

= The Downward Spiral =

The Downward Spiral is the second studio album by American industrial rock band Nine Inch Nails , released March 8 , 1994 , on Interscope Records . It is a concept album detailing the destruction of a man , from the beginning of his " downward spiral " to his attempt at suicide . The Downward Spiral features elements of industrial rock , techno , and heavy metal , in contrast to the synthpop @-@ influenced Pretty Hate Machine .

Co @-@ produced by Trent Reznor and Flood , The Downward Spiral was conceived after the Lollapalooza 1991 festival tour as a pivot for Reznor 's personal issues and the " negative vibe " felt by the band . Reznor moved to 10050 Cielo Drive , Benedict Canyon , Los Angeles in Beverly Hills , California the following year , where actress Sharon Tate was murdered by members of the Manson Family . It was used as a studio called " Le Pig " for recording Broken and The Downward Spiral with collaborations from other musicians . The album was influenced by late 1970s rock music albums , David Bowie 's Low and Pink Floyd 's The Wall in particular , and focused on texture and space , avoiding explicit usage of guitars or synthesizers .

The Downward Spiral was promoted with the Self Destruct Tour and four songs from the album ( " March of the Pigs " , " Closer " , " Piggy " , and " Hurt " ) became singles . The tour 's concerts debuted the band 's grungy and messy image and were violent and chaotic , with band members often injuring themselves and destroying their instruments . " March of the Pigs " and " Closer " were accompanied by music videos ; the " March of the Pigs " video was shot twice and " Closer " ' s was heavily censored . " Piggy " and " Hurt " were released as promotional singles .

A major commercial success , The Downward Spiral established Nine Inch Nails as a reputable force in the 1990s music scene , with its sound being widely imitated and Reznor receiving media hype and multiple honors while diverging into drug abuse and depression . It has been regarded by music critics and audiences as one of the most important albums of the 1990s and was praised for its abrasive , eclectic nature and dark themes , although it was scrutinized by social conservatives for its lyrics . A companion remix album , Further Down the Spiral , was released in 1995 . To mark the album 's tenth anniversary , The Downward Spiral was remastered and re @-@ released on November 23 , 2004 in high @-@ resolution SACD and DualDisc formats .

= = Writing and recording = =

The Downward Spiral was conceived after the Lollapalooza festival tour as Trent Reznor thought of a " negative vibe " felt by the band when they were in a European hotel . Nine Inch Nails live performances were known for its aggressive on @-@ stage dynamic , in which band members act angry , injure themselves , and destroy instruments . Reznor had a feud with TWT Records that resulted in him co @-@ founding Nothing Records with his former manager John Malm , Jr. and signing with Interscope . He wanted to explore a fictional character whose life is psychologically wounded and developed a concept about the album 's themes ; he later used the concept as lyrics . The concept was based on Reznor 's social issues at the time : he had personal conflicts with band member Richard Patrick and was known for enjoying alcohol . When developing The Downward Spiral , Reznor struggled with drug addiction and was depressed as he wrote songs related to personal issues . His friends suggested that he could take Prozac ( fluoxetine ) , an antidepressant , but this choice did not appeal to him . He wanted the album 's sound to diverge from Broken , emphasizing mood , texture , restraint and subtlety , although he was not sure about its musical direction . The album was made with " full range " and focused on texture and space , avoiding explicit usage of guitars or synthesizers .

Reznor searched for and moved to 10050 Cielo Drive in 1992 for recording Broken and The Downward Spiral , a decision made against his initial choice to record the album in New Orleans . 10050 Cielo Drive is referred to as the " Tate House " since Sharon Tate was murdered by members of the Manson Family in 1969 ; Reznor named the studio " Le Pig " after the message that was scrawled on the front door with Tate 's blood by her murderers , and stayed there with Malm for 18 months . He called his first night in 10050 Cielo Drive " terrifying " because he already knew it and

read books related to the incident . Reznor chose the Tate house to calibrate his engineering skills and the band bought a large console and two Studer machines as resources , a move that he believed was cheaper than renting . The studio was also used for the recording of Marilyn Manson 's debut album Portrait of an American Family , which Reznor co -@-@ produced . Marilyn Manson accepted Reznor 's offer of signing a contract with Nothing Records .

