

= Silent Alarm =

Silent Alarm is the debut studio album by British indie rock band Bloc Party . Recorded in Copenhagen and London in mid 2004 with producer Paul Epworth , it was released in February 2005 on Wichita Recordings . The record peaked at number three on the United Kingdom Albums Chart . In the United States , it entered the Billboard 200 at number 114 and the Billboard Top Independent Albums at number seven . The double A side " So Here We Are / Positive Tension " , " Banquet " , and " Pioneers " were released as singles . Silent Alarm went on to achieve worldwide sales of over one million copies .

Bloc Party aimed to create an album that appealed to followers of different musical genres . Building on the arrangements in their demo songs recorded in 2004 , the band members moulded tracks largely through live takes during the Silent Alarm studio sessions . The compositional focus was on rhythm and the drum and bass parts , while lyricist Kele Okereke 's writing examined the feelings and hopes of young adults , including views on global politics . Following the album 's completion , Bloc Party embarked on promotional tours before its release .

Silent Alarm garnered widespread critical acclaim with praise often centered on its fast tempo and passionate delivery . Later in 2005 , it was remixed as Silent Alarm Remixed and was re-released with bonus tracks to coincide with Bloc Party 's worldwide touring schedule . The album has received accolades throughout the music industry since its release .

= Background =

In 2003 , Bloc Party consisted of guitarists Kele Okereke and Russell Lissack , and bassist Gordon Moakes . After drummer Matt Tong auditioned and joined the trio , the band members ' songwriting evolved and they started crafting tracks for Silent Alarm . Discussing the first demo " She 's Hearing Voices " , Okereke has stated that it " was really just a drum beat , which was something we couldn't do before because we relied on writing songs only with guitars " . Self-recorded in a small , hired space in Acton , London , the song was followed by the May 2004 double A side single , " Banquet / Staying Fat " , produced by Paul Epworth . Bloc Party EP was subsequently released by Moshi Moshi Records in the UK , containing all three previous songs and new material .

After exposés in British magazines and newspapers and a successful performance on BBC Radio 1 , Bloc Party received a contract offer from Parlophone . The band members declined the opportunity because they did not want to work for a major record label and instead signed a recording contract with East London indie label Wichita Recordings , chosen because it did not want to stamp its agenda on the conception of records . Frontman and chief writer Okereke wanted Silent Alarm to emphasise the importance of finding pleasure in small mundane things , because " those are the sort of things that can be incredibly touching " . The album was borne out of " a nagging youthful urgency " and the realisation that responsibility has to be taken for the first time as a young adult . Before recording started , Okereke attended singing lessons to open up his voice .

= Recording =

In June 2004 , Bloc Party convened at Deltalab Studios in Copenhagen to make Silent Alarm with Paul Epworth . The band had already written demo songs to record , but Okereke has noted that " it is a creative process and you have to let yourself be inspired while you 're in the studio as well " . The Deltalab set-up posed problems , because it included bare mains cables and dated , malfunctioning equipment from the 1960s and 1970s . Bloc Party took three sessions to get acquainted with Epworth 's methodology . The producer has called the recording time a " growing process " because Okereke was not wholly comfortable singing in front of people , especially after tonsil problems . Although the band members had preliminary ideas about a track 's rhythm , they did not know how songs were going to start or end . Okereke often asked Tong to play something on the drums , which inspired him to mould a track by adding guitar chords to the beat .

Bloc Party 's priority when recording Silent Alarm was " to give the music more depth , sonically

speaking " rather than focus on making a punk funk record . The band believed that 21st @-@ century rock music could only survive if people started " mixing styles that aren 't supposed to be together " . Okereke has suggested that forward @-@ thinking bands reach a plateau and start to question the boundaries of their medium ; this leads to experimentation with elements from other genres . Bloc Party set out to explore the idea of merging different styles in the debut album , rather than in later work . Silent Alarm was crafted to appeal to R & B , electro , and pop fans , on top of the band 's core indie rock fanbase . Okereke wanted the album to sound " very rich and full " .

Preferring live recording takes for better sound authenticity , Epworth 's style separated the band 's elements by accentuating the bass and by allowing the guitarists space to improvise . The producer meticulously tuned and retuned the components of the drum kit for a specific sound and used ribbon or condenser microphones lined up in an equidistant formation . According to Lissack , the basic idea was to emulate the " optimum audio representation " of songs heard in a club environment by adding guitar lines on top of boosted drum and bass tracks . Epworth advised Bloc Party to shape dynamics " a bit more subtly " . As the sessions progressed , the band members started experimenting with distortion pedals to add to their " chiming , clean guitar sound " , although they did not listen to the producer about song structure . In the end , 15 tracks were recorded in 22 days in Copenhagen , while the vocal overdubbing was subsequently done at London locations . Throughout the studio sessions , Okereke focused closely on the nuances of songs by often amending " microscopics " .

