

= Wavering Radiant =

Wavering Radiant is the fifth and final full @-@ length album by American post @-@ metal group ISIS , released by Ipecac Recordings in 2009 and produced by Joe Barresi . It stands as Isis ' last full @-@ length album , as the band split just over a year after its release . The album continues Isis ' history of lengthy songwriting , yet presents a slight departure from the soft @-@ loud dynamics and post @-@ metal aesthetic which characterized previous releases .

Reviewers noted a continued increase in melody from previous releases , and many were quick to note an increased prominence of keyboardist Bryant Clifford Meyer 's work , using a Hammond B3 organ . In keeping with Isis ' retinue of concept albums , a thematic strand runs throughout , dealing with dreams and Jungian psychology . Critical appraisal was largely positive , with some critics deeming it Isis ' finest album ; it also appeared on a handful of best @-@ of lists at the close of the year . Commercially , it was Isis ' most successful release ever , breaching the Billboard 200 for the first time and gaining international chart presence . It was ranked in the year @-@ end lists by a number of reputed publications . To promote the album , Isis embarked on a world tour and shot a music video for the sixth track " 20 Minutes / 40 Years . "

= = Writing and recording = =

From conception to final release in 2009 , drummer Aaron Harris estimates that the creation and execution of Wavering Radiant took about two and a half years . During the writing of the record , all of Isis ' members were residing permanently within Los Angeles ; a situation in contrast to their previous full @-@ length , 2006 's In the Absence of Truth ; band members were divided between New York and Los Angeles throughout that album 's inception and creation . The entire band felt a degree of dissatisfaction with In the Absence of Truth , and Harris felt that the logistical change was beneficial to the writing process , allowing for more time : " rather than feeling like we had limited time to capture something , I felt like we could take our time with the songs , and come back the next day to work on things rather than in a few weeks " . The resulting sound was described by guitarist Michael Gallagher as " more live [...] a little bit dirtier ? almost , for lack of a better word , sloppy . But in a good way . We spent a lot of time getting all of our takes as close to perfect as we could on previous records . On this one , we went more with the vibe of the particular take in question . "

During the composition phase , Harris multitrack recorded the rehearsals , allowing the band to listen to the material and re @-@ examine it , allowing them greater room to jam while writing " without the worry of forgetting something or not fully understanding what [they were] doing " . This , coupled with the lack of a deadline , meant that the process was more open @-@ ended for the band , allowing more freedom to abandon failed avenues and giving ideas time to evolve . This attitude was extended to the manner in which the vocals were tracked ? until Wavering Radiant , the vocals had normally been recorded last . Instead , more time was spent recording them ; this allowed Turner , who had steadily grown in confidence as a vocalist , to relax and enjoy the process .

The recording process for the album began in November 2008 and lasted around three months , helmed by Joe Barresi . Isis ' previous full @-@ lengths since Celestial had been produced by Matt Bayles , but for this record , it was decided that a change was needed . Although the professional parting of ways was peaceable , working with Bayles had become , in the words of Harris , " routine " and " old hat " . Barresi was selected thanks to his work with bands such as Tool , Queens of the Stone Age and Melvins , and upon the album 's completion , Harris felt that Barresi " brought out some aspects of the band that even we didn 't fully understand . " Harris ' drums and keyboardist Bryant Clifford Meyer 's Hammond B3 lines were tracked over three and a half days at Sound City in Van Nuys ; the same studio in which the seminal Nirvana record Nevermind was tracked . This marked the first time a specialist drum tech was utilised by the band ; Jerry Johnson , a veteran of projects with Def Leppard and Linkin Park , was recruited .

The involvement of Tool 's Adam Jones as a guest musician was revealed at the same time as the

album 's official announcement . Jones contributes additional guitar on " Hall of the Dead " and keyboards on " Wavering Radiant " , whereas Tool member Justin Chancellor had contributed to Isis ' 2004 album , Panopticon , and Isis supported Tool during a 2006 tour .

