

= Songs from the Black Hole =

Songs from the Black Hole is an unfinished , unreleased album by the American alternative rock band Weezer , once intended to follow their 1994 self @-@ titled debut album . It was to be a science fiction rock opera that expressed songwriter Rivers Cuomo 's mixed feelings about rock and roll success . Its six characters were to be voiced by Cuomo , guitarist Brian Bell and bassist Matt Sharp of Weezer , Rachel Haden of That Dog and the Rentals , Joan Wasser of the Dambuilders , and Weezer collaborator Karl Koch .

Cuomo recorded demos for Songs from the Black Hole over Christmas 1994 , and Weezer worked on the album in recording sessions over the following year . At the end of 1995 , Cuomo enrolled at Harvard University , where his songwriting became darker and more confessional . Feeling the Black Hole concept was " too whimsical " , he abandoned it and Weezer 's second album became Pinkerton ( 1996 ) , featuring songs once intended for Songs from the Black Hole and new songs written at Harvard .

Two Songs from the Black Hole tracks , " I Just Threw Out the Love of My Dreams " ( with Haden on vocals ) and " Devotion " , were released as B @-@ sides for the Pinkerton singles " El Scorcho " and " The Good Life " respectively . Many of Cuomo 's demos were eventually released across the compilation albums Alone - The Home Recordings of Rivers Cuomo ( 2007 ) , Alone II : The Home Recordings of Rivers Cuomo ( 2008 ) and Alone III : The Pinkerton Years ( 2011 ) , and on the 2010 " deluxe " reissue of Pinkerton . Lyrics and sheet music were included with The Pinkerton Diaries , a book collecting Cuomo 's writings from the era . In 2007 , Rolling Stone named Songs from the Black Hole one of rock music 's " mythical lost masterpieces " .

= = Background = =

Weezer 's self @-@ titled debut album , also known as the Blue album , was released in May 1994 and became a commercial success ; it was certified gold on December 1 and platinum on January 1 , 1995 , with sales of over one million . Songwriter Rivers Cuomo wrote that success had " stirred up a lot of mixed feelings in me ? ' Yay , I 'm happy ' as well as ' I 'm not sure this is the life I want to lead . ' " He had also developed a " huge inferiority complex " about rock music , saying : " I thought my songs were really simplistic and silly , and I wanted to write complex , intense , beautiful music . " Touring with Weezer , he listened to the operas Aida ( 1871 ) and Madama Butterfly ( 1904 ) , the rock opera Jesus Christ Superstar ( 1970 ) , and the musical Les Misérables ( 1980 ) . Inspired by how these works married music and narrative , he decided to write a rock opera to explore his feelings about relationships , fame , and his life as a touring musician .

= = Concept = =

Songs From the Black Hole was to be a science fiction rock opera with tracks that segued seamlessly , ending with a coda that revisited the album 's major musical themes .

In 2126 , the spaceship Betsy II embarks on a galaxy @-@ wide mission . Crew members Wuan ( to be voiced by Weezer guitarist Brian Bell ) and Dondó ( bassist Matt Sharp ) are in high spirits , but the ship 's captain , Jonas ( Cuomo ) , has mixed feelings . The ship 's robot , M1 ( Weezer collaborator Karl Koch ) , urges the crew to stay focused on their objective . Jonas becomes involved in a love triangle with " good girl " Laurel ( Rachel Haden of That Dog and the Rentals ) , and the ship 's cook , " bad girl " Maria ( Joan Wasser of the Dambuilders ) , with whom he fathers a child . When the Betsy II reaches its destination , Jonas is disillusioned and longs to return to a simpler life .

Cuomo said the story was a metaphor for his conflicted feelings about " heading out on tour and up the charts with a rock band . " The ship 's name Betsy II is taken from Weezer 's first tour bus , nicknamed Betsy ; M1 represents Weezer 's management and record label ; Wuan and Dondó represent the part of Cuomo that was excited about rock and roll success ; Jonas represents his doubts and longing ; Laurel and Maria represent his relationships with women .

= = Recording and abandonment = =

Cuomo recorded demos for Songs from the Black Hole on an 8 @-@ track recorder at his family home in Connecticut over Christmas 1994 . Most of the songs already existed and were rewritten to fit the Songs for the Black Hole concept . Cuomo performed every part himself , pitch @-@ shifting his voice for the female characters . Wanting to add a " sci @-@ fi " element to Weezer 's guitar rock sound , he used synthesizers including a Electrocomp 101 monophonic synthesizer he had recently purchased from a pawn shop in rural Connecticut . By February , he had completed an initial track list . While Weezer was on tour in Europe later that month , Sharp returned to America because of a family emergency , leaving the band stranded in Hamburg for a week . Cuomo rented a recording studio and recorded additional demos , including a version of " Blast Off ! " using a vocoder for the robot character of M1 .

