

= The Eraser =

The Eraser is the debut solo album by Thom Yorke of the English alternative rock band Radiohead , released on 10 July 2006 on the independent label XL Recordings . It was produced by longtime Radiohead producer Nigel Godrich . The album comprises electronic music Yorke recorded during Radiohead 's 2004 hiatus and between their 2005 rehearsals , and makes heavy use of original samples .

The lyrics express Yorke 's political concerns . Lead single " Harrowdown Hill " was written about the death of David Kelly , a whistleblower who allegedly committed suicide after telling a reporter that the British government had falsely identified weapons of mass destruction in Iraq . The album artwork , by longtime Radiohead cover artist Stanley Donwood , was inspired by the legend of King Canute failing to command the ocean , which Yorke likened to government attitudes towards climate change .

The Eraser debuted at number three on the UK Albums Chart and number two on the American Billboard 200 . It was named one of the best albums of 2006 by the NME , Rolling Stone and the Observer , and was nominated for the 2006 Mercury Music Prize and the 2007 Grammy Award for Best Alternative Music Album .

Two singles were released from the album : " Analyse " and " Harrowdown Hill " . It was followed in the same year by a B @-@ sides EP , Spitting Feathers , and in 2009 a remix album , The Eraser Rmxs . In 2010 , to perform the album live , Yorke formed Atoms for Peace with musicians including Godrich and Red Hot Chili Peppers bassist Flea .

= = Recording = =

In 2004 , after finishing the tour for their sixth album Hail to the Thief (2003) , Radiohead went on hiatus . Songwriter Thom Yorke began recording The Eraser , his first solo release , with longtime Radiohead producer Nigel Godrich in late 2004 , and continued work throughout 2005 between Radiohead sessions . He told Pitchfork : " I 've been in the band since we left school and never dared do anything on my own ... It was like , ' Man , I 've got to find out what it feels like , ' you know ? "

The album was recorded in Radiohead 's Oxford studio , Godrich 's studio in Covent Garden , and Yorke 's home . Yorke wanted to " approach and engage with computers and not a lot else , and yet still have lots of life and energy in the music . " To generate ideas , he cut and pasted clips at random from Radiohead 's library of original samples , many of which were created on laptops in hotel rooms as the band toured . He would send sound fragments to Godrich , who identified passages that could become songs , edited them , and returned them to Yorke . Describing the collaborative process , Yorke said : " ' Black Swan ' , back in the day , was a ... nine @-@ minute load of bollocks . Except for this one juicy bit , and [Godrich] goes past and goes , ' That bit . Fuck the rest . ' Usually it 's something like that . "

To create the title track , Yorke sampled piano chords played by Radiohead guitarist Jonny Greenwood and cut them into a new order . " And it Rained All Night " contains an " enormously shredded @-@ up " sample from " The Gloaming " (from Hail to the Thief) , and " Black Swan " samples a rhythm recorded by Radiohead guitarist Ed O'Brien and drummer Philip Selway in 2000 . Yorke said " Harrowdown Hill " had been " kicking around " during the 2002 Hail to the Thief sessions , but felt it could not have worked as a Radiohead song .

Yorke initially intended to create instrumental tracks , but added vocals at the encouragement of Godrich . On Radiohead albums , Yorke had altered his voice with layers of reverb and digital effects ; however , for The Eraser , Godrich wanted Yorke 's voice to be " dry and loud . " As Yorke found it difficult to write lyrics to loops of music , saying he could not " react spontaneously and differently every time " , he translated the music to guitar and piano and generated new musical components in the process .

Yorke saved one song recorded in the Eraser sessions , " Last Flowers " , for the bonus disc of Radiohead 's seventh album , In Rainbows (2007) . Another song , " The Hollow Earth " , was

finished later and released as a single in 2009 .

= = Music and lyrics = =

The Observer described The Eraser as " an insidious collection of skittery beats and pattery rhythms and minimal post @-@ rockisms " . The LA Times described it as " an evocative portrait of life made slippery by urban sprawl , murky political alliances and global warming ... with the blips and bleeps of Yorke 's laptop excursions coalescing into soulful , politically charged songs . " Pitchfork described it as " glitchy , sour , feminine , brooding " . Citing inspiration from the 1997 Björk album Homogenic , Yorke said the album was designed to be heard in an " isolated space ? on headphones , or stuck in traffic . " Louis Patterson of the NME and Rob Sheffield of Rolling Stone likened the album to the 2000 Radiohead album Kid A.

