

= A Ghost Is Born =

A Ghost Is Born is the fifth studio album by American alternative rock band Wilco . Released on June 22 , 2004 , it features singer Jeff Tweedy on lead guitar more than any previous Wilco album . The band streamed the album online for free , and offered a five song EP to purchasers .

Tweedy entered a rehab clinic shortly before the release of the album , delaying its release by two weeks . It also shortened its promotional tour . Despite this , A Ghost Is Born 's opening week was the best sales week for the band at the time and the album was met with good reviews from major publications such as Rolling Stone and PopMatters . The album earned Wilco a Grammy Award for Best Alternative Music Album .

= = Production = =

Wilco signed a contract with Nonesuch Records in November 2001 after a lengthy dispute with Reprise Records over the release of the band 's fourth album Yankee Hotel Foxtrot . Foxtrot was welcomed with positive reviews from The Village Voice ? where the album was rated by the critics as the best album of 2002 ? and Rolling Stone . It sold over 590 @, @ 000 copies , earning a Gold certification by the Recording Industry Association of America .

= = = Composition = = =

Recording for a new album began in November 2003 under the working title Wilco Happens . The album was produced by Jim O 'Rourke , who mixed Foxtrot and was a member of Wilco side project Loose Fur . O 'Rourke encouraged lead singer Jeff Tweedy to develop his guitar skills for the album ; Tweedy recently became the lead guitarist for the band due to the dismissal of Jay Bennett after the Yankee Hotel Foxtrot recording sessions . Tweedy sought to play solos on the album that were unlike those of jam bands such as Phish and The Grateful Dead . Instead , he performed composed solos influenced by Television such as the one during the coda of " At Least That 's What You Said " . Tweedy refers to the guitar solo at the end of the track as a " musical transcription " of one of his panic attacks . A Ghost Is Born was recorded in a manner different from Foxtrot or 1999 's Summerteeth ; whereas those recordings were performed live in the studio and then overdubbed , A Ghost Is Born was first performed on Pro Tools and only played live once completed . Tweedy was excited about writing an album this way :

An unusual feature of A Ghost Is Born is the fifteen @-@ minute long track " Less Than You Think " . The first part of the song begins as a ballad which references belief systems and atheism which after 3 minutes , fades out . The second part begins at this moment and consists of electronic drones and noise , intended to audibly represent the migraines that lead singer Jeff Tweedy had been suffering from while addicted to pain killers during the recording sessions for A Ghost Is Born . For the song , each band member created a synthesizer noise that mimicked an electronic sound . The installations were simultaneously activated in the room and recorded . The noise , which served as the coda to the song , was remixed to provide dynamics to the track . Calling it " the track that everyone will hate , " Tweedy defended the song 's inclusion on the album :

A Ghost Is Born was the first Wilco album with pianist Mikael Jorgensen ; he had previously worked as an engineer with the band on their collaboration with The Minus 5 . Jeff Tweedy provided lead vocals and acted as lead guitarist for the only time since the band formed . John Stirratt , the only original member aside from Tweedy , played bass and guitar . Glenn Kotche and Jim O 'Rourke , Tweedy 's associates from Loose Fur , acted as drummer and multi @-@ instrumentalist , respectively . Leroy Bach played a variety of keyboards as well as bass guitar . All members of the band contributed with a synthesizer part on " Less Than You Think " .

= = Marketing and promotion = =

Wilco began touring in support of Ghost even before the album had been released . Multi @-@

instrumentalist Leroy Bach left the band after the recording sessions to join a theater production , so Wilco added jazz rock guitarist Nels Cline and multi @-@ instrumentalist Pat Sansone to replace him . Sansone had been playing with The Autumn Defense , a side project led by bassist John Stirratt . However , the tour to support the album had to be abridged . In May 2004 , Tweedy checked himself into a rehabilitation clinic in Chicago , Illinois due to chronic migraine headaches , anxiety attacks , and clinical depression . In the process of treating the ailments , Tweedy became addicted to prescription painkillers . His rehab led to the cancellation of the European stage of the tour and a delay in the album 's release date . Intended for release on June 8 , 2004 , the album was officially released on June 22 , 2004 .

The band also webcast the album in its entirety on the Internet in a promotion with Apple Computer . Nonesuch was willing to allow the MPEG @-@ 4 broadcast due to the success of a similar broadcast in the promotion of Yankee Hotel Foxtrot . Additionally , Wilco offered a free EP to purchasers of the album . The EP featured two outtakes from the album ? " Panthers " and " Kicking Television " ? and live versions of " At Least That 's What You Said " , " The Late Greats " , and " Handshake Drugs " . The EP was later packaged with the album and sold as a " deluxe version " .