Reznor collaborated with former Jane 's Addiction and Porno for Pyros drummer Stephen Perkins , progressive rock guitarist Adrian Belew , and Nine Inch Nails drummer Chris Vrenna . Belew 's first visit to the studio involved playing the guitar parts in " Mr. Self @-@ Destruct " , and he was told to play freely , think on reacting to melodies , concentrate on rhythm , and use noise . This approach improved Reznor 's confidence in the instrument : he found it to be more expressive than the keyboard due to the interface . Belew praised Reznor for his " command of technology , " and commented that the music of Nine Inch Nails made innovations " that are in [ his ] realm . " Vrenna and Perkins played drum parts recorded live in the studio ; the tracks were rendered into looped samples . Reznor took a similar approach to recording guitar parts : he would tape 20 to 25 @-@ minute long sessions of himself playing guitars on a hard disc recorder with the Studio Vision sequencer .

Most of the music was recorded into a Macintosh computer using a board and manipulated with music editor programs on the computer . Unique effects such as analyzing and inverting the frequency were applied to the tracks to create original sounds . The band would " get an arrangement together " and convert it into analog tape . Reznor sampled excerpts from guitar tracks and processed them to the point of randomness and expression . Among the equipment Reznor used for recording the album are Pro Tools , Digidesign 's TurboSynth , a Marshall rack head , the Prophet VS keyboard , and various Jackson and Gibson guitars .

In December 1993 , Reznor was confronted by Patti Tate , who asked if he was exploiting Sharon Tate 's death in the house . Reznor responded that he was interested in the house as her death happened there . He later made a statement about this encounter during a 1997 interview with Rolling Stone :

While I was working on [ The ] Downward Spiral , I was living in the house where Sharon Tate was killed . Then one day I met her sister [ Patti Tate ] . It was a random thing , just a brief encounter . And she said : ' Are you exploiting my sister 's death by living in her house ? ' For the first time , the whole thing kind of slapped me in the face . I said , ' No , it 's just sort of my own interest in American folklore . I 'm in this place where a weird part of history occurred . ' I guess it never really struck me before , but it did then . She lost her sister from a senseless , ignorant situation that I don 't want to support . When she was talking to me , I realized for the first time , ' What if it was my sister ? ' I thought , ' Fuck Charlie Manson . ' I went home and cried that night . It made me see there 's another side to things , you know ?

Flood , known for engineering and producing U2 and Depeche Mode albums , was employed as co @-@ producer on The Downward Spiral . It became his last collaboration with Nine Inch Nails due to creative differences . A " very dangerously self @-@ destructive , " humorous short song written for the album , " Just Do It " , was not included in the final version and criticized by Flood in that Reznor had " gone too far . " Reznor completed the last song written for the album , " Big Man with a Gun " , in late 1993 . After the album 's recording , Reznor moved out and the house was demolished shortly thereafter . The Downward Spiral entered its mixing and mastering processes , done at Record Plant Studios and A & M Studios with Alan Moulder , who subsequently took on more extensive production duties for future album releases .

= = Music and lyrics = =

Numerous layers of metaphors are present throughout The Downward Spiral , which leaves it open to wide interpretation . The album relays nihilism and is defined by a prominent theme of self @-@ abuse and control . It is a semi @-@ autobiographical concept album in which the overarching plot follows the protagonist 's descent into madness in his own inner solipsistic world , through a metaphorical " Downward Spiral " , dealing with religion , dehumanization , violence , disease ,

society , drugs , sex , and finally suicide . Reznor described the concept as consisting of " someone who sheds everything around them to a potential nothingness , but through career , religion , relationship , belief and so on . " Media journalists like The New York Times writer Jon Pareles noted the album 's theme of angst had already been used by grunge bands like Nirvana , and that Nine Inch Nails ' depiction was more generalized .

The Downward Spiral features elements of industrial rock , techno , and heavy metal , a change from the synthpop @-@ influenced Pretty Hate Machine . Reznor regularly uses noise and distortion in his song arrangements that do not follow verse ? chorus form , and incorporates dissonance with chromatic melody or harmony ( or both ) . The treatment of metal guitars in Broken is carried over to The Downward Spiral , which includes innovative techniques such as expanded song structures and unconventional time signatures . The album features a wide range of textures and moods to illustrate the mental progress of the central protagonist . Reznor 's singing follows a similar pattern from beginning to end , frequently moving from whispers to screams . These techniques are all used in the song " Hurt " , which features a highly dissonant tritone played on guitar during the verses , a B5 # 11 , emphasized when Reznor sings the eleventh note on the word " I " every time the B / E # dyad is played .