Epworth 's bass @-@ oriented production was key to creating a universally appealing album and was also used as a musical background to the lyrics . Okereke has explained that the songs were crafted to balance dark lyrics with uplifting melodies . He called the final version of Silent Alarm " technicolour " due to its stylistic choices and indicated that Bloc Party achieved the aim of making the songs sound " better and bigger " when they were recorded in the studio . Moakes later pointed out that the band members were relative novices when they entered the recording sessions , and that for the most part they only did what they were advised ; this is an additional reason why the album is disjunct and not focused on any particular musical style .

= = Composition = =

= = = Music = = =

Many of the arrangements on Silent Alarm are strongly percussive . The leading song , " Like Eating Glass " , was inspired by a remix of The Smiths ' " There Is a Light That Never Goes Out " Okereke heard in 2002 . Its drum track was deliberately mixed louder than usual to add emphasis to the album 's opening . " Helicopter " has a quick tempo of 171 beats per minute , while " Positive Tension " begins with a solitary bassline and builds up pace , first with a rhythmic drumming pattern , and then with a guitar solo towards its conclusion . " Banquet " involves lead guitar and rhythm guitar playing in syncopation , while " Blue Light " has a slower tempo and a crescendo towards the end . During the studio sessions , the Bloc Party EP version of " She 's Hearing Voices " was reworked to include reverberation and stereo separation of the instrumental parts . " This Modern Love " begins minimally with panned vocals before the rhythm section enters the mix and the song intensifies .

The second half of Silent Alarm includes more studio effects . " Pioneers " opens with a series of delayed guitar harmonics , while " Price of Gas " is driven by a marching @-@ like sound created by Moakes walking in the studio with planks of wood strapped to his feet . " So Here We Are " is the only track on the album to not include vocal overdubbing . The song contains layered audio tracks of guitar and is followed by " Luno " , which begins with 32 bars of bass guitar and drums . " Plans " has a slower tempo and uses a synthesizer and effects such as flanging during the chorus . The final track , " Compliments " , incorporates an electronic drum kit and the use of reverberation .

= = = Lyrics = = =

Silent Alarm does not contain a solitary lyrical centre and simply observes people 's lives . Okereke wanted to leave individual listeners space to make their own conclusions , but has admitted that the record " operates in the realm of cultural politics " . Much of the songwriting is inspired by the style of confessional poetry authors like Anne Sexton and musicians Thom Yorke and Björk . In general , Silent Alarm tries to make clear an existential pointlessness in life . With hindsight , Okereke noted themes of " helplessness and weariness " because of the album 's focus on how he was feeling between the ages of 18 and 20 . Professor John Sutherland has pointed out literary elements , often similar to Sylvia Plath 's work , in the lyricist 's writing . Discussing the opening track " Like Eating Glass " , he explained , " It strikes me that whoever did the lyrics must have read some of her work . It has the same rather jagged , surprising imagery . It could sit fairly comfortably in a poetry anthology . " The recurring line " We 've got crosses on our eyes " is inspired by cartoon characters who have crosses on their eyes when they die . Okereke tried to convey the feelings in a failing relationship , " of being completely disorientated " , using childhood metaphors .

According to Heather Phares of AllMusic , " Pioneers " and " Price of Gas " exemplify the political undercurrent on Silent Alarm , the latter including the explicit chant " War / War / War / War " . " Helicopter " focuses in equal measure on America 's " red states " and on UK apathy and " the people queueing for the McDonald 's by [Okereke 's] house " . " Positive Tension " concerns boredom and its dangers , focusing on how it " can lead you into dark places " , while " Banquet " details " how sex is about power , submission , domination and real rapacious desire " . The lyrics in the chorus of " She 's Hearing Voices " , " Red pill / Blue pill / Milk of amnesia " , are in reference to the medications a friend of Okereke 's took to relieve the symptoms of schizophrenia . The lyricist has described the moment in " This Modern Love " when the backing vocals enter the mix before the second chorus as " perfect " , because it evokes the idea of " two people on the telephone , who can 't touch each other , and as the song and the conversation progress , everything amplifies " .