In March 1995 , Cuomo , who was born with one leg shorter than the other , had extensive surgery to lengthen his leg followed by months of painful physiotherapy sessions . This affected his songwriting , as he would spend long periods hospitalized under the influence of painkillers . According to Cuomo , around this time the rock opera concept " started to feel too whimsical for where I was emotionally , going through the pain of the procedure ... I went to a more serious and dark place . "

Recording began in August 1995 in New York City 's Electric Lady Studios , where Weezer had recorded their debut album , but the new sessions were not productive . Further sessions were held in September and October , and Weezer recorded versions of " Blast Off ! " , " Longtime Sunshine " , " I Just Threw Out the Love of My Dreams " , " Tired of Sex " and " Getchoo " . Weezer had not yet abandoned Songs from the Black Hole , but the songs were recorded , according to Koch , with " no story , no theatrics , no characters . "

At the end of 1995 , wanting to " escape the limelight " , Cuomo enrolled at Harvard University to study classical composition . Becoming socially isolated , and still recovering from surgery , Cuomo 's songwriting became , according to Koch , " darker , more visceral and exposed , less playful . " In January 1996 , Weezer restarted recording in Los Angeles at Sound City Studios with new material . The Songs from the Black Hole tracks " Superfriend " , " She 's Had a Girl " and " Dude , We 're Finally Landing " were recorded , but shelved . By May 1996 , Cuomo had settled on a new direction for Weezer 's second album , expressing his loneliness and frustration at Harvard , and Songs from the Black Hole was abandoned . The decision was influenced by that year 's release of Return of the Rentals , the debut album by Sharp 's band the Rentals , as Cuomo felt it shared many musical and lyrical themes .

Weezer 's second album became Pinkerton , released on September 24 , 1996 . It includes " Tired of Sex " , " Getchoo " and " No Other One " : songs written before Songs from the Black Hole was conceived , rewritten to fit the Black Hole concept , and finally rewritten again for Pinkerton . In June 1996 , after Pinkerton 's completion , Weezer recorded the Songs from the Black Hole tracks " I Just Threw Out the Love of My Dreams " ( with Rachel Haden on vocals ) and " Devotion " as B @-@ sides for the singles " El Scorcho " and " The Good Life " respectively .

= = Demo releases = =

In 1998 , Cuomo discussed releasing a compilation of his demos with Weezer 's record label Geffen Records , including Songs from the Black Hole tracks , but the label feared it would " dilute " the Weezer brand . Fans petitioned to have Songs from the Black Hole released . On December 18 , 2007 , after further negotiation with Geffen , Cuomo released Alone - The Home Recordings of Rivers Cuomo , a compilation of his demos recorded from 1992 to 2007 . The album includes five Songs From the Black Hole demos : " Longtime Sunshine " , " Blast Off ! " , " Who You Callin ' Bitch ? " , " Dude , We 're Finally Landing " , and " Superfriend " .

On November 25 , 2008 , Cuomo released Alone II : The Home Recordings of Rivers Cuomo , including " Oh Jonas " , " Please Remember " and " Come to My Pod " . On November 2 , 2010 ,

Geffen released a " deluxe " reissue of Pinkerton , including a version of " Longtime Sunshine " recorded at Electric Lady Studios in August 1995 and Cuomo 's demo of " You Won 't Get With Me Tonight " .

On December 12 , 2011 , Cuomo released Alone III : The Pinkerton Years , including a " Suite from the Black Hole " comprising " Oh No , This Is Not For Me " , " Tired of Sex " , " She 's Had a Girl " , " What is This I Find ? " , " Now I Finally See " and " Longtime Sunshine " . The album was sold exclusively with a book , The Pinkerton Diaries , which collects Cuomo 's writings from the era , including Songs from the Black Hole lyrics and sheet music .

= = Legacy = =

In 2007 , Rolling Stone named Songs from the Black Hole one of rock music 's " mythical lost masterpieces . " In 2012 , Complex included the album on its list of " 50 Unreleased Albums We 'd Kill to Hear " , writing that " most of Weezer 's best material was recorded during the Blue Album to Pinkerton era . Naturally , we 'd love to see more Weezer records from the period . " In June 2014 , the NME included the album on its list of " 25 Unreleased Albums We 'd Really Love To Hear " , but conceded that Pinkerton was " not exactly the worst second prize . " In a December 2014 article titled " Weezer 's ' lost ' science @-@ fiction rock opera is better than almost everything they 've released in the last fifteen years " , Vice wrote that Songs from the Black Hole " deserves to be ahead of most records in every Weezer fan 's collection . "

Reviewing Alone , Pitchfork writer Jason Crock felt that the Black Hole demo " Blast Off ! " was the album 's " crown jewel " , writing that " it is such a fleeting rush of distortion @-@ driven joy that the edges of the supposed dialogue are entirely blurred , and are hardly essential to enjoy it ... [ it is ] at least on par with Pinkerton 's stellar B @-@ sides ( many of which would have made up Songs from the Black Hole ) . " Reviewing Alone II , Crock found that its Songs from the Black Hole demos were " all goofy , off @-@ the @-@ cuff , and charming . "

The American band Tera Melos included a cover of " Blast Off ! " on their 2009 EP IDIOMS vol . I. In 2013 , the Weezer tribute act Operation Space Opera released an album recreating Songs from the Black Hole from Cuomo 's demos and writing .

= = Track lists = =

Cuomo compiled track list 1 in February 1995 and track list 2 in late 1995 .

= = = Track list 1 = = =

= = = Track list 2 = = =