" Mr. Self Destruct " , a song about a powerful person , follows a build @-@ up sampled from THX 1138 with an " industrial roar " and is accompanied by an audio loop of a pinion rotating . " The Becoming " expresses the state of being dead and the protagonist 's transformation into a non @-@ human organism . " Closer " concludes with a chromatic piano motif : The melody is debuted during the second verse of " Piggy " on organ , then reappears in power chords at drop D tuning throughout the chorus of " Heresy " , and recurs for the final time on " The Downward Spiral " . The album was chiefly inspired by David Bowie 's Low , an experimental rock album which Reznor related to on songwriting , mood , and structures , as well as progressive rock group Pink Floyd 's The Wall .

= = Cover art = =

Committere , an installation featuring artwork and sketches for The Downward Spiral , " Closer " and " March of the Pigs " by Russell Mills was displayed at the Glasgow School of Art . Mills explained the ideas and materials that made up the painting ( titled " Wound " ) that was used for the cover art :

I had been thinking about making works that dealt with layers , physically , materially and conceptually . I wanted to produce works that were about both exposure and revealing and at the same dealt with closure and covering . Given the nature of the lyrics and the power of the music I was working with , I felt justified in attempting to make works that alluded to the apparently contradictory imagery of pain and healing . I wanted to make beautiful surfaces that partially revealed the visceral rawness of open wounds beneath . The mixed media work ' Wound ' was the first piece I tackled in this vein ( no pun intended ) and it became the cover of the album . It is made of plaster , acrylics , oils , rusted metals , insects , moths , blood ( mine ) , wax , varnishes , and surgical bandaging on a wooden panel .

= = Promotion = =

= = = Singles = = =

" March of the Pigs " and " Closer " were released as singles ; two other songs , " Hurt " and " Piggy " , were issued to radio without a commercial single release . " March of the Pigs " has an unusual meter , alternating three bars of 7 / 8 time with one of 8 / 8 ( in effect , a 29 / 8 time signature ) , and has a BPM rate of 269 . The song 's music video was directed by Peter Christopherson and was shot twice ; the first version scrapped due to Reznor 's involvement , and the released second version being a live performance .

" Closer " features a heavily modified bass drum sample from the Iggy Pop song " Nightclubbing "

from his album *The Idiot* . Lyrically , it is a meditation on self @-@ hatred and obsession , but to Reznor 's dismay , the song was widely misinterpreted as a lust anthem due to its chorus , which included the line " I wanna fuck you like an animal " . The music video for " Closer " was directed by Mark Romanek and received frequent rotation on MTV , though the network heavily censored the original version , which they perceived to be too graphic . The video shows events in a laboratory dealing with religion , sexuality , animal cruelty , politics , and terror ; controversial imagery included a nude bald woman with a crucifix mask , a monkey tied to a cross , a pig 's head spinning on a machine , a diagram of a vulva , Reznor wearing an S & M mask while swinging in shackles , and of him wearing a ball gag . A radio edit that partially censored the song 's explicit lyrics also received extensive airtime . The video has since been made part of the permanent collection of the Museum of Modern Art in New York City .

" Piggy " uses " nothing can stop me now " , a line that recurs in " Ruiner " and " Big Man with a Gun " . The frantic drumming on the song 's outro is Reznor 's only attempt at performing drums on the record , and one of the few " live " drum performances on the album . He had stated that the recording was from him testing the microphone setup in studio , but he liked the sound too much not to include it . It was released as a promotional single in December 1994 and reached the Top 20 on the Billboard Modern Rock Tracks chart .

Released in 1995 , " Hurt " clearly includes references to self @-@ harm and heroin addiction , although the overall meaning of the song is disputed . Johnny Cash covered the song for *American IV : The Man Comes Around* . Its accompanying music video , featuring images from Cash 's life and also directed by Mark Romanek , was named the best video of all time by NME . British singer @-@ songwriter Leona Lewis covered the song and included it on her first EP , *Hurt : The EP* . Her cover garnered a mixed response from music critics . Lewis Corner for Digital Spy was complimentary of Lewis ' rock interpretation of the song as it displays the singer 's " emotive tones " on which she sings in " spine @-@ chilling " falsetto notes .

