

An Appreciation of a Modern-day Troubadour. “The Meat Loaf Story”

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*Voice? Check. Lyrics? Check. Looks? Ahhhhh. Well, as **Marvin Lee Aday**, who died on Jan 20 at 74, like to say....Two Out Of Three Ain't Bad.*

The stage name? **Meat Loaf**. For Crying Out Loud. OK.

How’s this for a pitch in 1977 to record companies for the breakthrough hit, **Bat Out Of Hell?** It’s a song about a guy on a motorbike crashing, dying, with his heart leaving his body like a bat.

That song will give the album its title, then we’ll have a song about a guy rejecting his girl by telling her there ain’t no way I’m ever going to love you and another about a man who wants to end the relationship and is praying for the end of time so I can end my time with you.

What record producer in their right mind would consider such an outlandish proposal? Remember, this was the late seventies. The Carter presidency. Music was polarized. In the blue corner, disco. In the red, punk. Bruce Springsteen and Queen were fighting the good fight but the dross seemed overwhelming. Rudely flapping its wings along comes the Bat Out of Hell album with its Wagnerian overtones and sense of Gotterdammerung and an overweight singer named after a dish not known for its gastronomic appeal. T-bone steak, roast lamb, leg of pork, roast potatoes maybe, but Meat Loaf?

After a slow burn, something happened, word of mouth and radio play resurrected it and

soon, say 1978, no high school or college dance was complete without a track or two, especially Two Out of Three Ain't Bad. This was before MTV. It's still appealing to young and not-so-young romantics with global sales in excess of 40 million and the album sales hit 200,00 a year.

But Meat Loaf was never about commercial success. At first he worked in harmony with songwriter **Jim Steinman** who died last year aged 73 before he fell out of harmony and then reunited.

Meat Loaf and Steinman gave angst-ridden teens, and I was a card-carrying member of the group, a tutorial in Wagnerian emotion and intensity. Music as theater with more than a hint of opera. Melodramatic? Yes but never schmaltzy. Meat Loaf was aiming not for intelligence but for the heart, for an adrenaline rush. We were teens or in our early 20s. All Revved Up With No Place To Go. Every Saturday night we felt the fever grow. This was soul music but not spiritual and not as we knew it. The frustration, the angst, the pent-up energy. He Took The Words Right Out Of My Mouth.

Sure, at times it verged on the ridiculous. I'm Going To Love Her For Both Of Us is utter nonsense. And there is nothing uplifting about Not A Dry Eye In The House.

But when on song, Meat Loaf made music fun. Especially with his use of melodrama. Rock And Roll Dreams Come Through or Life Is A Lemon And I Want My Money Back. Go on listen to them and stop your feet from moving.

Bombastic, certainly but never bullying or threatening. Sad, melancholy at times, especially when he was Left In The Dark.

Never morbid either. Not all the albums worked but when they did, when it all came together, you could imagine angels singing along.

The music wasn't just for teens He could pack venues with all ages.

Meat Loaf was not for the faint hearted, after all faint heart never won fair maiden. With his music young men became knights of the night.

I first heard him when I was a teenager. Now I am past 60. I have never revved a motorbike's engine. But he made me feel as if I could.

His voice was the soundtrack to my life. Memories? It's All Coming Back To Me Now.

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