

Bohemian Rhapsody

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Points to Note

- The listening section of the New Leaving Certificate Music Syllabus includes *Bohemian Rhapsody* as one of the four Prescribed Works to be studied in Group A for examination in the years 1999, 2000, 2001, 2005, etc.
- The primary source for *this study* is the *recording*. The sheet music is a secondary source. In Western Art Music, the music was composed and scored first. Performing and recording the work came later. In general, the full score defines the music: instrumentation, metre, tempo, dynamics, melody/harmony lines, etc. are fully notated. In Rock/Pop the sheet music is written after the studio-produced recording is created. Most sheet music (especially the piano/vocal/guitar edition) is simplified, contains errors and discrepancies, is very short on detail, for example, instrumentation or repeats may not be written out. The guitar-tab edition can be more accurate and informative. The OTR (off the record) edition is the nearest one comes to having a full score but it is more expensive and not necessarily error-free. The nature of Rock music, with multiple syncopated, improvised tracks and mixes, does not lend itself to producing a full Rock Score
- Queen Sheet Music is better transcribed than that of most other Rock/Pop artists.
- The Guitar-Tab edition (International Music Publications – GS1002) is much better than the PVG edition. Repeats, solos, backing vocals and guitar layers are written out, rhythm and pitch are more accurately notated and the different sections are indicated with associated tempo marks.
- The PVG edition (IMP–VS5946) is more useful for piano players but it lacks rhythmic and melodic accuracy, six bars are omitted from the guitar solo, and the verse repeat is not written out.
- Rock Music genre demands a different type of response from the listener than Western Art Music.
- The study of a Rock Music single requires different, yet equitable, treatment.

In addition to the usual type of analysis, it is also important to know about:

- 1) The album from which the single is taken
- 2) How the album came about?
- 3) Genre and its characteristics
- 4) What happened after the album/single?
- 5) production and make-up of the Album
- 6) Composer(s) and performer(s)
- 7) Who and what influenced them?
- 8) What influence, if any, they had on others?
- 9) Characteristics of the music and the genre that can be detected in the single

CHAPTER ONE

FACTFILE

- Composer: Freddie Mercury
- Performed by: Queen
- Members of Queen: Freddie Mercury
Brian May
Roger Taylor
John Deacon
- Single Release Date: 31 October 1975
- Album Name: *A Night at the Opera*
- Album Release Date: 21 November 1975
- Cover Concept: Freddie
- Chart Position: No. 1
- No. of Weeks in Charts: 50 in the UK
56 in the USA
- Released on: Vinyl, Tape, CD,
Video, Video Single
and CD Video

CHAPTER TWO

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Freddie Mercury: the early days

Freddie Mercury was born Farok (Frederick) Bulsara on 5 September, 1946, on the exotic island of Zanzibar, off the coast of Tanzania, East Africa. His parents, Bomi and Jer Bulsara were from Gujarat in western India and they were Parsees, Indian followers of Zarathustra. His father, Bomi, was a civil servant in the Judiciary working for the British Government. When Farok was five, he commenced school at the Zanzibar Missionary School that was run by British nuns.

In 1954 he was sent to St Peter's English boarding school, about 50 miles from Bombay, India, as his father spent much time working in India at this time. He returned to Zanzibar for his summer holidays. The other holidays were either spent at school, with his aunt, or with his grandparents. He was a good all-rounder at school, excelling at art. When the principal noticed that Freddie (as he was now called at school) had musical talent, he encouraged Freddie's parents to pay for piano lessons. Freddie also sang in the choir and took part in the school's theatrical productions. He started his first band called the Hectics (alluding to his style of piano playing, maybe). He gained up to grade V in piano and theory. He loved listening to all kinds of music, playing records of Indian, classical music including opera and some rock'n'roll constantly at home. This would later influence his compositions with Queen. When he was 16, he took his O' Levels, gaining good grades in English, History and Art. He decided not to return to St Peter's school but to remain at home in Zanzibar.

In 1964 the Bulsara family fled to England with few possessions, due to political unrest in Zanzibar. They settled in the London suburb of Feltham, in a semi-detached house far removed from the island of exotic spices. Yet it was an exciting time to be in Britain as the swinging 60s were underway. He wanted to study Art at College but first he had to pass his A' Level in Art which he did with flying colours at Isleworth Polytechnic in 1966.

In September 1966 he entered Ealing College of Art and graduated with a diploma in Art and Design three years later. Pete Townshend of the Who, Ronnie Wood of the Rolling Stones, among other famous people, also studied in this college. It was a great time to be in college as it was a hive of talent and ideas. As he said himself in 1971 'Art College teaches you to be more fashion conscious, to be always one step ahead'. Even though he was studying Art, his love of music, especially pop music, was still paramount. His main idol at this time was Jimi Hendrix, the American blues guitarist/vocalist. He would spend much time drawing and painting pictures of his rock hero and miming him, using a ruler as a microphone or a guitar and throwing back his head as he mimed Jimi singing his songs. It was here that he became good friends with Tim Staffell, a bass player/vocalist with the band **Smile**. He loved the sound that Smile made, became a keen supporter of the band, going to their gigs, but staying on the sidelines. He was full of good ideas and suggestions, and wanted to make use of them, so he joined the band IBEX in 1969 as lead vocalist. He dressed in outrageous clothes, put a lot of effort into his stage act and he was able to show off his fine voice. But he was making no money. IBEX broke up and then he sang with Sour Milk Sea. When they broke up he formed Wreckage which did not last too long either. He was still great friends with Smile, offering suggestions, sharing a flat with them, and even setting up a stall in the fashionable Kensington Market with one of them, namely, **Roger Taylor**. They sold Victorian second-hand clothes and art-work. Selling clothes proved the better option. The other member of the band was **Brian May**.

Brian May

Brian May was born on 19 July, 1947, in Twickenham, London. He left school with ten O' levels and three A' levels and proceeded to study Physics at London's Imperial College. He wanted to become an Astro-Physicist. Even though he was good academically, music was his first love. His parents were musical and encouraged him in the pursuit of his hobby. When he was around seven years old, he started taking piano and theory lessons and playing on a small acoustic guitar his father had bought him. His father taught him to play the ukulele. Brian also played other instruments including the Jew's harp and the tin whistle. He loved listening to records, playing along with them, dissecting the melodies and the chords, finding out what made them work and then improvising. By the time he was sixteen he had given up the piano lessons and needed a new, bigger guitar. He could not afford to buy a new Stratocaster. His father, an electrical engineer, and he proceeded to build an electrical guitar to their own exact specifications. Brian knew exactly what he wanted from a guitar and it took them nearly two years but it was worth it as he has used it ever since. It was known as the Red Special. The neck was made from a mahogany fireplace, the body made from oak, his mothers' old pearl buttons were used as fret markers and lastly he chose a sixpenny piece as his plectrum. Now all he had to do was work on his technique. Even while he attended school, he gigged around with bands playing FBI, Apache and Venture instrumental numbers. He was into Skiffle and Rockabilly music. He liked listening to and learning from the records of Hank Marvin, Rick Nelson and Elvis. As he lived in London he was able to attend performances of Eric Clapton and the Yardbirds at the Crawdaddy Club, Jimi Hendrix opening for The Who, and Cream at Eel Pie Island. He was amazed by the harmonies on the pop records by the Everly Brothers, The Crickets, The Shadows and surf rockers in general, wondering how they achieved effects like-harmonies based on fifths, discords and rhythms. While at college he formed the band **Smile** with **Roger Taylor** and Tim Steffel.

Roger Taylor

Roger was born on 26 July, 1949, in Norfolk. He always wanted to be a musician first as a guitarist and then as a drummer. With seven O' Levels and three A' Levels he went to London to study dentistry. He responded to an advertisement on the college noticeboard for a drummer, was recognised as a fine drummer by Brian and Tim, and was hired on the spot. He took a year off college to concentrate on music while Brian and Tim continued with their studies.

Smile rehearsed much and played their first gig as support to Pink Floyd. Semi-pro, they played mostly on the pub and college scene. They produced one record despite bad management. In 1970, Tim Steffel left the group and Smile broke up.

