

= Binaural ( album ) =

Binaural is the sixth studio album by the American alternative rock band Pearl Jam , released on May 16 , 2000 through Epic Records . Following a full @-@ scale tour in support of its previous album , Yield ( 1998 ) , Pearl Jam took a short break before reconvening toward the end of 1999 to begin work on a new album . During the production of the album , the band encountered hindrances such as singer Eddie Vedder 's writer 's block , and guitarist Mike McCready 's entrance into rehabilitation due to an addiction to prescription drugs .

The music on the record featured an experimental sound , evident on songs that used binaural recording techniques . The atmospheric tracks , mostly featuring somber lyrics dealing with social criticism , led the band to convey these themes with images of nebulas in the album artwork . Binaural received positive reviews , and debuted at number two on the Billboard 200 . Although the record was certified gold by the RIAA , it became the first Pearl Jam studio album to fail to reach platinum status in the United States . The album 's 2000 tour spawned a large collection of official bootleg releases .

= = Recording = =

Similar to the process for Yield , the band members worked on material individually before starting the recording sessions together . Lead vocalist Eddie Vedder called the making of the album " a construction job . " Binaural was the first album since the band 's debut that was not produced by Brendan O 'Brien . Gossard stated that the band " felt like it was time to try something new , " and that they " were ready for a change . " Instead the band hired producer Tchad Blake , known for his use of binaural recording . Binaural recording techniques , which employ two microphones to create a 3 @-@ D stereophonic sound , were utilized on several tracks , such as the acoustic " Of the Girl . " Regarding Blake , Gossard said , " He was just there for us the whole time , wanting us to create different moods . " This was the first Pearl Jam studio album following the departure of drummer Jack Irons , and features drummer Matt Cameron of Soundgarden , who had previously drummed on Pearl Jam 's U.S. Yield Tour .

Binaural was recorded in late 1999 and early 2000 in Seattle , Washington at Studio Litho , which is owned by guitarist Stone Gossard . The album was initially mixed at Sunset Sound Factory in Los Angeles , California with Blake ; however , the band proved to be dissatisfied with how the mixes turned out . According to McCready , Blake 's work complemented the slower tracks such as " Nothing as It Seems " well , but faced trouble with others , which the band wanted to sound heavier . For the heavier songs , the group brought in former producer O 'Brien , who remixed the tracks at his mixing facility at Southern Tracks in Atlanta , Georgia . It was with O 'Brien that the band determined the final sequencing of the album .

During the writing and recording of the album , the band encountered several obstacles . Vedder has admitted that while working on the album he suffered from writer 's block , which made it difficult for him to come up with lyrics . This inspired the hidden track " Writer 's Block " - which consists of the sounds of a typewriter - that appears at the end of the album , starting at 6 minutes and 50 seconds on the track " Parting Ways " . Vedder had written music for several songs , including " Insignificance " and " Grievance " , but was having trouble coming up with lyrics for the songs . He decided to not write any more music , and to focus only on lyrics , even banning himself from playing guitar . Unable to write more lyrics , Vedder said he saw a ukulele and thought " that 's not a guitar , " and wrote the song " Soon Forget " using the ukulele . Guitarist Mike McCready went into rehabilitation to receive treatment for an addiction to prescription drugs . Gossard recalled that " everyone wasn 't on the same page " due to McCready 's absence and the familiarization with Cameron .

Three instrumentals featured on the Touring Band 2000 DVD ( " Thunderclap " , " Foldback " , and " Harmony " ) come from the early Binaural sessions . Several songs were rejected from the album that eventually found their way on to the 2003 Lost Dogs collection of rarities . These include " Sad " , " Hitchhiker " , " In the Moonlight " , " Education " , " Fatal " , and " Sweet Lew " . " Sad " , originally

called " Letter to the Dead " , was called " a great pop song " by Ament , but he said the song did not fit the album because the band does not " really [ write ] very many pop records . " " Sweet Lew " , about Kareem Abdul @-@ Jabbar , was cut from Binaural because it did not fit the album according to Ament . " Fatal " was producer Tchad Blake 's favorite song to come out of the recording sessions . " Strangest Tribe " and " Drifting " were also recorded around the time of the album 's recording sessions , and both songs were released on the band 's 1999 fan club Christmas single as well as Lost Dogs .

