

TUNE INTO ENGLISH

The White Stripes' Seven Nation Army

Il duo di Detroit sprigiona un carisma rivoluzionario e senza tempo con i soli suoni di chitarra, batteria e voce, trasformando questa canzone in un inno di battaglia.



Meg White and Jack White of The White Stripes perform at Madison Square Garden in New York City in 2007.



LOWER INTERMEDIATE **B1**

GLOSSARY

- 1 **breakthrough:** primo successo
- 2 **gossip:** pettegolezzi
- 3 **siblings:** fratelli
- 4 **to mislead:** ingannare
- 5 **to spread:** diffondere
- 6 **to date:** frequentare
- 7 **to plot:** tramare
- 8 **to dry up:** prosciugare
- 9 **to sound-check:** fare il controllo del suono
- 10 **to label:** etichettare
- 11 **Salvation Army:** Esercito della Salvezza
- 12 **catchy track:** brano orecchiabile
- 13 **anthem:** inno
- 14 **to rip off:** rubare
- 15 **to and fro:** avanti e indietro
- 16 **sweat:** sudore
- 17 **to drip out:** sgocciolare
- 18 **to bleed':** sanguinare
- 19 **stains:** macchie

More renowned for its seven-note bass guitar riff than its lyrics, The White Stripes' 2003 breakthrough ¹ single *Seven Nation Army* was composed as an angry reaction to gossip ². At the time the Detroit-based duo of guitarist and vocalist Jack White and drummer Meg White was the subject of media scrutiny, with speculation as to whether the pair were married or were siblings ³ (they were, in fact, divorced, but deliberately misled ⁴ journalists). Jack later told *Rolling Stone* magazine that inspiration for the song actually came from "a frustration of watching my friends spreading ⁵ lies and the other person's reaction to it." But he also said that "It's about me, Meg and the people we're dating ⁶."

The song's protagonist has heard that there is someone spreading rumours about him, and plots ⁷ his revenge. In the third verse, he decides to leave town instead and do manual labour, but then, in a biblical reference, realises his creativity would dry up ⁸, and decides to stay.

Jack White came up with the iconic bassline while sound-checking ⁹ before a show in Melbourne, Australia. To remember it, he labelled ¹⁰ it "Seven Nation Army", his childhood name for the Salvation Army ¹¹ charity. As well as winning a Grammy for Best Rock Song, the catchy track ¹² became a sporting anthem ¹³, experiencing an international revival in 2006 when Italy won the FIFA World Cup. ☺

wanna/gonna: 'want to' and 'going to' are often shortened in songs and spoken English to make them flow more naturally.

takin' their time: not hurrying. The final 'g' in many gerunds is often omitted in songs to make the words flow better.

back and forth: a synonym of 'to and fro' ¹⁵, meaning movement in both directions.

o': a spoken or sung abbreviation of 'of'.

ain't: slang for 'isn't', often used in songs.

work the straw: a metaphor for working on the land, in agriculture.



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

I'm gonna fight 'em off

A seven nation army couldn't hold me back

They're gonna rip it off ¹⁴

Takin' their time right behind my back

And I'm talkin' to myself at night

Because I can't forget

Back and forth through my mind

Behind a cigarette

And the message comin' from my eyes

Says "Leave it alone"

Don't wanna hear about it

Every single one's got a story to tell

Everyone knows about it

From the Queen o' England to the Hounds of Hell

And if I catch it comin' back my way

I'm gonna serve it to you

And that ain't what you want to hear

But that's what I'll do

And the feelin' comin' from my bones

Says "Find a home"

I'm goin' to Wichita

Far from this opera forevermore

I'm gonna work the straw

Make the sweat ¹⁶ drip out ¹⁷ of every pore

And I'm bleedin' ¹⁸, and I'm bleedin', and I'm bleedin'

Right before the Lord

All the words are gonna bleed from me

And I will think no more

And the stains ¹⁹ comin' from my blood

Tell me "Go back home"

fight 'em off: 'to fight someone off' is a phrasal verb meaning to defend oneself from an attack. 'em is a spoken abbreviation of 'them'.

hold me back: a phrasal verb meaning to prevent someone from doing something.

Hounds of Hell: mythological ferocious dogs.

forevermore: a more emphatic synonym of 'forever'.

right before the Lord: in the tradition of blues songs, this is a reference to facing God. Jack White called this song a "blues at the beginning of the twenty-first century".

Fergal Kavanagh runs the website www.tuneintoenglish.com, the web's largest free resource for learning English through pop music.

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