CHAPTER THREE

QUEEN: 1970–1975

In April 1970, Brian and Roger finally joined forces with Freddie to form a new band which Freddie named Queen as it sounded regal, strong, had visual potential, and was open to all kinds of interpretation. Around this time, Freddie changed his surname to Mercury, after the mythological messenger of the Gods or because Mercury was his rising planet. They went through three bass players before they hit on John Deacon and this finalised a line-up that was to last more than 20 years. They rehearsed for nearly two years, experimenting and working through all their ideas and playing mainstream progressive rock at a few gigs in colleges and for friends.

The combination of Freddie's powerful vocals and vision with Brian's orchestral guitar playing and John and Roger's strong rhythm section orchestrations was one of the most successful in rock music both artistically and commercially. They were four highly educated, talented and creative people who produced many well-written songs that featured rich vocal harmonies and ensemble arrangements, sophisticated chord progressions and modulations and stark dynamic and textural contrasts. All four members contributed to writing songs and each performed on more than one instrument: Freddie on piano and synthesisers; Brian on vocals, harp, keyboards, ukulele and banjo; Roger on guitar, bass and high falsetto vocals; and John on electric piano, guitar and acoustic double bass. They took pride in not using synthesisers until the '80's. Freddie was the strong lead vocalist and dynamic front man as well as being a fine pianist. They performed a unique style of rock 'n' roll that combined elements from a wide range of musical genres, such as heavy metal, blues, rhythm 'n' blues, gospel, classical and folk. They were all strong admirers of Jimi Hendrix; maybe that's what brought them together in the first place. They also admired the Who and Led Zeppelin. Freddie was keen to get a stage act together, to mix rock with theatrics. David Bowie was working along similar lines.

In late 1971, they had a lucky break. They were offered a chance to test the new De Lane Lea recording studios. In return for demonstrating the new facilities to producers/technicians they were given unlimited free studio time trying out all the new technology and making demo tapes which they were not so successful in selling. Here they met up with Roy Thomas Baker, a studio engineer with Trident, who was to become the producer of their first nine albums. He introduced them to Norman Sheffield, co-owner of Trident, who agreed to sign them on in March 1972 and with whom they eventually signed a recording, publishing and management agreement in November 1972, after months of negotiating. They were all (except Brian) kitted out with new instruments and equipment, and allotted downtime only to work on their first album in Trident's 24-track studio. Trident's stars – David Bowie, Elton John and the Stones – were allotted prime time. By the summer of 1972 Freddie had designed the Queen emblem – a crest based on the group's star signs, Q with a crown and enclosed in a Phoenix symbolising success rising out of the ashes of Smile and Wreckage – and was still working in the Kensington Market and living with Mary Austin who worked in the Biba boutique. John graduated with a first-class degree in electronics, Roger graduated with a Biology degree and Brian was teaching and working on his PhD in Astro-Physics. In September 1972, Trident agreed to pay them £20 a week each pending the contracts being signed. After the contracts were signed it took months for Trident to sell the album. Eventually, EMI signed them up in March 1973. To celebrate the signing, they were launched to the Press at a heavily publicised gig at London's Marquee Club. They looked like no other band at the time, wearing silk and satin costumes and jewellery. They were still experimenting with their image and were now in a black and white phase. Freddie sported a black and white skintight catsuit, black and white painted nails and long black hair. All the publicity backfired. The press saw Queen as an unsuccessful mix of Bowie, Glitter glam, Led Zeppelin and Black Sabbath heavy metal. It would have been worse if it had been known that Freddie, Brian and Roger were involved in the Gary Glitter style Beach Boys song 'I can hear music'. Released by EMI under the name of Larry Lurex, it was seen as a skit on Gary Glitter by the fans

and it flopped. But it had afforded the band extra studio time to try out more ideas including Brian playing a two-part harmony phrase on guitar (the first time this type of playing was released to the public).

On 6 July, 1973, Queen's first official single 'Keep Yourself Alive' was released by EMI to mixed reviews. The album, *Queen*, from which the single was taken, was released a week later. Despite the heavy promotion by EMI it got little air-play, didn't reach the charts, and got mixed reviews. The publicity had backfired. The sleeve note stated that they didn't use synthesisers. The different instrument sounds heard on the album were in fact produced by Brian's guitar playing. It represented three years work and showed the group's virtuosity. The music was mainstream progressive rock and the style ranged from glam and jazz to heavy metal. The track 'Keep Yourself Alive' was noted for Brian's guitar orchestration and double tracking and 'Liar' for its pentatonic solos and power chord textures. The contrasting sound of piano and electric guitar – a Queen soundprint – was first heard on the track 'My Fairy King'. Later, Brian explained:

'This was the first time we'd really seen Freddie working at his full capacity. He's virtually a self-taught pianist, and he was making vast strides at the time, although we didn't have a piano on stage at that point because it would have been impossible to fix up. So in the studio was the first chance Freddie had to do his piano things, and we actually got that sound of the piano and guitar working for the first time, which was very exciting. 'My Fairy King' was the first of these sort of epics where there were lots of voice overdubs and harmonies. Freddie got into (this), and that led to 'The March Of The Black Queen' on the second album, and then 'Bohemian Rhapsody'.

They went straight on back to the studios to work on their second album. The first album contained material they had been working on for the previous two years. The second album was to contain new material. This time they were a major act and were given full use of the studio's time and resources. Following some English and European appearances they went on a major tour in November supporting the Bowie protégés, Mott The Hoople. It was a great success and garnered them many fans and good reviews.

During 1974, life improved for the band, despite a short-lived trip to Australia in January. EMI got a last minute slot on the BBC's Top Of The Pops for the unreleased single 'Seven Seas Of Rhye' from their forthcoming second album. This was a rewrite from an instrumental on the first album. At short notice they had to record a backing track as bands were not allowed then by the BBC to mime to the actual record. The single was rush released by EMI two days later on 23 February. It got good reviews and it became their first Top Ten hit. The release of the Album *Queen II* was delayed due to John Deacon's name wrongly written on the sleeve cover and there was a three-day working week in Britain due to the oil-crisis and the miners' strike. They rehearsed for their first UK headlining tour which started in March 1974. Freddie insisted that they concentrate on the visual drama and Zandra Rhodes designed their stage costumes, yet again, to Freddie's ideas. Freddie ceased working in Kensington Market and John gave up his MSc studies. They were all now fully committed to music and the band. The tour was a great success and played to packed venues.

On 8 March, *Queen II* was released to mixed reviews again but it was to reach No. 5 in the charts. One reviewer described it as the dregs of glam rock: weak and overproduced. Instead of an A and B side, the album had a Black and White side. It was more gentle and coherent than the first album. Brian's orchestral guitar style and Freddie's operatic vocal abilities, the hallmarks of the Queen sound, featured strongly. 'Processing' was the first proper multitracked song with nine guitar parts, six more guitar tracks doing orchestral parts and bass and drums. Brian was into medieval and early English music at the time.

The reviewers were still seeing them as copyists of Led Zeppelin, Black Sabbath and The Who but as Brian explained later:

'Led Zeppelin and The Who are probably in there somewhere because they were among our favourite groups, but what we were trying to do differently from either of those groups was this sort of layered sound. The Who had the open chord guitar sound, and there's a bit of that in 'Father To Son', but our sound is more based on the overdriven guitar sound, which is used for the main bulk of the song., but I also wanted to build up textures behind the main melody lines. To me, *Queen II* was the sort of emotional music we'd always wanted to play, although we couldn't play most of it on stage because it was too complicated... "We were trying to push studio techniques to a new limit for rock groups – it was fulfilling all our dreams because we didn't have much opportunity for that on the first album. It went through our minds to call the album *Over The Top*.'

The album reached No. 5 in the charts and its popularity brought in the first album *Queen* back into the charts.