= = = Tour = = =

The Nine Inch Nails live band embarked on the *Self Destruct* tour in support of *The Downward Spiral* . Chris Vrenna and James Woolley performed drums and keyboards respectively , Robin Finck replaced Richard Patrick on guitar and bassist Danny Lohner was added to the line @-@ up . The stage set @-@ up consisted of dirty curtains which would pulled down and up for visuals shown during songs such as " Hurt " . The back of the stage was littered with darker and standing lights , along with very little actual ones . The tour debuted the band 's grungy and messy image in which they would come out in ragged clothes slathered in corn starch . The concerts were violent and chaotic , with band members often injuring themselves . They would frequently destroy their instruments at the end of concerts , attack each other , and stage @-@ dive into the crowd .

The tour included a set at Woodstock ' 94 broadcast on Pay @-@ per @-@ view and seen in as many as 24 million homes . The band being covered in mud was a result of pre @-@ concert backstage play , contrary to the belief that it was an attention @-@ grabbing ploy , thus making it difficult for Reznor to navigate the stage : Reznor pushed Lohner into the mud pit as the concert began and saw mud from his hair entering his eyes while performing . Nine Inch Nails was widely proclaimed to have " stolen the show " from its popular contemporaries , mostly classic rock bands , and its fan base expanded . The band received considerable mainstream success thereafter , performing with significantly higher production values and the addition of various theatrical visual elements . Its performance of " Happiness in Slavery " from the Woodstock concert earned the group a Grammy Award for Best Metal Performance in 1995 . Entertainment Weekly commented about the band 's Woodstock ' 94 performance : " Reznor unstrings rock to its horrifying , melodramatic core--an experience as draining as it is exhilarating " . Despite this acclaim , Reznor attributed his dislike of the concert to its technical difficulties .

The main leg of the tour featured Marilyn Manson as the supporting act , who featured bassist Jeordie White ( then playing under the pseudonym " Twiggy Ramirez " ) ; White later played bass with Nine Inch Nails from 2005 to 2007 . After another tour leg supporting the remix album *Further*

Down the Spiral , Nine Inch Nails contributed to the Alternative Nation Festival in Australia and subsequently embarked on the Dissonance Tour , which included 26 separate performances with co @-@ headliner David Bowie . Nine Inch Nails was the opening act for the tour , and its set transitioned into Bowie 's set with joint performances of both bands ' songs . However , the crowds reportedly did not respond positively to the pairing due to their creative differences .

The tour concluded with " Nights of Nothing " , a three @-@ night showcase of performances from Nothing Records bands Marilyn Manson , Prick , Meat Beat Manifesto , and Pop Will Eat Itself , which ended with an 80 @-@ minute set from Nine Inch Nails . Kerrang ! described the Nine Inch Nails set during the Nights of Nothing showcase as " tight , brash and dramatic " , but was disappointed at the lack of new material . On the second of the three nights , Richard Patrick was briefly reunited with the band and contributed guitar to a performance of " Head Like a Hole " . After the Self Destruct tour , Chris Vrenna , member of the live band since 1988 and frequent contributor to Nine Inch Nails studio recordings , left the act permanently to pursue a career in producing and to form Tweaker .

= = Release and reception = =

The Downward Spiral 's release date was delayed at various times to slow down Reznor 's intended pace of the album 's recording . The first delay caused the process of setting up Le Pig to take longer than he expected , and its release was postponed again as he was educating himself different ways to write songs that did not resemble those on Broken and Pretty Hate Machine . He considered delivering the album to Interscope in early 1993 , only to experience a writer 's block as he was unable to produce any satisfactory material . Interscope grew impatient and concerned with this progress , but Reznor was not forced by their demands of expediency despite crediting the label for giving him creative freedom . He told rock music producer Rick Rubin that his motivation for creating the album was to get it finished , thus Rubin responded that Reznor might not do so until he makes music that is allowed to be heard . Reznor realized that he was in the most fortunate situation he imagined when the album was recorded with a normal budget , " cool " equipment , and a studio to work at .

