint Austell, Cornwall Coliseum UK, 'The Ides of March' was played over the speakers, followed immediately with the band's live performance of 'Sanctuary', which possibly implies that the songs were recorded together and thus also played together. Moreover, it's easily possible that Maiden simply recorded 'The Ides of March' twice and just never mentioned this in public. On the Wakefield recording from February 1980, 'Wrathchild' follows 'The Ides of March', while on the 16/06/1980 audio it is 'Sanctuary'.

We should also mention Andy Scott, guitarist of the band Sweet, who was one of the potential producers of Iron Maiden's first album and who they were supposed to record their new singles with. The December 1979 session, by now featuring the line-up Di'Anno, Smith, Stratton, Harris and Burr, ultimately turned out to be a waste of time. Iron Maiden wanted to improve the recorded drums for 'Running Free'. Andy was dropped when he began pressuring Harris to use a guitar pick instead of his fingers, as well as for demanding guarantees that he would produce the entire album before they had even started recording the single. There were doubts that the mystery recording was redone then with Clive and Dennis, and ultimately, I decided to verify this. I asked Dennis Stratton and he responded *"No, all this was done before I joined. And Steve liked the idea of an intro tape when we first started playing as a band"*. This key piece of information automatically removes all sessions with the first album line-up and the period of late 1979 and 1980, cutting the likely candidates down to the 'Metal for Muthas' and 'Axe Attack' studio sessions. As 'Metal for Muthas' took place on 24/10/1979 and 'Axe Attack' a month later, on listening to all the available bootlegs I've concluded that the recorded 'The Ides of March' doesn't appear on any of them before

Stjepan Juras - Killers

the 'Axe Attack' session, making 25-26/11/1979 the most likely date of recording. Also, only rhythm guitars were laid down for the second part of the song, no solos, so since the line-up at the time was transitional and included only Dave Murray on guitar, the probable plan was to record the guitars later on. This makes 'The Ides of March' the first actual recording of the song, made before Samson's 'Thunderburst', and it will probably remain the only unreleased Iron Maiden studio recording. Knowing Harris and Rod, I have no doubt he took all the necessary steps to assert his own copyright at the time.

And as it happens in the tensest of thrillers, I had concluded this chapter and the book was at the printer's, when a fan (who wishes to remain anonymous for the time being) provided me with some information about the existence of a reel-to-reel track on which this song was recorded, under the working title 'Maiden March'. The name had nothing to do with March, the third month of the year, but was intended to indicate that this song was Iron Maiden's war march, their song before 'battle', the intro before going on stage. There was no way around it - I had to stop the presses and wait for the photo of the real, physical track, proof it exists and that it's in the possession of a collector who is trusted by fans the world over and has earned that trust. Someone who has never presented a fake and tried to sell it as authentic. You can see the photo for yourselves now, in this very book, as proof that it exists and that it was originally called 'Maiden March', but you'll have to wait for my future book 'The Mystery of Benjamin Breeg' to read more about how it all came about'