In April they began their first American Tour as support to Mott the Hoople. It was going well until Brian got sick and they had to come home where they started work on their third album *Sheer Heart Attack*. It was recorded in four studios. They started recording in July without Brian who had to be hospitalised again. Roy Thomas Baker was a great help. When Brian rejoined he added in guitar and vocal tracks that he had composed while in hospital. This, their third album, contained leaner and cleaner tracks, emphasis was more on melodic or disposable pop like 'Killer Queen' rather than on the instrumental solo but it still contained the hard rock punch. The album was noted for Brian's guitar effects like the harmonised tape echo solo effect (Echoplex) in 'Brighton Rock', Roger's vocals in 'Tenement Funster', Freddie's piano playing in the 'Drama Of Ogre Battle' and for its range of styles from Dixieland sounding 'Bring back that Leroy Brown' to the hardrocking 'Stone Cold Crazy'.

'Killer Queen', released as a single on 11 October, 1974, was their first big hit and reached No. 2 in the charts. With its melodic lines, it was more listenable-to and it appealed to a wider audience. The guitar solo, a favourite of Brian's, used the jazz device of building up chords in arpeggios on guitars and vocals (American Influence).

'Sheer Heart Attack' was released on 8 November, 1974, reached No. 2 in the charts and it got good reviews all round at last, but the reviewers (Press) hadn't endeared themselves to Queen. Queen became more reticent and shied away from interviews. Relations were strained with the Press.

It was the turning point they needed. The other albums were still in the charts. Their tours – November in UK, December in Europe – were sold out, the album was selling well and they encountered much Queenmania. Despite their success, money was tight. They were on £60 a week now and they were very unhappy with the way they were being managed and they wished to be released from the contracts with Trident.

In January 1975, negotiations with Trident commenced. They were contentious and lasted about nine months.

In February 1975 Queen headlined their first US Tour. American reviewers were still comparing them to Led Zeppelin. The shows were a sell out but Freddie became ill with throat problems and they had to cancel dates again.

In April 1975 they paid their first visit to Japan for an eleven-date tour. Here they were No. 1 in the album and single charts, mobbed by fans everywhere and they felt for the first time that they really were successful rockstars. Freddie became a life long collector and fan of Japanese art and curios.

In May 1975 Freddie received the prestigious Ivor Novello Award for writing 'Killer Queen'.

In June 1975 Queen started work on their fourth Album.

By September 1975 the links with Trident were severed subject to a payment of £100,000 to Trident. After a long search, John Reid (Elton John's Manger) agreed to be their manager and they signed music publishing and recording deals with EMI (UK) and Electra (USA). They were much happier now but it took them awhile to shake off the bad memories and distrust of the Trident days. But the album was turning out as well as they had hoped. They announced the release date as they received Silver and Gold Discs for *Sheer Heart Attack* and 'Killer Queen', Gold for *Queen II* and Silver for *Queen*.

CHAPTER FOUR

A NIGHT AT THE OPERA

The Recording

Queen wanted to create a classic album using the best of technology but no synthesisers. They preferred real instrumental sounds. Every note they produced was Queen – no session players. Brian at this stage was able to produce any instrument sound he wanted on guitar. Starting in June, they rehearsed for two months and recorded for three months in six studios. Roger recorded the drum tracks at Rockfield, the multi-tracked vocals were recorded at the Roundhouse studios, Brian's multilayered guitar parts were recorded at Sarm. Roy Thomas Baker was yet again their co-producer who managed to ease matters between the group as their disparate music talents clashed because they were so intense on producing an album which would surpass anything heard before in its diversity and sound. They sought perfection, for example, Brian spent ages creating instrument sounds, from trumpets to clarinet, on his guitar by using a (guitar) pedal, building them up, one note at a time. This technique was imitated by other guitar players.

THE ALBUM

The Album from which 'Bohemian Rhapsody' was taken was released by EMI on November 21st 1975. It was entitled *A Night at the Opera*. It was named after the 1935 movie by the Marx Brothers of the same name. Freddie designed the picture cover using his birth sign blown up. It was the most expensive costing album of the time. It was their first Platinum Album for sales exceeding 250,000. It was released in the States in December and was 56 weeks in USA charts, their longest ever and their first in the Top 10. Melody Maker wrote:

'The overall impression is of musical range, power and consistently incisive lyrics. My hair is still standing on end – so if you like good music and don't mind looking silly, play this album.'

The album craftily produced by Roy Thomas Baker contained twelve songs ranging in eclectic styles from folk to metallic, hard rock to light pop & operatic rock. The tunes were memorable, winning them more fans. It has stood up to the test of time and is still one of rock's finest moments. Wolf Marshall said of it:

'Many of the great experiments of 60s and 70s rock – vocal and guitar harmony, orchestration, arrangement, production technique and effects use – came to full fruition on *A Night At The Opera*.

While 'Bohemian Rhapsody' was the centrepiece, the eleven other tracks were significant also, as follows:

1. 'Death On Two Legs' (3.44) Written by Freddie, it features hard hitting lyrics, a Spanish feel, word painting and romantic piano playing leading to hard metallic rock
2. 'Lazing on a Sunday Afternoon' (1.07) Written by Freddie in a vaudeville music hall style. Here, Freddie played electric piano 1930s style.
3. 'I'm In Love With My Car' (3.05) Written by Roger; metallic hard rock; clever use of car and bike sounds,
4. 'You're My Best Friend' (2.50) Pop style, released as a single in June 1976; written by John Deacon, who also plays electric piano. Use of diatonic close harmonies and guitar choir texture.

5. '39' (3.30) country/folk style, science fiction story, beautiful vocal harmonies, acoustic guitar, double bass and tambourine, played on stage as an acoustic quartet. Written and sung by Brian.
6. Hardrocking 'Sweet Lady' (4.02). Written by Brian.
7. 'Seaside Rendezvous' (2.14) French cabaret 1930s, vocal orchestrations, word painting. Brass vocal orchestration done by Roger. Woodwind vocal orchestration done by Freddie. Lots of humour. Written by Freddie.
8. 'The Prophet's Song' (8.20) in length like the 'Bohemian Rhapsody' epic. Written by Brian May, it was inspired by a dream. Harmonised guitar choir textures classically influenced: pair of lovely duets between acoustic guitar and koto (Japanese stringed instrument) in the Intro and Coda, powerchords, a wah wah solo, marvellous vocal harmonies, antiphonal call and response, panning, multilayering, two Echoplexes for echo repeat, four-part harmony chorale opening and unusual modulations.
9. 'Love Of My Life' (3.34) release on single in 1979 with its classical piano opening polyphonic lines, guitar orchestration, cello and wind instrument, lovely use of dynamics, harp accompaniment played by Brian May. Romantic ballad, written by Freddie.
10. Dixieland, jazzy 'Good Company' (3.17). Brian created the guitar jazz band of clarinet, trumpet, trombone instrumental sounds. Written and sung by Brian who also played the ukulele.
12. 'God Save the Queen' (1.12) harmonised lead guitar arrangement, a fine example of skill, of shimmering, panoramic guitar choir effects, for example, bends, trills and a superb IV-I final cadence, bright tone. This arrangement of the British National Anthem was included as it had become customary for the band to play this anthem at the end of their concerts, at the fans' request.

CHAPTER FIVE

'BOHEMIAN RHAPSODY' — THE SINGLE

The recording

The album *A Night at the Opera* contained what many people consider their greatest work, their all time epic masterpiece 'Bohemian Rhapsody'. When asked what it was about, Freddie would only say it was about personal relationships. The song took three weeks to record (seven days just on the vocal overdubs), had 180 vocal overdubs and multiple guitar layers. Roy Thomas Baker said about it:

'It wasn't all recorded in one go. We did the whole of the first section and the rock section, and for the middle part we just hit some drums now and then – after which it was basically edits. We just lengthened the middle section depending on what vocals were put in, because Freddie would come up with amazing ideas. He'd walk in and say, 'I've got some ideas for the vocals – we'll stick some Gallileo's in here'...

The basic backing track was done over a two-day period. The opera section was done over a seven day period of at least ten to twelve hours a day continual singing, and also continual laughing, because it was so funny to do that we were all in hysterics while it was being recorded. Then there were all the guitar overdubs and getting on for two days mixing it. I'd say that that track, on its own, took getting on for three weeks, because it's three songs merged together to make this one track.'