Two additional tracks were recorded during the Wavering Radiant sessions , but failed to make it onto the final cut of the album . " The Pliable Foe " was selected for the Metal Swim compilation released by Adult Swim , as well as Isis ' split with the Melvins , both released in 2010 . " Way Through Woven Branches " saw release as an addition to the Japanese edition as a bonus track , as well as making its way onto the split with the Melvins .

= = Theme = =

Reviewers have discussed the presence of a theme , with Milton Savage deducing that " track titles would imply an underlying conceptual framework to Wavering Radiant , with ' Hall of the Dead ' preceding ' Ghost Key ' , and ' Threshold of Transformation ' closing the album in epic circumstances ? Turner , it seems , has left our world behind for exploration of another beyond the lives led by mortal men . " Isis releases have always had a thematic basis ; as Andrew Rennie dissects , " Isis 's four previous full @-@ lengths have clear story arcs , but Wavering Radiant 's themes are open to interpretation , giving it added appeal . " Over time , Turner has become reluctant to divulge the thematic particulars of any given album and on Wavering Radiant he has been equivocal . The act of explaining the thematic basis of an album erodes Turner 's " connection " with the music , and he has spoken of how that relationship is something he " wishes to preserve " . He also asserts that retaining this synergy with the music allows him to commit more to the album 's live performances . Similarly , he has also spoken of how " [p] eople have a tendency to focus on one narrow aspect of the overall concept or misinterpret it . "

Although reluctant to give any specifics , he has expressed snippets of conceptual background at times ; this , however , doesn 't extend to the reasoning behind the album 's title , which he declined to elaborate upon . When asked to describe the album in three words , he stated that it was a " path of exploration " . Bassist Jeff Caxide has revealed that Turner noted Carl Jung as a major influence on the concept and lyrics . Jung 's 1961 work , Memories , Dreams , Reflections , served as a specific source of inspiration for Turner , as he noted on his blog in a post preceding the album 's release . Beyond Jung , he has spoken of how the album is closely related to dreams , and that he had been keeping a dream journal during the album 's compositional phase . He gave up smoking marijuana in 2008 , which he says enabled him to remember his dreams more clearly and , according to J. Bennett , " tap into an internal consciousness " . All of the album 's official lyrics , deemed almost entirely indecipherable , were revealed in celebration of the album 's first anniversary .

= = Music = =

Wavering Radiant , at 54 minutes , is Isis ' shortest release since their 2000 studio début Celestial . The standard release contains seven tracks , ranging from less than two minutes to more than ten . It continues Isis ' use of non @-@ standard time signatures , opening in 5 / 4 time with " Hall of the Dead " .

Milton Savage tussled with the challenge of defining Isis ' sound : " If it 's not heavy ? ' dense ' is better description ? and the band 's purer metal roots have grown into a towering trunk from which sprout the most tangled of branches , both sturdy and incredibly delicate , then how does one take in the full picture and condense twelve years of unfaltering advancement to a single adjective ? " Roque Strew , of Pitchfork Media , struggles in the same vein : " pin a single label , style , adjective on Isis and it slips right off . "

While reviewers were troubled with categorizing the band , much time was spent deliberating upon the album 's sound when held in comparison with other Isis material . Robin Jahdi , writing for FACT Magazine , holds that the album presents a shift in dynamic . " It takes a while to realise , but [Wavering Radiant] is pretty different to what 's come before from Aaron Turner and co . The last

time this happened was 2002 , when they transformed from brutal sludge metal to something altogether more delicate . " Here , he references the transition brokered when Isis released *Oceanic* , a critically acclaimed departure from the sound of 2000 's *Celestial* . Other differences from some of Isis ' previous material have been noted ; on a broad scale , the album was deemed " less punishing than *Panopticon* , from 2004 , and less ponderous than *In the Absence of Truth* , from 2006 " , but closer examination also led *Slant* 's Matthew Cole to suggest differences . " On past releases , Isis employed loud / soft dynamics to stunning effect , and while that element remains central to their sound , the best parts of *Wavering Radiant* suggest a more sophisticated integration . Rather than playing on the line between pretty and heavy , tracks like ' *Stone to Wake a Serpent* ' and ' *20 Minutes / 40 Years* ' dissolve it . " Not all reviews held the album to be such a departure ? for instance , Andrew Hartwig feels that " *Wavering Radiant* continues in the direction that Isis have been travelling since their inception , with an increasing prominence of melody and a greater focus on placid sections to balance out their signature crushing heaviness " .

