BORN TO BE WILD

Mars Bonfire

| STEPPENWOLF | 1968 | Dunhill Records #4138 |

The third single from the album **STEPPENWOLF**. Chart: **#2**. Time - 3:02 / 3:30.
Flip Side: "Everybody's Next One". Released in U.S.A. A million seller.

Recorded at The American Recording Studio, Los Angeles, California, USA. Produced by **Gabriel Mekler**.
Engineered by **Richard Podolor** and **Bill Cooper**.

Bonfire was an early member of Steppenwolf when they were known as the Sparrows, and his brother was the drummer in the current band. Although inspired by a poster of a motorcycle with a phrase 'Born to Ride', the song was actually written about a car as he had just purchased his first one. It was only the next year when it became the theme of 'Easy Rider' that it became a bikers tune. This is the first song to use the term 'Heavy Metal', although it was talking about a motorcycle. No one, the writer, the band or the record company viewed this as a potential hit. It was only released as a third single after the first two bombed. - Larry -

Personnel

John Kay - *lead vocals*
Micheal Monarch - *guitar*
Nick St Nicholas - *bass*
Jerry Edmonton - *drums*
Goldy McJohn - *organ*

John Kay - *2013:Classic Rock Here & Now*

"It was just five of us playing in the garage below this little crackerjack apartment that my newly wedded wife and I occupied in Hollywood, and we were kicking around some songs that I had written or co-written with band members. Our drummer one day showed up with a cassette tape that his brother had given him, and on it was 'Born to Be Wild.' Mars Bonfire recorded it in the evening ... he lived in a place that he couldn't make any noise, and I think it was recorded with just a Telecaster guitar and it was very low-keyed ... very low-energy. Our drummer Jerry Edmonton, Mars brother said, 'Why don't we just kick it around?' So we did, and actually it came to life relatively quickly once we picked a key. But it was just one of eleven songs that we recorded on our first album.

Nobody picked it as the undeniable hit or whatever; it was in fact the third single on the album released. The album was already in the top five nationally in 1968 before 'Born to Be Wild' was released. But once 'Born to Be Wild' came out in the summer of '68, obviously when it became so successful it was all over the country on AM-Hit radio, so we kind of had that double barrel of success, meaning the album was being played almost in its entirety on the so-called 'underground' newly formed FM radio stations, while 'Born to Be Wild' was played on Top 40 stations. So it kind of built our fan base as a result of those two exposures."

MARS BONFIRE

"The demo tape that Steppenwolf originally heard of 'Born to be Wild' was not from the demo sessions for my solo album that Jerry and a few others played on. It was just one guitar and one voice. There was a guy who was kind of like John Kay, a solo blues player named John Hammond Jr. and I liked his style of guitar. I was fooling around with some of his riffs and guitar patterns, changing them around into my own thing. One of those riffs became the foundation for 'Born to be Wild'."

"I was walking down Hollywood Boulevard on day and saw a poster in a window saying 'Born to Ride' with a picture of a motorcycle erupting out of the earth like a volcano with all this fire around it. Around this time I had just purchased my first car, a little desmond-hand Ford Falcon. So all this came together lyrically: the idea of he motorcycle coming out along with the freedom and joy I felt in having my first car and being able to drive myself around whenever I wanted."

"I put it together with a reworking of a John Hammond riff, borrowed a tape recorder from Morgan Cavett, and put it down on tape. In my tiny apartment on Yucca in Hollywood, I couldn't make much noise because the other residents complained. I still had my Telecaster but I couldn't plug it in to an amp, so I did the demo tape with the Telecaster dry, unplugged. When Jerry asked me if I had any songs because he and John were getting back together, I took the tape over to Jerry and Nancy's place but they weren't home so I dropped the tape through the mail slot. Nancy had this big dog and afterwards I worried that the dog would eat the tape before Jerry got back."

"'Born to be Wild' didn't stand out initially. Even the publishers at Leeds Music didn't take it as the first or second song I gave them. They got it only because I signed as a staff writer. Luckily it stood out for Steppenwolf...For me at the time, it was just another song of many that I was writing and i liked them all."

JERRY EDMONTON

"I was used to hearing songs with just acoustic guitar and voice. That's how John used to play new songs for me. I put Mars's tape on and thought, 'This is great!' this sounds like the band.' I took it over to John and Jutta's place and put it on his tape machine. Everybody listened to it twice through with Micheal copping that guiter riff right away. As soon as he started playing that riff, the band just fell in behind him. It took about twenty minutes and that was it. That's the way the song has always been, never changed. When John started singing, it was almost like Mars couldn't have written a better song for John's voice. That sound was classic Steppenwolf."

"The funny thing was, the song didn't stand out to Jay Lasker at Dunhill Records or his group of guys when we played it to them...The song was ready, it just took the executives another half a year to be ready for it."

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Get your motor runnin'
Head out on the highway
Lookin' for adventure
And whatever comes our way
Yeah Darlin' go make it happen
Take the world in a love embrace
Fire all of your guns at once
And explode into space

I like smoke and lightning
Heavy metal thunder
Racin' with the wind
And the feelin' that I'm under
Yeah Darlin' go make it happen
Take the world in a love embrace
Fire all of your guns at once
And explode into space

Like a true nature's child
We were born, born to be wild
We can climb so high
I never wanna die

Born to be wild
Born to be wild
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