Later, Brian said about:

"'Bohemian Rhapsody' was really Freddie's baby from the beginning: he came and knew exactly what he wanted. The backing track was done with just piano, bass and drums, with a few spaces for other things to go in, like the tic-tic-tic on the high-hat to keep the time, and Freddie sang a guide vocal at the time, but he had all his harmonies written out, and it was really just a question of doing it.'

Queen finally released 'Bohemian Rhapsody' as a single on Halloween thanks to DJ Kenny Everett. John Reid, their manager, had been very apprehensive in selling a six-minute rock single. It was felt that airplay would be hard to get for a six-minute single. Three-minute singles were the norm. The band wouldn't dream of cutting it. They had worked too hard on it for it to be cut or interfered with.

Freddie gave a tape of it to Kenny Everett who thought it was marvellous. Freddie told him not to play it for anyone knowing that Kenny probably would. Kenny played it fourteen times on Capitol Radio over a weekend. By Monday, EMI were loaded with orders for a single that wasn't even released yet so they had to rush release it on 31 October, 1975. The B-Side was Roger Taylor's 'I'm In love With My Car'. It shot straight up the charts to No. 1 and stayed in the charts for seventeen weeks, nine weeks at No. 1, breaking a record set by Slim Whitman's 'Rosemarie' in 1957. It sold over a million records. Freddie got a second Ivor Novello Award for writing it. The British Phonographic Industry awarded it 'The Best Single of 1975'. It was also their first UK single to have a picture cover. Reviewers were split in their opinions. They either praised it or slammed it. Many felt it wouldn't be a hit as it was too long for airplay. But the radio stations played it often and in its entirety.

Freddie replied to his critics:

'a lot of people slammed 'Bohemian Rhapsody' but who can you compare that to? Name one group that's done an operatic single. We were adamant that 'Bohemian Rhapsody' could be a hit in its entirety. We have been forced to make compromises, but cutting up a song will never be one of them.'

The Video

Queen were about to embark on a UK Tour and were anxious for TV coverage in their absence, especially on Top of the Pops. So they decided to make a short film to promote Bo Rap as they nicknamed it. They engaged Bruce Gowers to direct it. It was shot in Elstree Studios in four hours and cost £4,500 approximately, expensive in those days. Queen planned the shots including their now famous pose of the four heads looking up to the light in the Gallileo break as in the cover of *Queen II*. The video captured the atmosphere reflecting multi-layered vocals of the single in kaleidoscopic colour. Promotional films had been used before, most of them just showing bands performing on stage, stand-ins for the real thing. Apart from the Beatles the others were ordinary. The Beatles had made a special film in the '60s for the double hit singles 'Strawberry Fields Forever' and 'Penny Lane'. But the Bo Rap video was the first to establish the phenomenon of the Rock Video. Their later hits all had promo films. This video was a work of art, exciting to watch and was as good if not better than the real thing. Today it gives an insight into what they looked like on stage. The stage set for this sell-out tour was more spectacular than ever: bigger lighting, more dry ice and pyrotechnics. Roger had an extended drum kit including a gong. Freddie and indeed all the band were more flamboyant and diverse in their dress and antics. Freddie wore satin sequinned catsuits, embroidered jackets and Japanese kimono jewellery.

CHAPTER SIX

‘BOHEMIAN RHAPSODY’ — THE ANALYSIS

Notes

- In the analysis that follows, page, system and bar references are to the PVG sheet music published by International Music Publications Limited. The bar numbers can also refer to the Guitar-Tab edition.
- There are discrepancies between the written music and the sound, some of which will be pointed out.
- The small notes on pages 3 and 4 of the PVG score refer to variations on the repeat.
- Note Chord Notation: e.g. on p2, fourth system, fourth bar, the chord of B flat (D bass) is the same as the chord of B flat, first inversion or B flat/D.

Lyrics

Is this the real life?
Is this just fantasy?
Caught in a landslide,
No escape from reality.
Open your eyes,
Look up to the skies and see,
I'm just a poor boy, I need no sympathy,
Because I'm easy come, easy go
Little high, little low,
Any way the wind blows, doesn't really matter to me, to me.

Mama, just killed a man,
Put a gun against his head,
Pulled my trigger, now he's dead.
Mama, life had just begun,
But now I've gone and thrown it all away.
Mama, ooo, didn't mean to make you cry.
If I'm not back again this time tomorrow,
Carry on, carry on as if nothing really matters.

Too late, my time has come,
Sends shivers down my spine, body's aching all the time.
Goodbye, ev'rybody, I've got to go,
Gotta leave you all behind and face the truth.
Mama, ooo (Any way the wind blows)
I don't want to die,
I sometimes wish I'd never been born at all.

I see a little silhouette of a man,
 Scaramouche, Scaramouche, will you do the Fandango.
 Thunderbolt and lightning, very, very fright'ning me
 Gallileo, Gallileo, Gallileo, Gallileo,
 Gallileo figaro – Magnifico.
 I'm just a poor boy and nobody loves me.
 He's just a poor boy from a poor family,
 Spare him his life from this monstrosity.
 Easy come, easy go, will you let me go,
 Bismillah! No, we will not let you go. Let him go!
 Bismillah! We will not let you go. Let him go!
 Bismillah! We will not let you go. Let me go!
 Will not let you go. Let me go!
 Will not let you go. Let me go!
 No, no, no, no, no, no, no.
 Oh Mama mia, mama mia, mama mia, let me go.
 Beelzebub has a devil put aside for me, for me, for me.

So you think you can stone me and spit in my eye.
 So you think you can love me and leave me to die.
 Oh, baby, can't do this to me, baby,
 Just gotta get out, just gotta get right outta here.

Nothing really matters,
 Anyone can see,
 Nothing really matters, nothing really matters to me.
 Any way the wind blows.

Instrumentation

Electric Lead Guitar:	Brian May
Electric Bass Guitar:	John Deacon
Percussion:	Roger Taylor
Piano:	Freddie Mercury
Lead Vocal:	Freddie
Operatic Vocals:	Roger, Brian and Freddie
Guitar Orchestra:	Brian

General

This song is a tightly-integrated, large-scale work, which fuses pop, rock and opera; it is unified by motifs, harmonic progressions and well-conceived transitions. It broadly follows the ballad/rocker/ballad style of Led Zeppelin's 'Stairway To Heaven'. It contains many changes in mood, rhythm, style, tonality, and texture. It features many techniques (more than a classical symphony might have !), for example, imitative counterpoint, frequent and/or abrupt modulations, diminished and chromatic passing chords, altered chords, inversions (voicing), secondary dominant cadences, and melodic sequencing. Stylistic features include romantic piano accompaniment, dynamic and textural contrasts, rich vocal harmonies, hard driving double octave power riffs, orchestral and piano interludes, operatic fanfares, antiphonal and a capella vocals.

It can be divided into four main sections as follows:

Intro & Main Song	Operatic Section	Second Song	Recap & Coda
1 →	2 →	3 →	4

INTRO	
CD timing	00:00–0:55
No. of bars	4+12

	Bar Numbers	Key Centre(s) Dynamics	Style Metre/Tempo	Musical Features
Section 1 0:00–0:14	1–4 4 bars	B flat major/ G minor <i>mf</i>	Slow rock crotchet = 72 Free 4/4 (5/4)	A cappella 4-part close harmony vocals repeated melody notes
Section 2 0:15–0:55	5–16 12 bars	G minor/ B flat major	4/4 In time	Vocals/piano; crash cymbal and bass guitar enter; piano accomp figure & backing vocals countermotif; Harmony falling and rising a semitone; Panning left to right

Intro section 1

Bars 1–4:

The intro opens with a four-part *a cappella* close harmony vocals with repeated notes and rhythm a feature in the melody line.