= = Music and lyrics = =

Binaural opens with three up @-@ tempo songs before growing more diverse . Vedder explained , " We 'd rather challenge our fans and make them listen to our songs than give them something that 's easy to digest . There is a lot of music out there that is very easy to digest but we never wanted to be part of it . " As described by critic Jon Pareles on his review for Rolling Stone , Pearl Jam distances itself from the grunge that made them famous and " delve [ s ] elsewhere : jumpy post @-@ punk and somber meditations , tightly wound folk rock and turbulent , neopsychedelic rockers that sound like they boiled out of jam sessions . "

A few songs on the album show classic rock influences . The intro to the opening track " Breakerfall " uses a guitar riff similar to The Who song " I Can See for Miles " ( from the 1967 album , The Who Sell Out ) . Additionally , " Soon Forget " , which features Vedder playing a ukulele , is heavily influenced by The Who song " Blue , Red and Grey " ( from the 1975 album , The Who by Numbers ) , with Vedder describing it as " 30 seconds of plagiarising " and thanking Pete Townshend on the lyric sheet . The song " Nothing as It Seems " has been compared to the style of Pink Floyd .

Bassist Jeff Ament wrote the lyrics for two songs on the album ( " Gods ' Dice " and " Nothing as It Seems " ) , and Gossard for three ( " Thin Air " , " Of the Girl " and " Rival " ) . The album is lyrically darker than the band 's previous album Yield , with Gossard describing the lyrics as " pretty somber . " Vedder addressed the social criticism contained in the album 's lyrics by stating , " I think what everyone 's looking for , y 'know , is freedom ... That 's part of being comfortable in your own skin . I know I had a problem with being told what to do , and had a problem with being mentally and physically constricted . All of humanity is searching for freedom and I think it 's important to know when you have it , too . " Ament stated that " Gods ' Dice " is about " judging anybody who has any sort of belief system whether they believe in God or not " , and that " Nothing as It Seems " is about his childhood growing up in a rural area of Northern Montana . Vedder called " Evacuation " a " song about change " , and stated in an interview that the moral of " Insignificance " is " the ineffectiveness of political struggle . " Vedder took inspiration from the 1999 World Trade Organization protests in Seattle when writing " Grievance " , and said the song is about the dangers of technology . Gossard has said that the song " Rival " is his reflection upon the 1999 Columbine High School massacre .

= = Packaging = =

The album 's cover art is a modified Hubble Space Telescope photo of the Hourglass Nebula . Hubble Space Telescope photos of the Helix Nebula and Eagle Nebula are also featured in the inside cover and liner notes for this album , respectively . The photos were used with the permission of NASA . Regarding the artwork , Ament said , " The reason that we went with Tchad [ Blake ] is because he provides an amazing atmosphere to songs .... So , I think we wanted the artwork to represent that .... One of the themes that we 've been exploring ... is just realizing that in the big scheme of things , even the music that we make when we come together , no matter how powerful it is , it 's still pretty minuscule . I think for me the whole space theme has a lot to do with scale . You know , you look at some of those pictures , and there are thirteen light years in four inches in that picture . " Some claim the cover idea was inspired by Mother God Moviestar 's self @-@ titled record , which was released on Interscope Records in May 1998 .

The album 's title is a reference to the binaural recording techniques that were utilized on several tracks . Binaural literally means " having or relating to two ears . " Regarding the choice of the title ,

Gossard said , " When we looked up the word ' binaural , ' it meant to listen with both ears . So it seemed like a fitting title for the album . "

= = Release and reception = =

= = = Commercial performance = = =

Binaural sold 226 @, @ 000 copies during its first week of release and debuted at number two on the Billboard 200 album chart . It was held off the top spot by the Britney Spears album , Oops ! ... I Did It Again . Binaural became the first Pearl Jam studio album to fail to reach platinum status . Binaural has been certified gold by the RIAA , and , as of 2013 , has sold 850 @, @ 000 copies in the United States according to Nielsen SoundScan . The album topped the charts in New Zealand , where it was certified gold , and Australia , where it went platinum and ended as the 36th best @-@ selling record of the year .

Two singles were released from Binaural . The lead single " Nothing as It Seems " was issued on April 11 , entered the Billboard Hot 100 at number 49 , and reached number three on the Mainstream Rock charts . The album 's other commercially released single , " Light Years " , did not chart on the Hot 100 , but it did place on the Mainstream Rock and Modern Rock charts .

