

# Judas Priest Breaking The Law



Judas Priest *Breaking the Law* is not merely a song title; it encapsulates a significant moment in the history of heavy metal music and the cultural landscape of the late 20th century. Judas Priest, a British heavy metal band formed in 1969, emerged as one of the pioneering forces in the genre. Their song "Breaking the Law," released in 1980 as part of the album *British Steel*, has become an anthem for rebellion and defiance, resonating deeply with fans and influencing countless musicians. This article delves into the significance of "Breaking the Law," its impact on the music industry, and the controversies that have surrounded it.

## Understanding "Breaking the Law"

"Breaking the Law" is a track that epitomizes the essence of heavy metal: themes of rebellion, frustration, and the quest for freedom. The song features a driving guitar riff, powerful vocals, and a catchy chorus, making it an instant classic.

## Thematic Elements

The lyrics of "Breaking the Law" reflect the disillusionment of individuals feeling trapped by societal

norms and expectations. Key themes include:

- Rebellion against Authority: The protagonist of the song grapples with feelings of entrapment and seeks liberation through defiance.
- Societal Discontent: The lyrics highlight the struggles of individuals facing economic hardship, illustrating a broader commentary on societal issues.
- The Quest for Freedom: The chorus, with its energetic call to "break the law," serves as a rallying cry for those who feel oppressed.

## **Musical Composition**

"Breaking the Law" is characterized by its iconic guitar work and structure. Key elements include:

- Memorable Guitar Riff: The song opens with a distinctive guitar riff that has become synonymous with Judas Priest.
- Powerful Vocals: Rob Halford's soaring vocals convey both urgency and emotion, embodying the song's rebellious spirit.
- Dynamic Arrangement: The blend of heavy metal instrumentation with a catchy melody makes it accessible to a wide audience.

## **Cultural Impact and Legacy**

Since its release, "Breaking the Law" has had a profound influence on both music and culture. Its themes and sound have inspired generations of musicians and fans alike.

## **Influence on Heavy Metal**

Judas Priest is often credited with shaping the sound and image of heavy metal. "Breaking the Law" played a pivotal role in:

1. Establishing Heavy Metal Aesthetics: The song and its accompanying music video helped to popularize the leather-and-denim look that became synonymous with the genre.
2. Paving the Way for Future Artists: Many bands have cited Judas Priest as a major influence, and "Breaking the Law" remains a staple in the playlists of heavy metal bands worldwide.

## Commercial Success

"Breaking the Law" contributed significantly to the commercial success of British Steel, which was a landmark album for Judas Priest. The album itself marked a turning point for the band, as it achieved:

- Mainstream Recognition: The album became one of the first heavy metal records to achieve commercial success on a large scale.
- Chart Performance: "Breaking the Law" reached notable positions on music charts, further solidifying the band's reputation.

## Controversies and Challenges

Despite its popularity, "Breaking the Law" has been embroiled in controversies that highlight the complexities of interpreting artistic expression.

### The 1990s Trials

One of the most infamous controversies linked to "Breaking the Law" occurred in the early 1990s when Judas Priest faced a lawsuit related to a tragic incident involving two teenagers in Reno, Nevada. The

case raised questions about the influence of music on behavior and the responsibilities of artists.

- The Incident: In 1985, two teenagers attempted suicide, with one dying as a result. Their families claimed that the song contained subliminal messages that incited the boys to take their lives.
- The Lawsuit: The families sued Judas Priest for wrongful death, asserting that the band was responsible for the boys' actions.
- Court Ruling: After a lengthy trial, the court dismissed the case, stating that there was no evidence linking the music to the boys' actions. This case sparked a nationwide debate about censorship, artistic freedom, and the influence of music on youth.

## **Censorship and Parental Concerns**

"Breaking the Law," along with other heavy metal songs, has faced scrutiny from parents and advocacy groups concerned about the potential negative influence of music on young listeners.

- Parental Advisory Labels: In response to growing concerns, the music industry introduced parental advisory labels to warn consumers about explicit content in music.
- Ongoing Debate: The discussions surrounding the song's themes and their interpretation continue to this day, as new generations of listeners grapple with the implications of heavy metal music.

## **Live Performances and Cultural Relevance**

"Breaking the Law" remains a staple in Judas Priest's live performances, continuing to resonate with audiences worldwide. The song's energetic delivery and engaging lyrics create an atmosphere of camaraderie among fans.

## Concert Experience

When performed live, "Breaking the Law" often elicits a powerful response from audiences. Key aspects of the concert experience include:

- Fan Interaction: The sing-along nature of the chorus encourages audience participation, creating a sense of unity.
- Dynamic Stage Presence: Rob Halford and the band deliver high-energy performances that elevate the song's themes of rebellion and freedom.

## Cultural Relevance Today

As society continues to grapple with issues of authority, freedom, and disillusionment, the relevance of "Breaking the Law" endures. The song is often invoked during protests and movements advocating for social change, demonstrating its lasting impact on popular culture.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, "Breaking the Law" by Judas Priest transcends its status as a mere song; it is a cultural phenomenon that encapsulates the spirit of rebellion and the complexities of societal norms. From its powerful musical composition to its controversial history, the song remains a significant part of heavy metal lore. As long as themes of defiance and the quest for freedom resonate with individuals, "Breaking the Law" will continue to inspire and provoke thought, solidifying Judas Priest's legacy in the music world. Whether you are a lifelong fan or a newcomer to heavy metal, the impact of this iconic track is undeniable, making it a true anthem for generations to come.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### What is the main theme of Judas Priest's song 'Breaking the Law'?

The main theme revolves around rebellion and the feeling of being trapped in a mundane life, leading to a desperate act of breaking the law for freedom.

### When was 'Breaking the Law' released?

'Breaking the Law' was released on the album 'British Steel' in 1980.

### What significance does 'Breaking the Law' hold in heavy metal history?

It is considered one of the defining anthems of heavy metal, showcasing the genre's themes of rebellion and individuality.

### How has 'Breaking the Law' influenced pop culture?

The song has been featured in various films, television shows, and commercials, often representing themes of defiance and lawlessness.

### What is the musical style of 'Breaking the Law'?

The song features a classic heavy metal style with a catchy riff and driving rhythm, characteristic of Judas Priest's sound.

### Who wrote the lyrics for 'Breaking the Law'?

The lyrics were primarily written by Rob Halford, the band's lead vocalist, along with contributions from other band members.

## What impact did 'Breaking the Law' have on Judas Priest's career?

The song significantly boosted Judas Priest's popularity and is often regarded as a breakthrough track that helped establish them as a leading band in the heavy metal genre.

## Are there any notable live performances of 'Breaking the Law'?

Yes, 'Breaking the Law' is a staple in Judas Priest's live performances and is often accompanied by dramatic visuals and audience interaction.

## What is the iconic imagery associated with 'Breaking the Law'?

The song is often associated with themes of urban decay and rebellion, illustrated through its music video and album artwork featuring a gritty, industrial aesthetic.

## How do fans perceive 'Breaking the Law' today?

Fans continue to regard it as an anthem of freedom and rebellion, celebrating its timeless message and catchy melody at concerts and metal festivals.

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