Fig. 1: bars 1–2

Even though B flat is very dominant, the first chord could be said to be Gm7 which would give rise to the sequence Gm7–C7–F7–B flat, where C7 is an altered version of ii7 acting as V7 of F (secondary dominant). The progression adds strength to the opening and increases the sense of drama and tension.

Intro section 2

Bars 5–16:

The piano enters with broken chords in the right hand and semibreve octaves in the left hand. The melody, syncopated in anticipation, rises at 'open your eyes and see' and at bar 7 is accompanied by a recurring figure and is one of the many unifying elements that frames the whole song.



Fig. 2: bar 7

The backing vocals counter motif at bar 8 'Ooh poor boy' is another element that acts as a building block



Fig. 3: bars 8–9

At bar 10 major chords falling and rising in chromatic steps (consecutive chords) give rise to the melodic idea in the operatic section.



Fig. 4: bar 10

The effect is intensified by panning from left to right at bar 11. The flanged crash cymbal paints the wind blowing at bar 12 while the backing vocals counter motif continues with *Ooh the wind blows*



Fig. 5: bar 12

The descending bass line: E flat–D–D flat–C or (I–Vb–Idim–V7c) draws the intro to a close on a suspended 6/4 chord to the words 'Any way the wind blows, doesn't really matter to me'

Bars15 & 16 link the intro to the main song. The bass enters, doubling the piano left hand. The piano right hand figure is developed from Fig. 2.

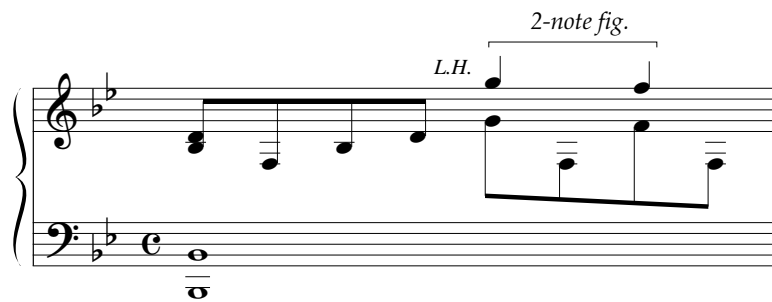


Fig. 6: bar 15

Main Song Verse 1	
CD timing	00:56–1:54
No. of bars	18 bars: 16+2
Bar structure	(4+4+6+2+2)

Section	Bar Numbers	Key Centre(s) Dynamics	Style Metre/Tempo	Musical Features
Verse 1 0:56–1:54	17–34 18 bars	B flat / E flat <i>mf</i> → <i>f</i> → <i>mp</i>	Ballad style In time: 4/4/ (2/4)	Vocals & piano/bass Accompaniment figure developed; Drums enter Chord sequence I→vi→ii→ V

Main Song: Verse 1

Bars 17–20:

A luscious solo melody is accompanied by piano in B flat. The accompaniment is developed from Fig. 6.

Note the harmonic progression I→vi→ii→V. At bar 20 there is a glissando in the bass leading to

Bars 21–24:

A development of the previous four bars. Note how the piano mirrors the two notes A and G at 'just begun'. Descending chromatic scale in piano and bass guitar, bass rhythm changes to minim, two crotchets and expressive melody rises in anticipation as drums enter at bar 24 with a cymbal crash.

Bars 25–32:

In E flat. The drums continue with bass drum accented on beats 1 and 3 and snare drum on beats 2 and 4 (standard Backbeat).

Bars 31–32

Piano accompaniment is a development of Fig. 2. (See Fig. 11.)

Main Song Verse 2	
CD timing	1:55–3:02
No. of bars	20 bars: 4+4+4+8

Section	Bar Numbers	Key Centre(s) Dynamics	Style Metre/Tempo	Musical Features
Verse 2 1:55–2:37	35–46 12 bars	B flat / E flat <i>mf</i> → <i>f</i>	Ballad style 4/4 (2/4) In time	Vocals, piano & rhythm section Drums play from beginning with standard rhythm Word-painting
Bridge 2:37–3:02	47–54 8 bars	E flat <i>f</i>	Rock: 4/4	Instrumental Guitar solo

Main song Verse 2

The plot thickens. Broadly the same as the first verse. The drums play from the beginning of verse with standard rhythm. Crash cymbal emphasises first beat, bass drum accents beat 1 and 3, snare and ride cymbal on beat 2 and 4. The bell tree paints an eerie picture of ‘shivers down my spine’ at bar 37.

At bar 42 an aggressive entry by the electric guitar heralds more tension at ‘face the truth’ and completes the line up.

From bar 43 the vocal texture is enriched by the backing vocals developing two countermotifs ‘ooh, ooh’ from Fig. 3 and ‘Any way the wind blows’ from the two-note figure, Fig. 6.

The accompaniment at bars 43–46, with chords I–Vb–vi–ii, is repeated twice and is the basis for the guitar lick at bar 47.

The image shows a musical staff in G major (one sharp) with a treble clef. It contains vocal notation for six bars. The lyrics are: "Ooh ooh,—" (bar 43), "ooh." (bar 44), "Ooh— ooh— ooh— ooh,— ooh ooh.—" (bar 45), and "Ooh— ooh— ooh— ooh,— ooh ooh.—" (bar 46). The notation includes various note values, rests, and phrasing slurs.

Fig 7: bars 43–48



Fig. 8: bar 44

More use of the crash cymbal and semiquaver movement in the piano and rhythm section reflects the angry mood at 'I sometimes wish I'd never been born at all'.

Bridge (transition)

Bars 47–54:

Single note lead guitar lick improvises on chord sequence I, Vb, VI, and II accompanied by guitar overdubs and a descending bass line doubled on bass guitar and piano left hand. The lick is initially based on the E flat pentatonic scale leading to the full scale at bar 50. The figure in bar 48 (Fig. 9) is developed at bar 52 accompanied by Fig. 10 on piano and aggressive semiquaver offbeat figure in bass guitar.



Fig. 9: bar 48

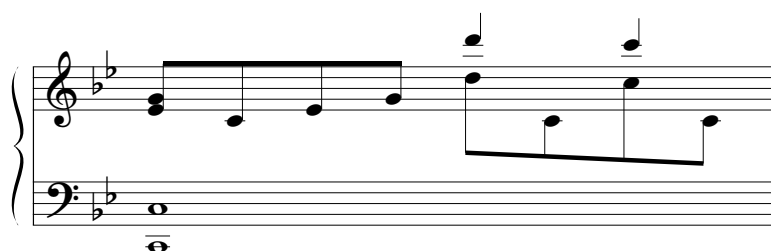


Fig. 10: bar 48

The combination of Brian's handmade guitar, the amp vox ac-30 and instrumental technique in his choice of bends, vibrato and glissando makes for unique expressive tones. At bar 53, the harmony uses a Romantic device to bring in an abrupt key change in this case to A with chords a major 3rd apart (Fm-D flat/Csharp-A)

These eight bars make for a marvellous fanfare for the next section.

Operatic Section	
CD timing	3:03–4:08
No. of bars	41 bars: 13+24+4

Section	Bar Numbers	Key Centre(s) Dynamics	Style Metre/Tempo	Musical Features
Interlude 3:03–4:01	55–91 37 bars	A/A flat <i>mf</i> and <i>f</i>	Dramatic Style quaver = crotchet In time: 4/4 (2/4)	Complete change of texture/timbre. Antiphonal, operatic vocals dominate. Bars 10/11 motif recalled. Chord sequence IV→I→Idim→I alternates with IV→I→IV→I. Roots rising a major third.
Bridge 4:02–4:08	92–95 4 bars	E flat <i>f</i>	Rock 4/4 = 12/8 dotted crotchet = 138	B flat 7 chord. Rhythm section in triplets ups the pace leading to hard rock riff.

Operatic Interlude

Bar 55

Abrupt change of tempo, texture, key and mood. Two bars of staccato piano chords (right hand only) paints an eerie picture and introduces this vocal-dominated section built on Bars 10–11 in the key of A. (Hint of *Batman*'s theme here.)

Bar 57

Solo voice alternates with rich vocal chords. The chord sequence IV–I–dim–I alternates with IV–I–IV–I.