Released on March 8 , 1994 to instant success , The Downward Spiral debuted the following week at number two on the US Billboard 200 chart ; American grunge band Soundgarden 's Superunknown had topped the chart in the same week and also shipped on March 8 . On October 28 , 1998 the Recording Industry Association of America ( RIAA ) certified the album quadruple platinum , denoting shipments of four million in the United States . The album peaked at number nine on the UK Albums Charts and the British Phonographic Industry ( BPI ) gave the album a gold certification on July 22 , 2013 for sales of over 100 @,@ 000 copies in the United Kingdom . It reached number 13 on the Canadian RPM album charts and received a triple platinum certification from the Canadian Recording Industry Association ( CRIA ) for selling 300 @,@ 000 copies in Canada . A group of early listeners of the album viewed it as " commercial suicide , " but Reznor did not make it for profit as his goal was to slightly broaden Nine Inch Nails ' scope . Reznor felt that the finished product he delivered to Interscope was complete and faithful to his vision and thought its commercial potential was limited , but after its release he was surprised by the success and received questions about a follow @-@ up single with a music video to be shown on MTV . The album has since sold over four million copies worldwide .

Many music critics and audiences praised The Downward Spiral for its abrasive , eclectic nature and dark themes and commented on the concept of a destruction of a man . The New York Times writer Jon Pareles ' review of the album found the music to be highly abrasive . Pareles asserted that unlike other electro @-@ industrial groups like Ministry and Nitzer Ebb , " Reznor writes full @-@ fledged tunes " with stronger use of melodies than riffs . He noticed criticisms of Nine Inch Nails from industrial purists for popularizing the genre and the album 's transgression . Robert Christgau gave the album an honorable mention ( ) rating and commented that , musically , the album was comparable to " Heironymus Bosch as postindustrial atheist " , but lyrically more closely resembled " Transformers as kiddie porn . " Jonathan Gold , writing for Rolling Stone , likened the

album to cyberpunk fiction . Entertainment Weekly reviewer Tom Sinclair commented : " Reznor 's pet topics ( sex , power , S & M , hatred , transcendence ) are all here , wrapped in hooks that hit your psyche with the force of a blowtorch . "

= = = Accolades = = =

The Downward Spiral has been listed on several publications ' best album lists . In 2003 , the album was ranked number 201 on Rolling Stone magazine 's list of the 500 greatest albums of all time and number 201 on its 2012 online edition . The Rolling Stone staff wrote : " Holing up in the one @-@ time home of Manson @-@ family victim Sharon Tate , Trent Reznor made an overpowering meditation on NIN 's central theme : control . " The album was placed 10th on Spin 's 125 Best Albums of the Past 25 Years list ; the Spin staff quoted Ann Powers ' review that appreciated its bleak , aggressive style . It was ranked number 488 in the book The Top 500 Heavy Metal Albums of All Time by heavy metal music critic Martin Popoff . In 2001 , Q named The Downward Spiral as one of the 50 Heaviest Albums of All Time ; in 2010 , the album was ranked number 102 on their 250 Best Albums of Q 's Lifetime ( 1986 @-@ 2011 ) list . The Downward Spiral was featured in Robert Dimery 's book 1001 Albums You Must Hear Before You Die . In May 2014 , Loudwire placed The Downward Spiral at number two on its " 10 Best Hard Rock Albums of 1994 " list . In July 2014 , Guitar World placed The Downward Spiral at number 43 in their " Superunknown : 50 Iconic Albums That Defined 1994 " list .

= = Legacy = =

The immediate success of The Downward Spiral established Nine Inch Nails as a reputable force in the 1990s . The band 's image and musical style became highly recognizable that a Gatorade commercial featured a remix of " Down in It " without its involvement . Reznor felt uncomfortable with the media hype and success the band earned , received false reports of his death , depression , and relationship with serial killer Jeffrey Dahmer , and was depicted as a sex icon due to his visual identity . Nine Inch Nails received several honors , including Grammy Award nominations for Best Alternative Performance for The Downward Spiral and Best Rock Song for " Hurt " . After the release of The Downward Spiral , many bands such as Gravity Kills , Stabbing Westward , Filter , and Mötley Crüe made albums that imitated the sound of Nine Inch Nails .

