

Drive-By Truckers

"The Day John Henry Died"

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I watched the rain it settled in we disappeared for days
again
Most of us were stayin' in, lazy like the sky
The letters flew across the wire filtered through a
million liars
The whole world smelled like burning tires the day John
Henry died

We knew about that big machine that ran on human
hope and steam
Bets on John were far between and mostly on the side
We heard he put up quite a fight his hands and feet
turned snowy white
That hammer rang out through the night the day John
Henry died

When John Henry was a little bitty baby
Nobody ever taught him how to read
But he knew the perfect way to hold a hammer
Was the way the railroad baron held the deed

It didn't matter if he won, if he lived, or if he'd run
They changed the way his job was done, labor costs
were high
That new machine was cheap as hell and only John
would work as well
So they left him laying where he fell the day John Henry
died

John Henry was a steel-driving bastard
But John Henry was a bastard just the same
An engine never thinks about his daddy
And an engine never needs to write its name

So pack your bags, we're headed west and L.A. ain't no
place to rest
You'll need some sleep to pass the test, so get some
on the flight
And say your prayers John Henry Ford
'Cause we don't need your work no more
You should have known the final score the day John
Henry died

The day John Henry died

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