= = Promotion and release = =

Bloc Party EP was distributed in America in September 2004 by Dim Mak Records , while the band performed several gigs at the end of the year in the US and Canada . The release of Silent Alarm was preceded by the marketing of Little Thoughts EP in Japan in December 2004 , containing previous UK singles " Little Thoughts / Tulips " and " Helicopter " and new material . Bloc Party commenced UK promotional touring in January 2005 by performing during the NME Awards Tour . " Tulips " was released from Little Thoughts EP in the US on 25 January . The first single from Silent Alarm , " So Here We Are / Positive Tension " , was released on 31 January and peaked at number five on the UK Singles Chart , the band 's second highest peaking release on the chart (behind 2007 's " The Prayer " which reached number 4) . Between 31 January and 4 February , Bloc Party performed after autograph signing sessions in UK HMV stores . The band achieved exposure largely because of word @-@ of @-@ mouth and favourable press reviews .

Silent Alarm was released on 2 and 14 February 2005 , in Japan and Europe respectively . Chosen because the album has a sense of disquiet , the name comes from an article in New Scientist about an early detection system for earthquakes in Japan , while the cover art is based on a bare winter landscape by freelance photographer Ness Sherry . Bloc Party followed the album 's release with a short European promotional tour in early March 2005 . Between 17 March and 9 April , the band undertook a first headlining US tour to coincide with the American release of Silent Alarm through Vice Records on 22 March . The US marketing was geared to establish a long @-@ term fan base among " tastemakers and early @-@ adopter rock enthusiasts " , rather than a short @-@ term emphasis on radio play . At the time , Okereke stated , " All I 'm concerned about is playing live shows here to people who want to see us . "

= = Reception = =

= = = Commercial = = =

Silent Alarm entered the UK Albums Chart and the Irish Albums Chart at number three , selling 61 @, @ 737 copies during the first week in the former country . The album achieved gold certification within 24 hours of its European release . 350 @, @ 000 copies were shipped worldwide by the first week of March 2005 ; 20 @, @ 000 were sent to America , double the record labels ' January forecast . In the US , the record entered the Billboard 200 at number 114 and the Billboard Top Independent Albums at number seven . With little radio support , it became the best @-@ selling release in Vice 's history as a label . 123 @, @ 000 copies of Silent Alarm were sold in the US by the end of July 2005 . The record was listed at number 75 in the end @-@ of @-@ year UK Album Chart and was certified platinum by the British Phonographic Industry after more than 500 @, @ 000 copies were sold in the UK during 2005 . According to Nielsen SoundScan , 280 @, @ 000 copies of the album were sold in the US by January 2007 . More than one million copies have been sold worldwide .

= = = Critical = = =

Silent Alarm was received to critical acclaim by both critics and musicians ; aggregating website Metacritic reports a normalised rating of 82 % based on 32 critical reviews which indicates " universal acclaim " . Drowned in Sound 's Gen Williams described the album as " mature and expansive " and wrote that " the autonomy , creativity and sheer , elastic beauty that spans this debut more than justifies the rapidly accelerating hype " . Andrew Romano of Newsweek similarly noted that it " lives up to the hype " . Summing the record up as " dance rock , but highly caffeinated " , Barry Walters of Rolling Stone explained that the tracks are emotive and rhythmic in equal measure , while Nick Southall of Stylus thought that every song is " full of thrilling ideas and inspired moments " . Johnny Davis of Q labelled Silent Alarm " an arty , confident and exhilarating debut " , while Joshua Glazer of URB compared Bloc Party to " every legendary band ever who followed an EP with an even better album and on into greatness " . The Guardian 's Alexis Petridis was less receptive and commented that the " reedy vocals and lyrical evocations of suburban ennui ... induce a worrying ennui of their own " . Heather Phares of Allmusic stated that the record is not perfect , but praised its " passion and polish " .

Romano and Glazer compared Silent Alarm to U2 's early work , while Walters claimed that it distills " twenty @-@ five years of spiky British rock , from The Cure to Blur to hot Scots Franz Ferdinand " . Pitchfork Media 's Nitsuh Adebé noted particular similarities between " Banquet " and Franz Ferdinand 's second single " Take Me Out " , calling both songs " wonderfully tight and energetic ? the same kind of spiffy half @-@ dancing rock " . Phares suggested that Bloc Party are more comfortable with lyrical proclamations than their contemporaries Franz Ferdinand or The Futureheads , while Imran Ahmed of NME concluded , " Silent Alarm is no Franz Ferdinand . In fact , listen to it with the words ' popular ' and ' arty ' in mind and its spirit is closer to the Manic Street Preachers ' The Holy Bible . "

= = Tours and supporting releases = =

By the end of April 2005 , Silent Alarm had charted in eighteen countries on four continents . Bloc Party toured in Japan with The Rakes at the start of May and completed a headlining tour of the US in June . The band members played their first concerts in Australia in July and spent the whole of August on the European festivals circuit . The remix album Silent Alarm Remixed was released on 29 August 2005 following Bloc Party 's headlining slots at the Reading and Leeds Festivals on 26 ? 28 August . The record includes reworked versions of all original tracks by artists such as Ladytron , Death From Above 1979 , and Nick Zinner from Yeah Yeah Yeahs .

