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Best rock songs about losing a loved one

When you strip songwriting to the most important topics, you usually have stories of love and stories of death. Today we focus on the latter of the Top 10 Songs About Death. As long as rock and roll is already around, musicians are obsessed with their mortality – not surprisingly, given how many of their fellow rockers died tragically young. Despite being a true downer of the subject, some of the following tracks are fun, some are inspiring, and others only illustrate how great the outside is to Dylan's universally fascinating subject. 10 Bob Dylan From: Planet Waves (1974) From: The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll to Knockin' on Heaven's Door to the whole Time Out of Mind, Bob Dylan has spent quite a bit of time writing about the life of the last act. On this chestnut, ol' Bob contemplates suicide with the help of the band. I just got to the place / Where the willow does not bend, hows. It's a serious, dark and soulful song. 9 Rolling Stones From: 'Goats Head Soup' (1973) Jagger wonders: Will it be poison, a glass dunk? / Will it be slow or will it be fast? Perhaps he was referring to his crime partner, Keith Richards. Between drug addiction, house fires, brutal falls and near-electric shock, Keef danced with Mr. D all his life. 8 Bruce Springsteen From: Working on a Dream (2009) Bruce Springsteen and his E Street Band have proven resistant in the face of death and continue to push for following the deaths of founding members Clarence Clemons and Danny Federici in recent years. This song, with the otherwise upbeat Working on a Dream, finds Springsteen paying tribute to one of them, returning the 1973 'Wild Billy's Circus Story, on which Federici played an accordion (his son Jason performs honors this time). Bruce laments: We're not going to dance together on a high wire / In the face of a line with you by my side, and he sings about how the train is still rolling. 7 Metallica From: 'Ride the Lightning' (1984) Metal legends contributed to one of the top 10 songs about death at a time when band members were obsessed with the subject (after all, ride the lightning refers to an electric chair). Fadi to Black was Metallica's first ballad and the first to set a slow and heavy template to which the band would return. In the epic song, frontman James Hetfield roars about suicide and the void that fills it. He had his own brush with death when, while performing the song in 1992, he entered the pyrotechnic stage effect and suffered second and third degree burns. 6 Warren Zevon From: Wind (2003) It's one thing to theorize about your or think about a fallen friend. It's another write song about staring at your own mortality in the face. That's what singer-songwriter Warren Zevon did in 2003, after getting a short time to live with terminal mesothelioma. Weary Zevon chews on the topic of sowing this mortal coil and hopes that his loved ones will not forget him. He sings in simple words, which makes his more poetic lyrics all the more significant. The engine driver headed north to Pleasant Stream, Zevon warbles over a scintillating acoustic guitar. Keep me in your hearing for a moment. He died two weeks after the release of his last album. 5 Led Zeppelin From: 'Physical Graffiti' (1975) Although the subtitles for the album spoke of others, Led Zeppelin did not write In My Time of Dying. It's an old gospel melody that dug in for at least 50 years before the boys appeased it. Dylan even made a version on his debut LP. But no one except Zeppelin could do it, making him an 11-minute stunner (the band's longest studio track) with a woody slide from Jimmy Page and a relentless banging from John Bonham, who accidentally ends the song with a coughing fit. Through the song, Robert Plant sings an appeal for deliverance, despite his transgressions, and the band delivers one of the most exciting performances of his career. 4 Gordon Lightfoot From: Summertime Dream (1976) The nerds of the record store at High Fidelity call it one of the best songs of death, and we must agree. Gordon Lightfoot's modern version of the sea shanty was inspired by an actual mass carrier that sank at Lake Superior in November 1975, taking its 29-member crew to an icy grave. The Canadian songwriter (himself a sailing enthusiast) tells the story zealously and with a little creative license, insisting on a tragic story and punishing the forces of nature against which no one can win. In the middle of the storm, he allows himself a philosophical moment: Does anyone know where God's love goes / When the waves turn minutes into hours? 8 Queen From: Innuendo (1991) Brian May was the main player behind this Queen barnstormer, who is about frontman Freddie Mercury pushing himself to the brink of exhaustion as a performer as he was getting weaker and weaker than his fight against AIDS. At the end of the song, Mercury Belts, I have to find the woes to continue. At the time - about a year before Freddie's death in 1991 - May did not know if Mercury would be able to deliver the powerful vocals the song required. He was thrilled to see his bandmates gather all his strength to tear the song to shreds. The show must go on, indeed. 2 Eric Clapton From: Rush (1992) After the tragic death of his four-year-old son Conor, Eric Clapton found comfort in writing songs. The result was this heartfelt ballad, in which the guitar perfectly imagines a situation in which he can spend a little more time with his little boy. But Tears in Heaven is not only death, but determination to deal with all-encompassing sorrow. Behind the door / There is peace, I'm sure singing, sounding unconvinced. E.C. actually withdrew the song from his performances in 2004, feeling that he couldn't connect with it in the way he did in the years after Conor's death (such as on the 1992 Grammy-winning Unplugged album). But in 2013 he started playing Tears in Heaven again. 