Bar 61

Drums enter. Texture thickens with hammering bass octaves in piano and enhanced by Roger's falsetto voice, all reflecting the frightening thunder and lightening. Chords rise by a major 3rd : A flat - C - E

Bar 63

Roger's falsetto voice starts the antiphonal 'Gallileo's – dominant answered by tonic – which leads into a bar of consecutive 5ths (organum).

Bar 66

A 2/4 bar followed by a 4/4 bar. On 'Magnifico', the voices enter one after another in a shimmering bell-like fashion on a chord of Cm7 (upper part of F") leading to

Bar 68

An extended chromatic reprise of bars 57–67 in the key of A flat.

Bar 74

Piano accompaniment of bar 32 is recalled and calms the music before another build up.



Fig. 11: bar 32

Bar77–84

Tonic/dominant harmony dominates this passage and reflects the struggle with Bismillah. Solo and backing vocals alternate three times.

Bar 83

The music to 'never, never' recalls the countermotif Fig. 7 and splashes into the bell-like 'go, oh' on chord of G flat 7/F sharp 7, the dominant of B minor. This leads to

Bar 86

Emphatic, staccato 'no's rising chromatically on the sharp side accented by the crash cymbal winds the music up to another climax based on the antiphonal idea in E flat.

Bridge

Bar 92

On the chord of B flat 7, full chords on overdubbed guitar, pounding quavers on piano and rhythm section move into triplets and launch into the hard rock section.

Second Song	
CD timing	4:08–4:55
No. of bars	27 bars: 4+13+10

Section	Bar Numbers	Key Centre(s) Dynamics	Style Metre/Tempo	Musical Features
Riff 4:08–4:14	96–99 4 bars	E flat <i>f</i>	Hard rock 12/8	Heavy guitar lick. Overdubbed guitar tracks. No piano. Syncopation. Funky feel. Loud. Unusual key for a rock riff.
Verse 4:15–4:37	100–112 13 bars	E flat <i>f</i>	Hard rock 12/8 (6/8)	Solo voice enters. Changes in metre. Abrupt D flat chord.
Riff 4:37–4:55	113–122 10 bars	E flat <i>f</i>	Hard rock 12/8	Riff returns. Bars 115–120 missing from piano score. Lick moves through the scales of G flat, C flat, A flat and B flat. Piano double octaves join at bar 121 and the pace slows down for recap. Metre changes back to 4/4.

Second Song Riff

Bar 96

The unusual key of E flat is the basis for a classic heavy lick on guitars, lead and bass, overdubbed. It is in a slightly slower tempo in 12/8 (4/4) time as in a shuffle groove with syncopation and a funky feel. No piano is used. This riff is used and developed after the 2nd Song.

Second Song

Bar 100

In B flat, solo voice enters for three bars with pedal like bass, and guitar chords played with distortion, bends and vibrato.

Bar 103

One bar of 6/8 (2/4) interrupts with an abrupt chord of D flat.

Bar 104

Solo voice re-enters and the three bars are extended through the chords of Fm7 and B flat until it resolves on E flat for the return of the riff.

Riff

Bar 113

Note: Bars 115–120 are missing from the piano/vocal score.

Extension and development of riff passes through the scales of G flat (Lydian Mode), C flat, A flat and B flat.

Bar 121

Piano re-enters on B flat triplets slowing the pace down to 4/4 quavers at bar 122 for the last section

Recap and Coda

CD timing	4:56–5:55
No. of bars	16 bars: 9+7

Section	Bar Numbers	Key Centre(s) Dynamics	Style Metre/Tempo	Musical Features
Recap 4:56–5:27	123–131 9 bars	E flat / C minor / G minor <i>f</i> > <i>mf</i>	Slow rock Crotchet = 72 4/4	Backing vocals recall bar 43. Expressive overdubbed guitars in imitation recall bar 15. Guitar harmony recalls motif from bar 48. Plaintive solo voice enters at bar 128 with refrain 'nothing really matters'. Chord progression I→Vb→vi. Drums drop out at bar 131.
Coda 5:27–5:55	132–138 7 bars	E flat→B flat → F <i>mf</i> > <i>p</i>	Rubato, rit.	Texture becomes more sparse. Expressive piano playing recalls bar 7. Gentle panned guitar is answered by piano and then by voice on 'anyway the wind blows' on F. The gong has the final sound. No fade.

Recap

Bar 123

In E flat, 4/4 time and original tempo. Complete change in guitar sound, texture and dynamics.

Note the chord progression I→Vb→vi

Backing vocals recall the 'ooh' from the Intro (bar 8) and Main Song (bar 48). Expressive, overdubbed guitars play on Fig. 2 in imitation and resemble a string choir.

Bar 125

Motif (bar 48) is recalled on a vocal sounding guitar choir

Bar 128

Solo voice enters on a plaintive note remembering that 'nothing really matters'

Bar 130

Rubato; accompaniment slows and thins down. Drums drop out.

Coda

Bar 132

After a perfect cadence in E flat, the coda begins with the expressive piano recalling Fig. 2. Dulcet tones on the panned guitar are answered first by the piano and lastly by the voice on 'Any way the wind blows' ending on F. There is no fade; just the gong and a final chord of F on piano.

Student Summary

Section	Sub-section	Key Centre(s)	Metre Tempo	Dynamics/ Style	Music Features
Intro	Section 1 bars 1–4	B flat/ G minor	crochet=72 Free 4/4 (5/4)	<i>mf</i> Slow rock	A cappella, four-part close harmony vocals
	Section 2 bars 5–16	G min/ B flat	4/4 In time	<i>mf</i>	Vocals/piano; crash cymbal and bass guitar enter; piano accompaniment figure and backing vocals motif; harmony falling and rising a semitone; panning left to right.
Main Song	Verse 1 bars 17–34	B flat/E flat	4/4 (2/4) In time	<i>mf</i> → <i>f</i> → <i>mp</i> Ballad style	Vocals and piano/bass. Accompaniment figure developed. Drums enter. Chord sequence I →vi→ii→V.
	Verse 2 bars 35–46	B flat/E flat	4/4 (2/4) In time	<i>mf</i> → <i>f</i> → <i>mp</i> Ballad style	Vocals, piano and rhythm section. Drums play from beginning with standard rhythm. Word-painting.
	Bridge bars 47–54	E flat	4/4	<i>f</i> Rock	Instrumental. Guitar solo.
Operatic section	Interlude bars 55–91	A/A flat	4/4 (2/4) quaver= crotchet	<i>mf</i> and <i>f</i> Dramatic	Change of texture/timbre. Antiphonal, operatic vocals dominate. Motif from intro recalled. Roots rising a major third.
	Bridge bars 92–95	E flat	4/4=12/8 dotted crotchet=138	<i>f</i> Rock	B flat 7. Rhythm section in triplets ups the pace leading to hard rock riff.
Second song	Riff bars 96–99	E flat/F	12/8	<i>f</i> Hard rock	Heavy guitar lick. Overdubbed guitar tracks. No piano. Syncopation. Unusual key for a rock riff.
	Verse bars 100–112	E flat	12/8 (6/8)	<i>f</i> Hard rock	Solo voice enters. Changes in metre. Abrupt D flat chord.
	Riff bars 113–122	E flat	12/8 (4/4)	<i>f</i> Hard rock	Bars 115–120 missing from piano score. Lick moves through scales. Piano octaves join at bar 121. Pace slows down. Metre changes back to 4/4.
Recap & Coda	Recap bars 123–131	E flat/ C minor	Crotchet=72 4/4	<i>f</i> → <i>mf</i> Slow rock	Motifs from Intro and Verse recalled. Plaintive solo voice enters at bar 128 with refrain 'nothing really matters'. Chord progression I →Vb→vi. Drums drop out at bar 131.
	Coda bars 132–138	E flat→ B flat→ F	4/4 Rubato, rit.	<i>mf</i> → <i>p</i>	Texture sparse. Expressive piano playing recalls bar 7. Gentle panned guitar is answered by piano and then by voice on 'anyway the wind blows'. Ends on F. The gong has the final say. No fade.

