

Video debut: Judas Priest at US Festival, 1983

(<http://www.invisibleoranges.com/2013/11/judas-priest-live-83/>)

By

Invisible Oranges Editor

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With the volume up and your eyes closed, this video of Judas Priest performing “You’ve Got Another Thing Coming” is a great performance of a classic song by a great band. There are four-second-long Halford screams and a masterful call and response with the crowd. There’s a groove that makes headbanging irresistible, great riffs, and a solo that make you want to start your own band. The whole thing is timeless, like all good rock music is.

With your eyes open, it’s Judas Priest performing at an enormous festival in 1983, and as the L.P. Hartley line goes, “The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there.” Here’s a rundown:

- *The drum riser is over 8 feet high*
- *Halford, Downing, and Tipton are all wearing leather vests accented with some kind of silvery mesh.*
- *Bombastic Halford hand gestures circa 1983, highlights at 0:45, 2:42, 2:48, 3:00*
- *Female fan, big '80s hair, air drumming, at 1:02*
- At 1:05 Halford sings, “That’s right, here’s where the talking ends,” and then acts out the talking with hand gestures
- Little Halford foot kick at 2:55
- Apropos of nothing, Halford hisses like a cat and makes a scratching gesture at 3:28
- At 3:40, all I can think of is [this](http://youtu.be/sOngjkJTMaA?t=9m9s) (<http://youtu.be/sOngjkJTMaA?t=9m9s>).
- Medium Halford foot kick at 4:11
- No discernible large Halford foot kicks
- Creepy K.K. Downing lip licking at 4:35

...and I’m stopping there, because I feel like I’m beating up on one of my favorite bands. The reason this video looks jarring is because metal was already splitting into two sides when it was shot. One side would fill stadiums, arenas, and festivals with pop-friendly hooks and crowd participation-oriented [choruses](#) (<http://youtu.be/0UIB9Y4OPPs>). The other would spend the rest of the decade going [hard](#) (<http://youtu.be/YcfIgok1mMl>), led by bands like Metallica and Slayer, and you’d never see them kicking their feet while they played. As to which side Judas Priest chose, well, aside from the technological prophecy of “Electric Eye”, remember that they were now closer to [this](http://youtu.be/JhY9GOhFwN4) (<http://youtu.be/JhY9GOhFwN4>) than to dense songs about [Satan](#) (<http://youtu.be/zC8qK-WDALQ>), Soviet [oppression](#) (http://youtu.be/H_mpt8xyZVI), the [apocalypse](#) (<http://youtu.be/Pu5k7HfrYSQ>), and [gay rights](#) (<http://www.invisibleoranges.com/2011/11/rob-halfords-raw-deal>).

Fittingly, Metallica themselves were on a month-long break between tour dates when this was filmed, with their debut not even on the record store racks yet. Judas Priest, once one of the fastest and heaviest bands on the planet, were a little old British sports car, soon to be lapped by their own race-bred and turbocharged mutant progeny, yet they were more popular than ever.

Differences between eras and performing styles aside, Halford was also giving an appropriately-sized performance for a festival attended by more than six times the number of people who've attended, say, every year of Maryland Deathfest combined. (Specifically, more than 600,000 people.) Priest needed to be on their game too, because it was the festival's official heavy metal day: Quiet Riot, Mötley Crüe, Triumph, Ozzy, Van Halen, and Scorpions also performed. Triumph admittedly isn't the most metallic band ever, but remember, it was '83, and it's not like Metallica, Slayer, Venom, or Manilla Road were going to get the call. Halford seems to break character at times too, with grins and stares towards people at the side of the stage, suggesting that he knows he's being over the top.

Regarding the festival itself, it took place on Memorial Day weekend in '83, and was the second and last US Festival. It's pronounced "us", like the pronoun, because it stood for "Unite Us in Song." After extensively researching the festival via its Wikipedia page, I know that Apple co-founder Steve Wozniak threw the whole shebang with lucre from his own pocket, which is staggering because Van Halen alone was paid one and a half million dollars to appear. (On a related and very Van Halen note, they had a contractual clause requiring that they be paid more than any other band on the bill.) Stealing from an old joke, Woz made a small fortune from the fest because he started out with a large fortune. It was all meant to be a celebration of people, computers, music, and culture, but a party seems to have broken out instead. Say what you will, though; Woz knew how to throw a fucking party.

Eyes closed or eyes open, with or without context and regardless of era, this performance shines. "You've Got Another Thing Coming" was made for arenas, and so was this model of Judas Priest. Perhaps it's better to judge the whole affair by the crowd's reaction; they were having a blast, and what else could you want from a live performance? I choose to watch with my eyes open, and I wish I could've been there: that chick at 5:22 is hot. I kinda hope she got knocked up in some dude's Firebird after the show, so that I could meet one of her daughters at a Priest show today, and because songs like "You've Got Another Thing Coming" are timeless, like all good rock music. Some aspects of the performance won't have changed [anyway](http://youtu.be/5omdlkrx3Yg?t=1m37s) (<http://youtu.be/5omdlkrx3Yg?t=1m37s>).

— Richard Street-Jammer

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US Festival 1983: Days 1-3 was directed by Glen Aveni and produced by Unison; it [comes out on 12/3 via MVD](#) (<http://www.seeofsound.com/p.php?s=MVD5946D>) and will be available to rent or download at iTunes. There are some other preview vids available online, too: [JP playing "Breaking the Law"](#) (http://www.brooklynvegan.com/archives/2013/11/watch_judas_pri.html) at BrooklynVegan; [U2 playing "Sunday Bloody Sunday"](#) (<http://www.rollingstone.com/music/videos/u2-at-the-us-festival-in-1983-premiere-20131119>) at Rolling Stone; [Stray Cats playing "Rock This Town"](#) (<http://www.purevolume.com/news/PREMIERE-Stray-Cats-Rock-This-Town-1983-US-Festival-Video>) at Purevolume; and [the Clash playing "Should I Stay or Should I Go"](#) (<http://www.spin.com/articles/the-clash-should-i-stay-or-should-i-go-us-festival-1983-dvd-video>) at Spin.

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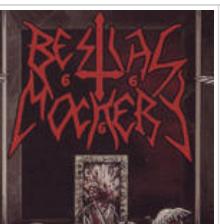
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