Although Turner 's lyrics are found to be " far from wholly discernable " , his vocals have " mellowed " . Robin Jahdi writes that " Turner 's vocals are growing as well , sounding eerily like Steve Brodsky , from Isis ' peers *Cave In* . These journeys into melody are so successful (vocal harmonies , no less) that you wonder why Turner still bothers with the pseudo @-@ death metal vocals at all . They add little to the music and must serve to turn off more potential fans than they attract . " Nate Chinen , however , sees this variety as a vital component of the album 's success , attesting that " Aaron Turner expertly alternates between a death @-@ metal roar and a more human wail , using whichever better suits the needs of a song " .

According to William Ruhlmann , " a big difference is provided by keyboardist Clifford Meyer , who provides texture , filling up the overall sound and also adding ethereal touches that sometimes make Isis reminiscent of *Pink Floyd* . " This view is shared by Roque Strew , who argues that " equally vital to the record 's dense , hypnotic shape is Clifford Meyer 's command of the keyboard [...] His blissful , knotty phrases , played on a dusty Hammond B3 or Rhodes , often recreate moments from the psychedelic and prog @-@ rock past . " However , Chris Norton of *Tiny Mix Tapes* contends that " the prominent keyboard tones sound pretty hokey on this album . " Praise was spared for drummer Aaron Harris also ; on this release , " everyone is playing off Harris and following his lead dynamically . His sense of moment is perfect ; knowing exactly when and where to jump in or cut back , and just how much . "

The influence of several contemporary bands was deemed apparent upon the sound of the album . Robin Jahdi writes that " the Isis sound , debuted proper on the 2002 album , is still present and correct , but there 's more subtle shifts in mood here , most interestingly when they take influence from outside (*Tool* 's Adam Jones plays on two songs) . The basslines bounce and jolt with that familiar elasticity , but the seismic six @-@ string shifts on songs like ' *Hand of the Host* ' and ' *20 Minutes / 40 Years* ' are the sort not heard from this band in years . It is no coincidence that these are highlights . " The rhythms of " *20 Minutes / 40 Years* " are described as " *Pelican* @-@ like " by *NME* reviewer Ben Patashnik , and *No Ripcord* 's Sean Caldwell compares the album to *Mastodon* 's *Blood Mountain* , citing its potential for " crossover " appeal .

= = Promotion and release = =

In late December 2008 , Isis began to introduce a previously unheard track into their live setlists , prompting speculation from fans and critics as video versions circulated on the Internet . Turner went on to announce the track 's title as " *20 Minutes / 40 Years* " on 30 December . The album was officially announced on 22 January 2009 , and its title a week later . The album artwork and tracklist were published shortly afterwards , in early February . On 24 March , Isis added the song " *20 Minutes / 40 Years* " to their MySpace page , and a week before the album 's release , made the entire record available for streaming . To promote the album in the build @-@ up to its release , Isis released a series of teaser videos , consisting of footage of the band recording , but no musical content . A limited edition run of signed CD booklets were made available to those pre @-@ ordering the album , as well as album @-@ related merchandise .

The album was released by Ipecac Recordings on limited vinyl on 21 April 2009 , and in CD format on 5 May . European distribution was undertaken by Conspiracy Records , while a special Japanese edition was handled by Daymare Recordings .

Following the album 's release , Isis embarked on a tour of North America , supported by Pelican and Tombs . They then went on to tour the UK and Europe through late 2009 , supported variously by bands including Keelhaul , Dälek and Circle . They toured Australia , New Zealand and Japan with Baroness before returning to the United States to tour with Melvins , Jakob and Cave In from May to June . This American leg of the tour included an appearance at 2010 's Bonnaroo festival in Manchester , Tennessee , while the Pacific portion took in the Soundwave Festival in Australia .