CHAPTER SEVEN

'BOHEMIAN RHAPSODY' — AFTER 1975

'Bohemian Rhapsody' stayed at the top of the British Singles Chart for Nine weeks – the longest stay of any single since Slim Whitman in 1957. It reached No. 9 in the US charts and helped launch their first headline tour in the US. *A Night at the Opera* received the CBS Rock Award for the best album of the year. In 1977 the British Record Industry awarded it the Best Pop Single of the last 25 years jointly with Procul Harum's 'A Whiter Shade of Pale.' They had achieved more than even the Beatles.

During the US tour in 1977 it was performed in its entirety for the first time on stage; before this it was only performed as part of a medley due to its intricacies. Queen would leave the stage during the operatic section which could not be performed live due to the overdubbing and let pre-recorded tapes play.

In 1979 Freddie danced with the Royal Ballet in Covent Garden in a performance of 'Bohemian Rhapsody'

Its popularity in the US was renewed by the release of the film *Wayne's World* in 1991 in which Wayne and Garth headbang to 'Bo Rap' in the car sequence.

After Freddie's death in November 1991, It was released with 'Days of Our Lives' as a double A-sided single. It entered the UK charts at No. 1 where it stayed for five weeks and it reached No. 8 in the US charts.

Other Versions

1. The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra plays Queen Classic, DCD5256., 1992
2. The Braids., Bohemian Rhapsody, Big Beat records, 1996 from the soundtrack of the film High School High
3. Queen dance trax featuring Magic Affair., Bohemian Rhapsody, CDL/EMI 1996
4. De Danann., Hibernian Rhapsody, 1996

Internet Sites

<http://queen.iinet.net.au>

<http://queen-fip.com>

<http://www.queen.net>

CHAPTER EIGHT

QUEEN AFTER 1975

The success of *Bohemian Rhapsody* allowed Queen to develop their music in new ways and to produce more elaborate works. By the date of Freddie's death, 24th November 1991, they had released 16 more albums including *A Day at the Races*, 1976, *News of the World*, 1977, *Jazz*, 1978, *Live Killers*, 1979, *The Game*, 1980, *Flash Gordon*, 1980, *Greatest Hits*, 1981, *Hot Space*, 1982, *The Works*, 1984, *The Complete Works*, 1985, *A Kind of Magic*, 1986, *Live Magic*, 1986, *Queen at the Beeb*, 1989, *The Miracle*, 1989, *Innuendo*, 1991, and *Greatest Hits II*, 1991. Single successes include 'We are the Champions' / 'We Will Rock You' 1977, 'Don't Stop Me Now', 'Crazy Little Thing Called Love', 1979, 'Another One Bites The Dust', 'Flash', 1980, 'Under Pressure' (with David Bowie), 1981, 'Radio Ga Ga', 'I Want To Break Free', 1984, 'One Vision', 1985, 'A Kind of Magic', 1986 and 'Innuendo', 1991. In 1986, all their works to date were released on compact disc – another first for Queen. They toured extensively throughout the world and became noted for their Open Air and Stadium Concerts.

Notable successes include:

Hyde Park 1976. Open Air concert as a thank you to the fans. 180,000 attended.

Queen Lizzy Tour 1977. Toured the US with Thin Lizzy

The Crazy Tour 1979 (incl. RDS Simmonscourt)

United States 1980. 'Another One Bites the Dust' became their biggest hit in the states.

South America 1981. First of their stadium tours. They played in three World Cup soccer stadiums. They were the first big rock band to tour here.

The Works Tour 1984 incl. RDS Simmonscourt 28/29 August and a controversial visit to South Africa.

Rock in Rio 1985. Queen headlined what was billed as the biggest rock festival in the world.

Live Aid Concert 1985. A big turning point for Queen. They stole the show and it garnered them many more fans and a wider audience.

Magic Tour 1986. Their last big tour of Europe incl. Slane on July 5th and Budapest (were the first major rock group to perform in the Eastern Block).

Despite the rise of punk and the decline of rock in the late 70s Queen's popularity, fame and fortune continued into the 80s and 90s. By 1981 Queen had sold over 45 million albums, had formed their own management company and were the highest paid directors in the UK. Their music contained a broader range of pop and less heavy metal and thus was more accessible. Many of their songs became sport anthems world-wide. They recorded not only in the UK but also in the United States and in the Mountain Studios in Montreux which they bought. Freddie and Mary Austin had split up but remained good friends.

In 1983 Freddie, Brian, Roger and John took time out to work on their solo careers which they nurtured alongside their work with Queen. Freddie's first solo album *Mr Bad Guy* was released in 1985 followed by *Barcelona* with Montserrat Caballe, whom he had admired for a long time, in 1988. Freddie and Montserrat appeared together at a concert for the arrival of the Olympic Flag in Barcelona where they performed many of their songs including their hit duet 'Barcelona'. After this it was noticed that Freddie was keeping a low profile which led to rumours about his ill health.

On November 23rd 1991, Freddie announced to the world he had AIDS. He died peacefully at his Kensington home surrounded by family and friends the following day – 24th November – aged 45 years.

A memorial concert for Freddie was held in Wembley Stadium on 20th April 1992 to raise funds for AIDS research projects. It featured many stars including David Bowie, George Michael, Elton John, Liza Minnelli, Bob Geldof, Paul Young, Ian Hunter, Annie Lennox, Metallica, Extreme, Def Leppard, Guns N' Roses and U2 who performed and paid tribute to one of rock's greatest theatrical performers. David Cheal, Daily Telegraph, reported:

"Of all those who appeared, only Liza Minnelli, who led the customary chorus line of stars with a stirring 'We Are The Champions', came close to Mercury in terms of presence and personality. A reminder if it were needed that while Freddie Mercury left a legacy of unforgettable songs, as a performer he is simply irreplaceable."

Queen never announced an official break-up. In 1995, the album *Made In Heaven* was released. It contained vocal tracks that Freddie had recorded in his last year in his home in Montreux. The solo careers of Brian, Roger and John continue.

CHAPTER NINE

GLOSSARY — POP/ROCK STYLES

1. Rhythm 'n' Blues: Late '40s/early '50s Black Music; fusion of driving jazz rhythms with slow Blues, more danceable than blues. Structure was based on twelve-bar blues, repeating verses, instrumental improvisation usually on a saxophone and riffs. Accompaniment had an accented 4/4 rhythm with triplet feel, and included piano, string bass, drums with off-beat snare, and electric guitar. It had a small male voice backing group echoing vocal phases in the form of call-and-response. Noted players were Fats Domino and BB King. An important influence on Rock Music. British revival of R 'n' B in the '60s led to Rolling Stones, Eric Clapton, Jimi Hendrix.
2. Rock 'n' Roll: Popular style of black music played by whites in the '50s, heralded by Bill Haley and the Comets in 1954 with 'Rock around the Clock'. The mixture of R&B with Country Music appealed to a white audience. Used several guitars, double bass, and later electric bass. Had tight rhythm on drums with a clean back beat; little syncopation, lyrics were pure and simple; vocal lines with licks dominant; four-bar chord progressions and twelve-bar blues based on chords I, IV and V. Later rock 'n' roll used orchestral instruments. Had an important influence on soft rock.

Listen to: Buddy Holly, Gerry Lee Lewis and Chuck Berry.

3. Skiffle: British style of early rock 'n' roll in the '50s. It originated in the 1920s as an amateur jazz band with makeshift instruments. Uses elements of blues, country, bluegrass, folk and Appalachian. Sound was bright and rhythmic. Instruments included harmonica, banjo, washboards. Lonnie Donegan, an English guitarist, was regarded as England's Elvis Presley: he influenced Tommy Steele, The Shadows and the Beatles.
4. Rockabilly: An American early '50s style of music which Elvis and Gerry Lee Lewis played was a mixture of rock 'n' roll and country.
5. Surf Rock: Western coast American style '60s owed much to R 'n' R with vocals important. Songs based on twelve-bar blues praised the surfing life. Instruments included electric guitar and amplified steel guitar with lots of reverb/echo. Vocal effects e.g. a cappella, call-and-response, close harmony, falsetto and instrumental leads to songs are features of this style.