In September 2005 , the band members embarked on their second major worldwide tour of the year ; they played several gigs in North America between 8 and 24 September . Another headlining UK tour during the whole of October coincided with the release of new single " Two More Years " . Silent

Alarm was re @-@ released in the UK on 17 October 2005 with " Little Thoughts " and " Two More Years " as bonus tracks . It contained a bonus DVD , God Bless Bloc Party , which included Bloc Party 's two June performances and backstage footage at El Rey Theatre , Los Angeles . Dan McIntosh of PopMatters stated that the concert documentary shows the band " can consistently pull off its material live " , but concluded that it focuses on Bloc Party " much too intently , far too soon " .

= = Accolades = =

Silent Alarm was shortlisted for the 2005 Mercury Music Prize , but was beaten by Antony and the Johnsons ' second album I Am a Bird Now . It was also nominated for the 2005 Shortlist Music Prize , but lost to Sufjan Stevens ' fifth album Illinois . The record was named Album of the Year for 2005 by NME ahead of Arcade Fire 's debut album Funeral , by Intro in Germany , and by Rumore in Italy . URB included Silent Alarm in its unnumbered shortlist of the best records of 2005 . It figured highly in other end @-@ of @-@ year best album lists : at number two by Hot Press and by Stylus , at number four by Drowned in Sound , at number six by Spin , at number seven by Metacritic 's chief editor , and at number nine by The Denver Post . Silent Alarm earned Bloc Party several nominations , including Best Alternative Act at the 2005 MTV Europe Music Awards , Best British Band at the 2006 NME Awards , and Artist of the Year at the 2006 PLUG Awards . The record itself won Indie Rock Album of the Year at the 2006 PLUG Awards . It was also nominated as Best Album at the 2006 NME Awards , and as Album of the Year at the 2006 PLUG Awards .

In 2006 , NME placed Silent Alarm at number 55 in its list of the 100 Greatest British Albums Ever ! , while Drowned in Sound ranked it at number three in its list of the editorial staff 's 66 favourite albums of 2000 ? 2006 . In 2009 , Clash placed the record at number 11 in its list of the 50 Greatest Albums , 2004 ? 2009 . The same year , Pitchfork Media ranked it at number 156 in its list of The Top 200 Albums of the 2000s , while NME included it at number 38 in the list of The Top 100 Greatest Albums of the Decade decided by the publication 's staff and music industry members . In 2010 , Stylus placed Silent Alarm at number 31 in its list of the Top Albums of the previous decade .

= = Track listing = =

All songs written and composed by Bloc Party .

Tracks 8 and 9 were mislabelled on album pressings as " The Pioneers " and " Price of Gasoline " respectively .

CD hidden track

" Every Time Is the Last Time " ? 3 : 10 ? track 0 (pregap) on the UK and US editions and after track 13 on the European edition

Vinyl

There were two UK LP copies of Silent Alarm distributed by V2 Records : a standard black vinyl copy , and a limited edition picture disc version which has the album cover printed on Side A and the track listing printed on Side B.

The US LP issue was distributed by Dim Mak Records . It comprises two limited edition 12 " records which additionally contain a track listing for " Every Time Is the Last Time " on Side A , the appearance of " Little Thoughts " on Side C , and four bonus remix tracks ? two of " Positive Tension " (Jason Clark and Johnny Whitney) and two of " Price of Gas " (Automato and Jus Ske) ? on Sides E and F.

DVD

A CD with an extra DVD was released in the UK and Europe in February 2005 at the same time as the normal CD version . The DVD portion contains live footage of Bloc Party at Heaven in London .

A new version of the CD with an extra DVD was released in the UK in October 2005 . The DVD , titled God Bless Bloc Party , contains a US tour documentary at El Rey Theatre , Los Angeles , live footage of Bloc Party at the 2005 Eurockéennes Festival in Belfort , France , and nine music videos from the band 's career .

God Bless Bloc Party was released as a stand @-@ alone DVD in the US by Vice in January 2006 , but did not include the music videos .

= = Personnel = =

Those involved in the making of Silent Alarm are :

= = Chart positions = =