Reznor interpreted The Downward Spiral as an extension of himself that " became the truth fulfilling itself , " as he experienced personal and social issues presented in the album after its release . He had already struggled with social anxiety disorder and depression and started his abuse of narcotics including cocaine while he went on an alcohol binge . Around this time , his studio perfectionism , struggles with addiction , and bouts of writer 's block prolonged the production of The Fragile , and Reznor completed rehabilitation from drugs in 2001 .

One year after The Downward Spiral 's release , Reznor produced an accompanying remix album entitled Further Down the Spiral , the only non @-@ major Nine Inch Nails release to be certified gold in the United States . It features contributions from Coil with Danny Hyde , J. G. Thirlwell , electronic musician Aphex Twin , producer Rick Rubin , and Jane 's Addiction guitarist Dave Navarro . The album peaked at number 23 on the Billboard 200 and received mixed reviews . Recoiled , a remix EP of " Gave Up " , " Closer " , " The Downward Spiral " , and " Eraser " by Coil , was released on February 24 , 2014 via British record label Cold Spring .

Retrospective reviews regard The Downward Spiral as one of the most important albums of the 1990s and Reznor 's greatest work . The 2004 edition of The New Rolling Stone Album Guide gave the album five out of five stars and called it " a powerful statement , and one of the landmark albums of the Nineties . " Writing for Entertainment Weekly , Kyle Anderson remembered watching the music video of " Closer " on MTV as an adolescent and expressed that the album changed his perception of popular music from that of songs heard on the radio to albums with cover art . Stereogum 's Tom Breihan remains favorable toward the album since it is " the one that most fully inhabits " Nine Inch Nails ' characteristics and influenced youth culture , with teenagers wearing

ripped fish nets on their arms . The album was also included in the book 1001 Albums You Must Hear Before You Die .

= = Controversy = =

Its emphasis on transgressive themes made The Downward Spiral 's lyrics vulnerable to criticism from American social conservatives . Senator Bob Dole , then head of the Republican Party , sharply denounced Time Warner after a meeting between Michael J. Fuchs ( head of the Warner Music Group ) , William Bennett , and C. Delores Tucker , at which Tucker and Bennett demanded that Fuchs recite lyrics from " Big Man with a Gun " because they thought the song was an attack on American conservatives by metaphorically claiming within the lyrics that they have a jingoistic agenda . Interscope was blamed for releasing gangster rap albums by Dr. Dre , Tupac Shakur , and Snoop Dogg that were deemed objectionable . Reznor called Tucker ( who referred to Nine Inch Nails as a gangster rap act ) " such a fucking idiot " and claimed " Big Man with a Gun " was a satire of the genre and was originally about madness . Reznor conceded The Downward Spiral could be " harmful , through implying and subliminally suggesting things , " whereas hardcore hip hop can be " cartoonish . " Robert Bork also repeatedly referenced " Big Man with a Gun " in his book Slouching Toward Gomorrah as evidence of a cultural decline . The book incorrectly states that it is a rap song .

Before the Columbine High School massacre , perpetrator Dylan Klebold referenced lyrics from Nine Inch Nails multiple times in his journal . Klebold heavily identified with the protagonist of the album as a symbol of his own depression . On May 4 , 1999 , a hearing on the marketing and distribution practices of violent content to minors by the television , music , film , and video game industries was conducted before the United States Senate Committee on Commerce , Science and Transportation . The committee heard testimony from cultural observers , professors , and mental @-@ health professionals that included conservative William Bennett and the Archbishop of Denver , Reverend Charles J. Chaput . Participants criticized the album , Nine Inch Nails ' label @-@ mate Marilyn Manson , and the 1999 film The Matrix for their alleged contribution to the environment that made tragedies like Columbine possible . The committee requested that the Federal Trade Commission and the United States Department of Justice investigate the entertainment industry 's marketing practices to minors .

In 2009 , Apple rejected a proposal for a Nine Inch Nails iPhone application , citing objectionable content in The Downward Spiral . Days later , Apple reversed the decision but refused to explain its reasoning .

= = Track listing = =

All songs written and composed by Trent Reznor .

= = Personnel = =

Credits from The Downward Spiral taken from liner notes .

= = Charts and certifications = =

= = Single charts = =

Notes