Listen to the Beach Boys.

6. Folk Rock: American '60s style that merged folk music with electric bass and rock drumkit, social issues and politics, acoustic guitars and flute.

Performers: Bob Dylan, Simon & Garfunkel, The Mamas & Papas, The Byrds, Steeleye Span.

Influenced: Beach Boys, Led Zeppelin.

7. Acid Rock: Late '60s American San Francisco style. Peaked in 1967 at Monterey Pop Festival where Jimi Hendrix and Janice Joplin played. It was loud, distorted, repetitive LSD inspired music. It used simple chords, hypnotic rhythms, synths and electronic effects. It was the time for guitar virtuosos like Jimi Hendrix who developed guitar techniques e.g. Wah Wah and distortion. The shows were colourful, smelling of incense. It preceded heavy metal.

Influenced Pink Floyd who influenced Queen, Frank Zappa.

8. Psychedelic Rock: British and American style '60s, more dreamy, hypnotic, softer than acid rock. This love, peace and flower power music peaked with the Beatles *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* in 1967 and Woodstock in 1968.

9. Rock Music: Grew out of the R 'n' B side of Rock and Roll. Covers many styles with the Electric Guitar dominant as a bass, harmony, rhythm and melody instrument. The Beatles lead the way with advanced studio techniques, innovation, concept album and pop. The Rolling Stones drew on R 'n' B as the main source for their kind of rock which was raunchy and anti-social. The band of two or three guitars with drums was the norm, and it was the focus, rather the solo artists of pop. Rock is aggressive, into social statements and attitude. Driving rhythms with accented off-beats are fundamental to rock. Guitar chords are syncopated, loud and percussive and based often on the pentatonic scale and taken from the flat side of the key. Guitars are heavily amplified treated with distortion and provide improvised instrumental solos. Rock melodies are short and repeated. Rock is more male orientated, sets trends, is into growth and development and favours original composition.

Pop uses orchestral instruments as well as guitars, is heavily marketed, follows fashion is female dominated; its melodies are longer, lyrical and contrasting; makes no social statements and draws from many styles including classical.

Listen to: Jimi Hendrix, Led Zeppelin, Queen, Cream, Eric Clapton.

10. Hard Rock: (Associated with '70s rock.) Instruments include two or three guitars, drums and an optional keyboard and sax. Rhythms are hard with a strong bass drumbeat and dominant snare back beat; melodies are short, repetitive and use a hook line. Pitch range is narrow. Rock groups thrive on being individual.

Structure : Verse, chorus, verse, chorus, solo (lead guitar), verse, chorus.

Listen to: Bon Jovi, Dire Straits, U2, Bruce Springsteen.

11. Soft Rock: Another 70s rock development. Close to folk rock, it uses acoustic instruments, good lyrics and a wider range of chords. It is more melodic and has a softer more even rhythm. Hard and soft rock are often used together for example 'Stairway to Heaven' by Led Zeppelin

12. Heavy Metal: This is a late '60s development as a reaction to folk rock. It peaked in the '70s with Led Zeppelin, Deep Purple, Metallica and Def Leppard. More use of feedback produced a piercing electronic sound. Features include screaming, shouting, speakers on full volume, loud and accented drumming and repetition. Harmony was limited, lyrics antisocial, more occult than drugs related. Attitude was important. Tracks were longer, not suited for singles which encouraged live performances with laser show, head banging, air guitaring for the fans.

13. Soul: '60s American black music is gospel-based and tends to be sung by black artists whereas rock is blues based and sung by white artists. Chords in soul music are from jazz or diatonic scale. Soul uses more instruments, keyboards, orchestral arrangements and backing vocals than rock, which is guitar based.

Two types of soul: Atlantic and Motown

Atlantic soul was gospel based with secularised lyrics full of racial pride. Vocal techniques included call and response, melisma, note bending, close harmony and falsetto. Improvisation, handclaps and tambourines were much featured.

Listen to Otis Redding, James Brown, Marvin Gaye, Aretha Franklin.

Motown: the style is lighter, more for dancing, back beat not accented.

Listen to Stevie Wonder and the Supremes.

14. Punk Rock: Late 70s rock style grew, as a reaction to glam rock, out of the punk scene in London. Offensive lyrics, repetitive melodies, simple harmony and guitar style and loudness were features of this style. It represented a life style; it was there to shock.

Listen (if you dare) to Sex Pistols and the Clash.

15. New Wave: Early 80s development from heavy metal and punk. Has the hard rhythm of punk plus more interesting music, not as antisocial as punk.

Listen to Elvis Costello, Police.

16. New Romantics: 80s style of rock grew as a reaction to punk and new wave, more melodic.

Art Rock: Late 70s English development out of psychedelic rock. Uses light shows, electronic effects, non musical sound tracks flow into one another; lyrics are more intellectual and tracks use ideas from earlier tracks.

17. Glam Rock: British early 70s, middle of the road rock. Simple melodies used, more soft than hard rock. Image and life style very important using glitzy clothes, jewellery, etc. The video clip was a crucial part.

Early: David Bowie, Gary Glitter and Sweet
Late: Spandau Ballet and Wham

18. Electronic Rock: An 80s style inspired by Western Art Music as much as rock. Grew from the early use of electronics by the Beatles and Jimi Hendrix. Features include synthesisers and drum machines, little, if any, syncopation, simple drum parts and electric guitar effects e.g. feedback and distortion.

Listen to: Jimi Hendrix, Mike Oldfield, Eric Clapton, Emerson, Lake & Palmer, Jean Michael Jarre, Depeche Mode, Philip Glass, Pet Shop Boys.

CHAPTER 10

GLOSSARY — POP/ROCK RECORDING TERMS

A Capella (Rockapella)	unaccompanied singing in one or more parts
Backbeat	beats 2 and 4 accented usually by a snare drum
Bends	a guitar technique in which a note is altered in pitch by pushing the string up and down
Call and response	a technique of African folk origin by which a solo singer is answered by a chorus singing a repeated phrase
Distortion	A sound effect which overloads the speaker used in rock and heavy metal by guitars using a foot pedal. The sound can be harsh – overdrive – or subtle or heavy causing the sound to be sustained.
Echo	Often called ‘a delay’: a sound effect produced by a guitar pedal or at the mixing stage in a recording. It reproduces the sound and delays it. Common in rock ‘n roll.
Falsetto	A vocal effect mainly by males, singing in a very high artificial register
Feedback	Used by mainly rock musicians to produce a high-pitched sound by placing a guitar pickup on a microphone very close to a speaker so that the original string sound is amplified as well as the sound coming from the speaker.
Hook	A memorable part of a song, often repeated.
Lick	A melodic device based on a musical pattern to form short solos mainly on guitar and piano to link phrases and move up and down the register.
Melisma	One syllable of a word set to many notes.
Multi-track recording	A recording technique by which up to 24 tracks can be entered on to a recording machine simultaneously or one track at a time. The tracks can then be mixed onto a master tape which can then be recorded on to a stereo recorder.
Overdub	A recording technique where another part is recorded over a previous part on a multitrack recorder. It can also infer remixing of tracks.
Panning	A recording technique by which the pan control allows the sound to be placed in the left or right speaker in a stereo recording.
Pick up	A small microphone in an electric guitar or other electric instrument.
Powerchords	Use of open strings to produce a heavier sound on guitars.
Reverberation	A recording technique to create an echo effect using electronics.
Riff	A repeated short phrase like an ostinato in a pop/jazz composition.
Rimshot	Drummer hits rim of snare or side drum.
Seventh chords	Chord made up of root, third, fifth and seventh and much used in rock, soul, funk and reggae.
Turnaround	A small harmonic phrase that links two sections or repeats of a piece.
Vibrato	Fast, slight variations in pitch like a wobble. (** also intensity/volume)
Wah wah	A guitar pedal which varies the pitch of the note and produces a ‘miaow’ sound.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

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