

# Def Leppard: To Hell and back with *Hysteria*

"WE KEPT DOING IT again and again," says lead singer Joe Elliott of the group's first album since *Pyromania*. "We didn't like this and we didn't like that. The album wasn't as good as the last, so we just didn't release it. The decision cost us a lot of money, but we don't care. It's the final product that counts. I'd rather go down in the history books than the profit and loss columns."

It was well worth the wait. "We could have easily made 'Son Of *Pyromania*' but that wouldn't have been good enough," says Elliott. "We want to show that we can grow as a band. We were so convinced that we were going to put out an album better than the last. 'We haven't been here for a while,' we said to each other, 'let's give them something worthwhile.'" The group's firm conviction triumphed over near-tragedy and adversity. Three years ago, Def Leppard had sold six million copies of *Pyromania* in the U.S. alone, and only Michael Jackson's *Thriller* kept it out of the No. 1 spot. They had played to millions of fans on their world tour. Come late 1984, however, the Lepps went through a lifetime of bad news. The group set about working on a new album, and the false starts became a nightmare. First choice of producer *Pyromania*' but that unavailable...Second choice incompatible...First two engineers, ditto...Self-production difficult. Then, a car crash takes drummer Rick Allen's left arm...A year later, producer Mutt Lange (returning choice no. 1) damages his knee in a crash...Elliott contracts the mumps during vocal overdubs.

*Pyromania*'s follow-up seemed to be on permanent hold.

"We all tried very hard to save face, we were all smiling and laughing at each other, trying to work," says Elliott. "But it was very difficult to concentrate on what we were doing. We ended up going through nine or 10 months of lethargic nowhere-ness."

Their stupor shattered as Allen made a miraculous recovery. Determined to continue playing, the drummer developed a brilliant left foot technique to go along with a specially designed Simmons electronic drum kit. "Rick came in one day and played 'When The Levee Breaks' all the way through," the group recalls. "The guy had done it! From then on it was like a massive weight had been lifted from our shoulders."

Lange and Elliott healed quickly as well. A fragmented assembly of songs, dubbed *Hysteria*, became a cohesive whole. "We came back with a completely different frame of mind," says the singer. "We had a lot fresher attitude, the way it should be when making a new album. We didn't have a problem creating a flow because we were used to taking songs apart and putting them back together again. Every song is credited to everybody in the band — we all did our bit for every song."

The group courageously went on tour last summer, adding a second drummer for backup. He was history after four warm-up shows. Debuting on the road were two new songs, and it was apparent the quinter was stronger than ever.

Time spent working on

the new album also gave the rest of the group a chance to hone their skills. Further developed on *Hysteria* is the two-guitar sound of Steve Clark and Phil Collen, and Joe Elliott emerges a seasoned vocalist.


"I want to keep getting better as a singer," he says. "Over the last three or four years I basically found my voice. I can handle the low stuff and make it sound thick, like Joe Cocker. We were born two miles apart, so maybe that's got something to do with it. I've never had much call to sing with the band like that before, but I do a lot of it on this album."

DEF LEPPARD's first appearance on record was in 1979 with the self-produced EP, *Getcha Rocks Off*. They signed to Mercury and released a critically acclaimed debut album in 1980. On

Through *The Night*, spearheaded England's new wave of hard rock bands. It went gold in America. Mutt Lange produced its million-selling followup, *High 'n' Dry*, which featured the breakthrough hit, *Bringin' On The Heartbreak*. *Pyromania*, with Lange again on board, was released in early 1983. *Rock Rock*, *Photograph*, *Foolin'*, among others, kept it on the charts for nearly two years.

Now, after three years...12 songs, 62 minutes. Elliott: "We could have put out a dummy double record and made a lot more money, or we could have left off four tracks and had a 45-minute album, but so what! We're not businessmen, we're just concentrating on being a band."

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