

TUNE INTO ENGLISH

Talking Heads' Psycho Killer



È una delle canzoni più conosciute e ballate della band fondata da David Byrne. Si distingue per il ritmo coinvolgente, i testi accattivanti e il divertente intreccio di inglese e francese.

New York art rock band Talking Heads' signature song *Psycho Killer* is a bilingual look inside the **deranged**¹ mind of an assassin with multiple personalities. Taken from their 1977 debut album "Talking Heads: 77", it was one of singer David Byrne's first attempts at song writing, and was inspired by hard rock singer Alice Cooper and "bad guys in movies." This is most evident in the **chorus**²'s **refrain**³ of "Fa-fa-fa-fa, fa-fa-fa-fa, fa", an apparent reference to Alfred Hitchcock's classic horror movie *Psycho*, where protagonist Norman Bates **stutters**⁴ over the word 'falsity'.

The opening verse is a **jittery**⁵ **stream of consciousness**⁶ from a crazed serial killer

with the later use of French suggesting he suffers from Jekyll and Hyde syndrome. The bridge, written by bassist Tina Weymouth (whose mother was from Brittany), is a murderous confession with the illusion that the singer's crimes will lead him to glory. Byrne originally asked an ex-girlfriend to write this in Japanese, but she refused when she heard the name of the song. Although written four years earlier, the single was **released**⁷ shortly after the arrest of notorious New York serial killer David Berkowitz, better known by his pen name⁸ Son of Sam. This helped the track become a minor hit. It has since been **hailed**⁹ as a **masterpiece**¹⁰ of post-punk and is listed in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. ☺

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03

LOWER INTERMEDIATE B1

GLOSSARY

- 1 **deranged**: folle
- 2 **chorus**: coro
- 3 **refrain**: ritornello
- 4 **to stutter**: balbettare
- 5 **jittery**: agitato
- 6 **stream of consciousness**: flusso di coscienza
- 7 **to release**: pubblicare
- 8 **pen name**: pseudonimo
- 9 **to hail**: accogliere
- 10 **masterpiece**: capolavoro
- 11 **live wire**: cavo sotto tensione
- 12 **borderline**: limite

David Byrne with his New York City band Talking Heads performing in the late 1970s. Top right: the single of *Psycho Killer* with the song *Pulled Up* on the B-side.



face up to: this phrasal verb means to accept a difficult situation.

'cause: an abbreviation of 'because'.

qu'est-ce que c'est?: French for "what is this?"

This translates as "What I did that night What she said that night Fulfilling my hope I'm launching towards glory, okay"

I can't seem to **face up to** the facts
I'm tense and nervous and I can't relax
I can't sleep **'cause my bed's on fire**
Don't touch me, I'm a real **live wire**¹¹

Psycho killer, **qu'est-ce que c'est?**
Fa-fa-fa-fa, fa-fa-fa-fa, fa, better
Run, run, run, run, run, run, run away
Oh, oh
Psycho killer, **qu'est-ce que c'est?**
Fa-fa-fa-fa, fa-fa-fa-fa, fa, better
Run, run, run, run, run, run, run away
Oh, oh, oh, oh, aye-ya-ya-ya-ya

You start a conversation, you can't even finish it
You're talking a lot, but you're not saying anything
When I have nothing to say, my lips are sealed
Say something once, why say it again?

Psycho killer, **qu'est-ce que c'est?**
Fa-fa-fa-fa, fa-fa-fa-fa, fa, better
Run, run, run, run, run, run, run away
Oh, oh
Psycho killer, **qu'est-ce que c'est?**
Fa-fa-fa-fa, fa-fa-fa-fa, fa, better
Run, run, run, run, run, run, run away
Oh, oh, oh, oh, aye-ya-ya-ya-ya

Ce que j'ai fait, ce soir-là
Ce qu'elle a dit, ce soir-là
Réalisant mon espoir
Je me lance, vers la gloire, okay
Aye-ya-ya-ya-ya-ya-ya-ya-ya-yeah
We are vain and we are blind
I hate people when they're not polite

Psycho killer, **qu'est-ce que c'est?**
Fa-fa-fa-fa, fa-fa-fa-fa, fa, better
Run, run, run, run, run, run, run away
Oh, oh
Psycho killer, **qu'est-ce que c'est?**
Fa-fa-fa-fa, fa-fa-fa-fa, fa, better
Run, run, run, run, run, run, run away
Oh, oh, oh, oh, aye-ya-ya-ya-ya
Ooh

Hey, hey, hey, hey

my bed's on fire: this is a metaphor for the singer's anxiety at night.

live wire: an electrical metaphor, this personality trait implies the singer is ready to explode.

This verse also refers to singer David Byrne, who suffers from **borderline**¹² Asperger's syndrome.

Scan this QR code with your smartphone or tablet and listen to the official song on YouTube while reading the lyrics.



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