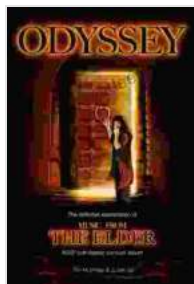


# The Definitive Examination of Music from "The Elder": Kiss' Cult Classic Concept



In the annals of rock history, few albums have been as polarizing as Kiss' 1981 concept album, "The Elder." Upon its release, the album was met with widespread critical derision, with many critics dismissing it as a pretentious

and misguided attempt at a Broadway musical. However, in the years since its release, "The Elder" has gradually gained a cult following among fans who appreciate its unique blend of hard rock, progressive rock, and theatrical bombast.



## Odyssey: The definitive examination of "Music From The Elder," KISS' cult-classic concept album by Tim McPhate

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Today, "The Elder" is widely regarded as one of the most ambitious and experimental albums in Kiss' catalog. The album's music is complex and challenging, and its lyrics are full of allegory and symbolism. It is a far cry from the straightforward rock anthems that made Kiss one of the biggest bands in the world in the 1970s.

In this article, we will take a closer look at the music of "The Elder," examining its composition, instrumentation, and lyrical content. We will also explore the album's troubled production history and its eventual critical and commercial reception.

## Background

"The Elder" was the brainchild of Kiss bassist Gene Simmons. Simmons had long been a fan of classical music and Broadway musicals, and he wanted to create an album that would combine the best elements of both genres. He enlisted the help of songwriter Bob Ezrin, who had previously worked with Kiss on their 1976 album, "Destroyer."

Ezrin and Simmons spent months developing the concept for "The Elder." They wanted to create a story-driven album that would follow the journey of a young boy named "The Elder" as he seeks to save his kingdom from an evil sorcerer. The album's music would be a mix of hard rock, progressive rock, and classical music, and its lyrics would be full of allegory and symbolism.

## **Composition**

The music of "The Elder" is complex and challenging. The songs are full of odd time signatures, unusual chord progressions, and intricate harmonies. The band's performance is also top-notch, with each member contributing their own unique talents to the album's sound.

Paul Stanley's vocals are particularly impressive on "The Elder." He sings with a wide range of emotions, from the soaring highs of "The Oath" to the whispered vulnerability of "Mr. Blackwell." Ace Frehley's guitar playing is also excellent, and he contributes several memorable solos to the album. Gene Simmons' bass playing is solid and supportive, and he also provides some of the album's most memorable vocals on the song "The Demon."

Peter Criss' drumming is surprisingly understated on "The Elder." He doesn't play any flashy fills or solos, but he provides a solid foundation for

the band's sound. His drumming is particularly effective on the album's ballads, such as "I" and "A World Without Heroes."

## **Instrumentation**

In addition to the traditional rock instruments, "The Elder" also features a wide range of orchestral instruments, including strings, horns, and woodwinds. These instruments are used to create a lush and atmospheric sound that complements the band's hard rock sound.

The album's use of orchestral instruments is particularly effective on the songs "The Oath" and "Escape from the Island." The strings and horns on "The Oath" create a sense of grandeur and majesty, while the woodwinds on "Escape from the Island" provide a sense of mystery and suspense.

## **Lyrical Content**

The lyrics of "The Elder" are full of allegory and symbolism. The album's story follows the journey of a young boy named "The Elder" as he seeks to save his kingdom from an evil sorcerer. However, the album's lyrics can also be interpreted on a more personal level, as a metaphor for the struggle between good and evil within each of us.

The album's title track, "The Elder," is a powerful ballad that sets the stage for the album's story. The song tells the story of a young boy who is chosen to be the leader of his people. He must overcome many challenges to fulfill his destiny, but he is ultimately successful in his quest.

The song "A World Without Heroes" is a moving ballad about the need for heroes in the world. The song's lyrics are simple and straightforward, but they are delivered with a sincerity that is both powerful and moving.

The song "I" is a powerful rock anthem that celebrates the individual. The song's lyrics are full of self-affirmation and determination. The song is a reminder that we are all capable of great things, if we only believe in ourselves.

## **Production**

The production of "The Elder" was troubled from the start. The album was originally scheduled to be released in 1980, but it was delayed several times due to creative differences between the band and their label, Casablanca Records.

The band was also unhappy with the album's producer, Bob Ezrin. Ezrin had a reputation for being a perfectionist, and he spent a lot of time experimenting with different sounds and arrangements. This led to the album's long and expensive production schedule.

In the end, "The Elder" was released in November 1981. The album was a commercial failure, and it received negative reviews from most critics. The band was so disappointed with the album's reception that they decided to fire Ezrin and abandon their plans for a follow-up album.

However, in the years since its release, "The Elder" has gradually gained a cult following among fans who appreciate its unique blend of hard rock, progressive rock, and theatrical bombast. The album is now considered to be one of the most important and influential albums in Kiss' catalog.

## **Reception**

"The Elder" was a commercial failure upon its release. The album peaked at number 75 on the Billboard 200 chart, and it sold only about 1 million

copies worldwide. The album's poor sales led Casablanca Records to drop Kiss from their label.

The album was also met with negative reviews from most critics. Many critics dismissed the album as a pretentious and misguided attempt at a Broadway musical. The album's complex music and obscure lyrics were also criticized by some critics.

However, some critics praised the album's ambition and originality. The album's complex music and lyrical content were seen as a refreshing change from the straightforward rock anthems that Kiss had become known for.

In the years since its release, "The Elder" has gradually gained a cult following among fans who appreciate its unique blend of hard rock, progressive rock, and theatrical bombast. The album is now considered to be one of the most important and influential albums in Kiss' catalog.

## **Legacy**

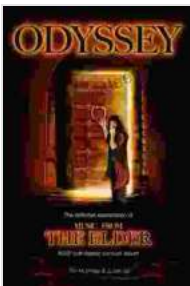
"The Elder" is a complex and challenging album that has divided critics and fans alike. However, there is no denying the album's ambition and originality. "The Elder" is a bold and unique statement from a band that was at the peak of their powers.

The album's complex music and lyrical content have influenced a generation of musicians. Bands such as Dream Theater, Symphony X, and Ayreon have all cited "The Elder" as an inspiration.

"The Elder" is a challenging album, but it is also a rewarding one. The album's complex music and lyrical content are sure to engage and challenge listeners. If you are a fan of hard rock, progressive rock, or theatrical bombast, then you owe it to yourself to give "The Elder" a listen.

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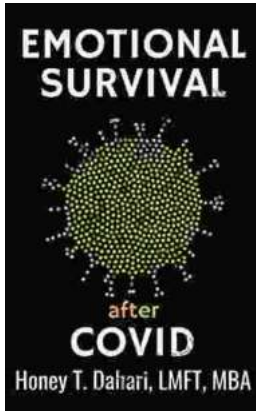


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