David Fricke of Rolling Stone felt the album 's lyrics have an " emotional and pictorial directness , rare for Yorke " . According to the Globe and Mail , " The Clock " , influenced by Arabic music , is a " gliding , droning song about losing control while pretending ' that you are still in charge ' . " " Analyse " was inspired by a blackout Yorke experienced in his hometown Oxford : " The houses were all dark , with candlelight in the windows , which is obviously how it would have been when they were built . It was beautiful . " The album title was inspired by " these huge elephants that we have in the room at the moment , in the West , and people are desperately trying to erase them from public consciousness . "

Yorke wrote " Harrowdown Hill " about David Kelly , a whistleblower who allegedly committed suicide after telling a reporter that the British government had falsely identified weapons of mass destruction in Iraq . Kelly 's body was found in the Harrowdown Hill woods near Yorke 's former school in Oxfordshire . According to the Globe and Mail , the song resembles a love song with a sense of " menace " and " grim political showdown " . Yorke was uncomfortable about the subject matter and conscious of Kelly 's grieving family , but felt that " not to write it would perhaps have been worse . " In an interview with the Observer , he said it was " the most angry song " he had ever written .

= = Artwork and packaging = =

The Eraser cover art was created by longtime Radiohead artist Stanley Donwood . The artwork , a linocut titled London Views , depicts a figure standing before London destroyed by flood in imitation of King Canute failing to command the ocean . It was inspired by the 2004 Boscastle flood and an article by the environmentalist Jonathan Porritt comparing the British government 's attitude to climate change to the Canute legend . The album is packaged as a single large foldout containing the CD ; Donwood and Yorke wanted to avoid using plastic .

= = Release = =

On 11 May 2006 , Yorke posted a link to theeraser.net on the official Radiohead website . Two days later , he wrote in a press a press announcing The Eraser : " I have been itching to do something like this for ages . It was fun and quick to do ... Yes , it 's a record ! No , it 's not a Radiohead record . " He emphasised that Radiohead were not splitting up and that the album was made " with their blessing " . Before the album 's release , " Black Swan " was used in the closing credits of the film A Scanner Darkly .

The Eraser was released on July 11 , 2006 by the independent label XL Recordings on CD and vinyl . Yorke said he chose the label because " it 's very mellow . There 's no corporate ethic . All [major labels are] like that . Stupid little boys ' games ? especially really high up . " The album was also released on iTunes . It debuted at number three in the UK album chart and stayed in the top 100 for ten weeks . In the United States , it debuted at number two on the Billboard 200 , selling over 90 @,@ 000 copies in its first week . The album leaked online a month before release ; Yorke said he regretted not releasing the album as a download beforehand .

" Harrowdown Hill " was released as a single on August 21 and " Analyse " on November 6 . The album was followed in the same year by a B @-@ sides EP , Spitting Feathers , and in 2009 by The Eraser Rmxs , an album of remixes by various artists .

In 2009 , to perform The Eraser live , Yorke formed Atoms for Peace with musicians including Godrich and Red Hot Chili Peppers bassist Flea . The band performed eight North American shows in 2010 .

= = Critical reception = =

On the review aggregator site Metacritic , The Eraser has a score of 76 / 100 , indicating " generally favorable reviews " . Reviewing The Eraser for the NME , Louis Patterson praised Yorke 's vocals and wrote : " Some will mourn its lack of viscera ; its coldness ; its reluctance to rock . But it ? s yet another revealing glimpse into Yorke 's cryptic inner @-@ world , and one that has the courage not to hide its political message in code . " Rob Sheffield of Rolling Stone said : " These aren 't Radiohead songs , or demos for Radiohead songs . They 're something different , something we haven 't heard before ... it 's intensely beautiful , yet it explores the kind of emotional turmoil that makes the angst of [Radiohead albums] OK Computer or The Bends sound like kid stuff . " PopMatters wrote : " The Eraser isn 't a masterpiece , but it ? s much more than solo @-@ project divergence . Yorke has stayed focused and created a tight album that draws on its predecessors without being held to or afraid of them . "

In The Guardian , Alexis Petridis wrote that the album " offers a plethora of low @-@ key delights " , but " you can 't help imagining what it might have sounded like if Yorke had turned it over to Radiohead . " The Village Voice praised Yorke 's vocals , but found that " without the hooks of his inspirations or [Radiohead 's] density , the results offer pleasantries where they could provoke profound unpleasanties . " Pitchfork wrote that The Eraser is " strikingly beautiful and thuddingly boring in maddeningly equal measure . "

The Eraser was named the 15th best album of 2006 by the NME , the 30th by the Observer , and the 34th by Rolling Stone . It was nominated for the 2006 Mercury Prize and the 2007 Grammy Award for Best Alternative Music Album .

= = Track listing = =

All songs written and composed by Thom Yorke , except where noted .

= = Personnel = =

Adapted from the album liner notes .

Stanley Donwood - artwork

Nigel Godrich ? arrangement , production , mixing , extra instrumentation

Jonny Greenwood ? piano on " The Eraser "

Graeme Stewart - engineering

Darrell Thorp - mixing

Thom Yorke ? music , arrangement

= = Chart positions = =