

ZZ Top - The Heaviest (2015)

Written by bluesever

Monday, 11 May 2015 15:50 -

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1. *Sharp Dressed Man* (4:16) 2. *Gimme All Your Lovin'* (4:00) 3. *Over You* (4:31) 4. *Give It Up* (3:32) 5. *Sleeping Bag* (3:54) 6. *Blue Jean Blues* (4:42) 7. *Chartreuse* (2:58) 8. *Rhythmeen* (3:54) 9. *Black Fly* (3:33) 10. *I Gotsta Get Paid* (4:01) 11. *Old Man* (3:31) 12. *Pincushion* (4:35) 13. *2000 Blues* (4:25) 14. *Consumption* (3:50) 15. *She's Just Killing Me* (4:57)

ZZ Top began as a rough-and-ready blues-rock power trio from Texas that became a huge mid-1970s concert attraction. Their real commercial peak didn't come, however, until the 1980s, when the "Little Ol' Band from Texas" became MTV superstars and sold multiple millions of albums.

ZZ Top was built around guitarist Billy Gibbons, whose career began with the popular Southwestern band Moving Sidewalks, whose "99th Floor" was a regional mid-'60s hit. They opened one night for Jimi Hendrix, and he later mentioned Gibbons on The Tonight Show as one of America's best young guitarists. After Moving Sidewalks broke up, Gibbons and manager/producer Bill Ham recruited Frank Beard and Dusty Hill from a Dallas band, American Blues.

Beginning with the release of First Album in 1970, ZZ Top has toured constantly, building a national following that has made all the band's albums gold or platinum. A year-long tour in 1976, "The Worldwide Texas Tour," was one of the largest-grossing road trips in rock at the time. Onstage with the band were snakes, longhorn cattle, buffalo, cactus, and other Southwestern paraphernalia. The group sold over a million tickets. They didn't record for the next three years, until 1979's Deguello. Though ZZ Top's only major hit singles had been Tres Hombres' "La Grange" (Number 41, 1973) and Fandango!'s "Tush" (Number 20, 1975), their albums consistently made the Top 40.

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With 1983's *Eliminator*, ZZ Top made a quantum leap from best-kept secret to massive stardom. Thanks to smartly directed video clips for such songs as "Gimme All Your Lovin'" (Number 37, 1983), "Sharp Dressed Man" (Number 56, 1983), "Legs" (Number 8, 1983), and "TV Dinners," Gibbons and Hill, with their long beards (ironically Frank Beard usually wore only a moustache), became MTV icons, as did the cherry red 1933 Ford coupe (restored by Gibbons) that gave the album its name, and which the band drove in the videos. Thanks to this exposure, a whole new audience began buying the band's albums, and *Eliminator* (Number Nine, 1983) eventually sold some 10 million copies, remaining on the chart for over three and a half years. "Legs" introduced a pulsating synthesizer beat into ZZ Top's crunching blues-rock riffs.

The trend continued with *Afterburner* (Number Four, 1985), which contained such video hits as "Rough Boy" (Number 22, 1985), "Sleeping Bag" (Number Eight, 1985), "Velcro Fly" (Number 35, 1986), and "Stages" (Number 21, 1986). The album sold over 3 million copies. After another long world tour, ZZ Top — which had long been based in Houston — announced that, through NASA, it had booked passage as the first lounge band on the space shuttle (though the band has yet to actually fly a mission).

At the peak of its success, ZZ Top still remembered its roots, and launched a fundraising drive to erect a Delta Blues Museum in Clarksdale, Mississippi. At a special ceremony the band unveiled the "Muddywood" guitar, made from a beam taken from the sharecropper's shack in which blues giant Muddy Waters had been raised, and which Gibbons donated to the museum.

ZZ Top appeared to have finally tapped out the motherlode with *Recycler* (Number Six, 1990), which sold a relatively disappointing 1 million units, and yielded only minor hits in "Doubleback" (Number 50, 1990) and "Give It Up" (Number 79, 1990). After Warner Bros. released *Greatest Hits*, ZZ Top left the label and signed a \$30 million deal with RCA. The band's first album for the new label, *Antenna*, was named in tribute to rock radio — especially the Mexican border stations of the 1950s and 1960s that influenced the band. The album entered the chart at Number 14 but dropped rapidly and failed to yield a hit single. Still, *Antenna* went platinum, proving the band still had a considerable fan base. --- rollingstone.com

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