= = = Critical response = = =

Binaural received generally favorable reviews from music critics according to Metacritic , where it holds a 69 after 16 reviews . NME gave Binaural a nine out of 10 . In the review , Binaural is called " a seething , furious album ; a declamatory statement against cynicism and passivity and the simple injustices of everyday life " and that " even when the band slow the pace , the songs are coloured by a heartfelt intensity . " AllMusic staff writer Stephen Thomas Erlewine gave the album four out of five stars , saying , " The songs are sharper , the production is layered , and the performances are as compassionate as ever , resulting in their finest album since Vitalogy . " Time reviewer Christopher John Farley noted that the album is " less impatient and rage filled than much of Pearl Jam 's earlier work . " Farley added that " Pearl Jam , rather quietly , is building a long @-@ term career to rival the rock legends of the past . " Jim Farber of Entertainment Weekly gave the album a B + , considering that the " weighty subjects [ give ] Pearl Jam 's introspective lyrics and stone @-@ faced rock a refreshing edge " and adding that " if PJ long ago lost the zeitgeist , at least they 've kept a hold on their hearts . " Critic Robert Christgau described the album as " Rock as inner struggle , eternally externalized . "

Spin gave the album seven out of 10 stars , writing that " Everything you want is still there ? goofy experimentalism , guitar frenzy , Eddie 's self @-@ abusive wail . It 's just more solid , more clear . " Q gave the album three out of five stars , commenting that " Grunge may have died , but Pearl Jam it seems will never be slayed . " Rolling Stone staff writer Jon Pareles gave the album three out of five stars , feeling that the album " comes across as part of an extended conversation among the five band members ... and fans loyal enough to check in for Pearl Jam 's latest musings on love , death and social responsibility . " The Guardian also gave the album three out of five stars , stating that Pearl Jam " are dignified , musicianly , sincere ... and a teensy bit dull " and observing that " Vedder 's affecting vocal angst drowns in a sea of pessimistic riffola . " The review called Binaural " a warts @-@ and @-@ all album ; it has grabbers , songs that sink in slowly and a few absolute duds . " At the 2001 Grammy Awards , " Grievance " received a nomination for Best Hard Rock Performance . Regarding Binaural , Ament stated that " we look back and think we didn 't put some of the best songs on it " , adding that " I think there are some beautiful things that came out of it , but we 're never going to remember that record as one of the greats . "

= = Tour = =

Pearl Jam promoted the album with tours in Europe and North America . The tour started along with the album release on May 23 , with a show in Lisbon , Portugal . The European tour had 26 dates . The final concert of the European tour ended in tragedy , where an accident at the Roskilde Festival in Denmark on June 30 lead nine fans to be crushed underfoot and suffocated to death as the crowd rushed to the front . This led two additional concerts through July to be cancelled . A month after the European tour concluded , the band embarked on a two @-@ leg North American tour , starting on Virginia Beach , Virginia on August 3 . The first leg of the tour focused on the East Coast of the United States , and then the band moved to the Midwest and the West Coast for the tour 's second leg . The band considered disbanding after the Roskilde tragedy , but Vedder stated that " playing , facing crowds , being together " in the North American tour " enabled us to start processing it . "

On October 22 , 2000 , the band played the MGM Grand Garden Arena in Las Vegas , Nevada , celebrating the 10th anniversary of its first live performance as a band . Vedder took the opportunity to thank the many people who had helped the band come together and make it to 10 years . He noted that " I would never do this accepting a Grammy or something . " The tour 's final night took place on November 6 , 2000 , in Seattle , Washington at KeyArena where the band performed for more than three hours . The European and North American tours were documented by a long series of official bootlegs , all of which were available in record stores as well as through the band 's fan club . The band released 72 live albums in 2000 and 2001 , and set a record for most albums to debut in the Billboard 200 at the same time . Following the conclusion of the 2000 tour , the band released Touring Band 2000 , a DVD which featured select performances from the North American legs of the tour .

Binaural was played in its entirety at the May 10 , 2016 show in Toronto at the Air Canada Centre , as a block and in sequence , during the first set of a longer performance .

= = Track listing = =

All lyrics written by Eddie Vedder , except where noted .

^ I " Parting Ways " contains the hidden track " Writer 's Block " at 6 : 49 .

^ \* Asterisk denote the use of binaural recording techniques

Japanese bonus disc

All lyrics written by Vedder .

^ \* Live tracks recorded at the 1999 Bridge School Benefit .

= = = Original track listing = = =

When the track listing for Binaural was first released in late March 2000 , it was quite different from the final version . Some tracks that were originally on the album were dropped and not released until the 2003 rarities compilation , Lost Dogs , and " Gods ' Dice " was added to the final version . The original version is as follows :

" Breakerfall "

" Insignificance "

" Evacuation "

" Letter to the Dead "

Later renamed to " Sad "

" Rival "

" Grievance "

" Light Years "

" Of the Girl "

" Thin Air "

" Nothing as It Seems "

" Fatal "

" Sleight of Hand "

" Soon Forget "

" In the Moonlight "

" Parting Ways "

" Education "

= = Personnel = =