Having shot videos for tracks from their previous two albums , Isis went on to record another for " 20 Minutes / 40 Years " . Described as a " seven and a half minute epic " , the video , directed by Matt Santoro and released in November 2009 , opens with ferromagnetic fluid moving through an ambiguous , dark setting . A masked figure , trapped inside a translucent box , watches its interplay . The fluid enters the box , where it is subsumed by the figure . As the song reaches its crescendo , the box rises through the earth and breaks out of the surface into the sunlight , and its captive is freed . It received airplay on MTV2 's Headbanger 's Ball .

= = Reception = =

= = = Critical reception = = =

Critical response to the album was , overall , fairly laudatory . Its score of 79 out of 100 ? or ' generally favorable ' ? on Metacritic attests to decent reception . Regarding its place in Isis ' catalog , it has been described as their " most accomplished and complete album to date " by Ali Maloney of The Skinny , as their " smartest and richest record " and as " the toughest and catchiest Isis record " since their debut full @-@ length , *Celestial* . " Beyond the band 's own repertoire , it was described as " metal played at its arresting best " , and Andrew Rennie of NOW went as far as declaring it " close to perfect " . Not all reviews were so glowing , as the NME characterized it as " 45 minutes of awesomeness stretched out to a slightly bloated hour [...] the unsettling Toolisms of ' Ghost Key ' meander just too long and ' Hand of the Host ' spends half of its 11 minutes repeating itself without really juddering into the granite riff golem it threatens to be . " Similarly , Chris Norton of Tiny Mix Tapes feels that the album " isn 't the band 's best by a really long shot , even if it ain 't bad . " Accessibility was a similarly divisive issue , with the album being characterized as " perhaps their most rewarding yet , but simultaneously their hardest to immediately access given its prioritising of subtle nuances over senses @-@ numbing assaults " and " a slow @-@ burning success " . Conversely , it has also been declared to be " easily the band 's most accessible effort " . Allmusic 's William Ruhlmann felt that with regards to structure , " *Wavering Radiant* works as a single piece of music rather than a series of songs " , as Milton Savage of *Drowned in Sound* concurred that Isis have " construct [ed] their latest so that it 's best experienced as a whole " .

The success of the album was deemed contingent upon balance . The Guardian 's Jamie Thomson posits that " the Isis of old gave the impression they were enjoying their meandering jams just a little too much , leaving the listener a tad lost . Here , they rein them in perfectly , and reward you with a colossal chorus for staying the distance " , while Nate Chinen , of The New York Times , feels that the release " upholds a deliberative truce between brute physicality and moody rumination " .

Critical selection of album highlights has provided multiple standout tracks : Milton Savage unequivocally declares that " ' Stone to Wake a Serpent ' is an obvious selection : its ominous , horror @-@ movie keyboard tones duel with Turner 's most ferocious performance in some years " , a pick Andrew Rennie of NOW shared . Other selections include " 20 Minutes / 40 Years " and " Hall of the Dead " , which Roque Strew argues " may be the lushest , most astutely crafted opener in the Isis discography " .

Turner himself had this to say of the album , fully cognizant that it would be the band 's last : " I don 't know if looking back many years from now if *Wavering Radiant* will be my favorite Isis record or

not , but I certainly feel like it 's the best record we were capable of making at the time , and I also feel like we didn 't compromise in any really significant way the spirit or ideology behind the band in making it . And sonically speaking , I think it sounds really good , so that makes me happy , too . "

== Commercial reception ==

On 13 May the album entered the Billboard 200 at number 98 and the Top Independent Albums chart in tenth spot , representing the band 's highest placing to date . In the United States , the album sold 5 @, @ 800 copies in the first week of its release . It entered the BBC Radio 1 Top 40 Rock Albums chart at number 17 , the Norwegian National Chart at number 37 , and the German charts at number 96 , providing Isis with their first chart exposure outside the United States and United Kingdom .

== Accolades ==

== Track listing ==

All songs written and composed by Isis .

== Personnel ==

== Chart positions ==

== Release history ==