1 Blue Oyster Cult From: Agents of Fortune (1976) Proving that death and the bell go together like Romeo and Juliet is the song that ends Top 10 Songs About Death. Frontman Buck Dharma wrote the classic Blue Oyster Cult, contemplating an early fall for himself. While some misinterpreted (Don't Fear) The Reaper as a song about some sort of murder-suicide arrangement, Dharma (a.k.a. Donald Roeser) went on a record that he wrote about the inevitability of death and the inability to fear it. Radio staples don't just become the blue oyster cult's biggest hit; it also inspired Stephen King's The Stand and a Saturday Night Live skit. But even more cowbell will save you from the grim reaper. Peter Zelei Images / Getty Images Death is part of the life cycle. But this may be one of the most difficult and painful topics to discuss. Despite the fact that it is such a complicated, emotional subject, many great rock songs have referred to dying, from different perspectives. This list is limited to works from the 80's to the present, with only one song per artist. Total Assault I don't want to feel any longer, Alice in Chains main man Jerry Cantrell sings at the beginning of Black Gives Way to Blue. It is easier to fall. This wonderful ballad about Layne Staley, the former lead singer of the band who died in 2002 from a drug overdose, is teeming with pain and sadness, as if the grieving process was still very fresh. And as a sign of how sadness can bring together very different people, Elton John played the piano in the song. Frazer Harrison / Getty Images So many Drive-By Truckers songs cope with difficult times that it's hard to pick just one death-themed song from the band. But the nod goes to the Angels and Hull, an eight-minute epic that ends with their two-album set of Southern Rock Opera. The album often refers to the passing of Ronnie Van Zant, leader of Lynyrd Skynyrd, in the 1977 plane crash, and the Angels and Hull solve the subject head-on, imagining Van Zant's final moments. It's a slow, sad song, an interesting counterpoint to what one might assume was a panicked, terrifying scene for Van Zant, as well as other passengers of the doomed flight. Green Day is known for his rabid punk anthems, but Wake Me Up When September Ends wisely describes how he reminds frontman Billie Joe Armstrong every September of his father's death as a child. This American Idiot standout album ends with a rousing, all-guns-blazing note, but long-festering feelings and lingering losses are the emotional anchor of the song. Theo Wargo / Getty Images Heavy metal is often accused of provoking suicidal thoughts in vulnerable listeners. But, one of the best songs of the genre on the subject looks deeply at the depression and uncertainty that sometimes make life unbearable. Metallica's Faded to Black was written long before the band's multi-platinum success in the 1990s, and frontman James Hetfield rejects the volume to sincerely acknowledge his sense of futility. I was me, but now it is gone, regrets deciding that death will be better. Fortunately, Hetfield is still nearby. And, hopefully, so are the many lost souls who have gained comfort from the blunt study of the song's havoc. Troy Augusto / Getty Images For much of the first decade of Pearl Jam's career, lead singer Eddie Vedder covered topics such as alienation and murder. But for Last Kiss, a 1990s melody cover, the band seemed to take things a bit easier by performing a fluffy pop tune about a guy who gets into a car accident that killed his girlfriend. The subject was serious, but Pearl Jam's treatment made me feel almost nostalgic or tongue in cheek. Well, the joke was on Pearl Jam: It turned out to be one of their greatest hits of all time. The intensity of radiohead singer Thom Yorke's performance on Videotape may lead the listener to wonder if he's plotting suicide. Imagining going to heaven, probably after taking his own life, Yorke sounds not scared or sorry, but incredibly calm, stating that today was the most perfect day I've ever seen. Jittery drums and an icy piano create an alarming juxtaposition that complements the tone of the text: The end of life is a horrible moment, yet strangely beautiful. While some songs about death are vague or ambiguous, Brendan's Death Song Red Hot Chili Peppers is very specific. Written in honor of the departure of their friend Brendan Mullen, the song says goodbye to him, while frontman Anthony Kiedis imagines what his death will look like. Given how many deaths band members have experienced over the course of their careers, original guitarist Hillel Slovak has died of a drug overdose, the compassion that runs through Brendan's Death Song can be felt in any chord change. R.E.M. has devoted much of his 1992 album Automatic for the People, including references to the late performers Andy Kaufman (Man on the Moon) and Montgomery Clift (Monty Got a Raw Deal), but Try Not to Breathe remains the song that cuts the deepest. Imagining himself as an old man, singer Michael Stipe talks to his loved ones, asking them to remember him after his death. Stark beauty of the song has the simplicity of the funeral march. Kevin Winter / Getty Images. While other songs on this list approach death and suicide with compassion or sadness, Glebe from System Down expresses himself Anger. By pounding drums and furious riffs, singer Serj Tankian tears into a friend who killed himself. Although they are happy happy loss eats the narrator, causing him to wonder if he could do anything else to help. Often grief is experienced as sadness, but Soil is the moment when rage and confusion take over. Dave Hogan / Getty Images Many U2 songs touch on death, but Pride (In the Name of Love) may be the most famous band. A tribute to Father Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the song celebrates anyone who stands up to injustice with courage and love. Although King was murdered, the song claims his message of tolerance and equal rights lives. 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