= = Reception = =

In its debut week , A Ghost Is Born peaked at # 8 on the Billboard 200 chart and sold over 81 @,@ 000 copies , the highest US chart peak and best sales week ever attained by the band at that time . As of April 13 , 2007 the album has sold over 340 @,@ 000 copies according to Nielsen SoundScan . The album was an international hit as well , peaking at # 24 in Norway , # 29 in Sweden , # 33 in New Zealand , # 34 in Belgium , and # 37 in Ireland .

Like Foxtrot , A Ghost Is Born was well received by critics . On Metacritic , it has been given a score of 81 out of 100 based on " universal acclaim " . Jon Pareles of Rolling Stone called the album " as eerie as anything Wilco have recorded yet " and applauded " Tweedy offers illuminating curiosity about what can happen in a song . " Stylus Magazine gave it an " A " grade , named it " album of the week " , and claimed it was " even more brilliant " than Yankee Hotel Foxtrot . Michael Metevier of PopMatters also supported the notion that Ghost was better than Foxtrot , calling every note " purposeful " and said that the album made him " surprised and delighted enough to last several lifetimes . " James Hunter from The Village Voice gave it a positive review and said , " Wilco 's ideas are unremarkable , but are worked out with intelligence and striking conception . And as it happens , the new organic emphasis tables some of Wilco 's lamer stylistic obsessions . " Billboard also gave it a positive review and called it Wilco 's " most difficult and uncompromising album to date . "

Tiny Mix Tapes gave it all five stars and said that " Unlike the first three Wilco albums and even more than Yankee Hotel Foxtrot , A Ghost is Born requires careful listening . " The A.V. Club gave it a favorable review and said that " For the most part , Ghost channels its shaggy sound into pop music . True , it 's pop music that constantly threatens to erupt into noise or fade into silence , but it 's still hard not to hum along . " E ! Online gave the album a B + and said , " If the album weren 't so agreeably off @-@ kilter--short , whispery tunes alternate with long , rambling epics--its mix of guitars and piano would almost seem like the stuff you 'd hear on rockers like Layla or Abbey Road . " Neumu.net gave it eight stars out of ten and stated , " If Foxtrot ' s songs were fractured pop , then Ghost is just plain fracture , a soft and brutal self @-@ examination that pulls no punches even as it manages to remain carefully elliptical . " Playloder gave it four stars out of five and said , " This time , as well as simply delivering the goods , Wilco come bearing a basket of extras . " Q gave the album four stars out of five and called it " Even more meandering than its celebrated , if somewhat cold , predecessor . It 's also more confident , more coherent , yielding an all @-@ enveloping warmth that 's entirely resistant to any iPod shuffle function . " Flak Magazine also gave it a favorable review and stated : " It 's in the mournful , captivating , meditative , exasperating , pretentious , masterfully constructed experience of A Ghost Is Born that Tweedy and Wilco become true iconoclasts . " The Austin Chronicle gave it three @-@ and @-@ a @-@ half stars out of five and said the album was " not a lot of fun . Still , it 's an accomplishment , because it 's an angry album . "

Not all publications shared these views about the album . Pitchfork Media , who had given Yankee Hotel Foxtrot a perfect 10 rating , only gave Ghost a 6 @. @ 6 , calling it " wildly uneven " and " less cohesive than any other Wilco release . " Village Voice critic Robert Christgau called the album a " privileged self @-@ indulgence " due to its extreme musical dynamics . Joshua Klein of the Chicago Tribune gave it an average review and said that " the incomplete quality of " A Ghost is Born " can be quite intriguing , more of a side step than a forward leap , but a worthy experiment all the same . " NME gave the album a score of six out of ten and stated : " It 's like Scissor Sisters on tranquilisers . With a bit of ELO . And a dash of Ramones . And , with this eclecticism , a worrying lack of focus . " Alternative Press gave it three stars out of five and said , " It 's important that albums like Ghost exist-but unfortunately , those albums don 't always make the most enjoyable listens . " Trouser Press gave it a mixed review and called it " a textbook example of an album created to fulfill expectations the band doesn 't necessarily share . "

In 2005 , A Ghost Is Born won two Grammy Awards for Best Alternative Music Album and Best Recording Package . Although the band was nominated for Grammys for work on previous albums , this was the first time that they won one .

= = Track listing = =

All songs written by Jeff Tweedy except where noted .

Side one

" At Least That 's What You Said " ? 5 : 33

" Hell Is Chrome " (Tweedy , Mikael Jorgensen) ? 4 : 38

" Spiders (Kidsmoke) " ? 10 : 46

Side two

" Muzzle of Bees " ? 4 : 56

" Hummingbird " ? 3 : 11

" Handshake Drugs " ? 6 : 07

Side three

" Wishful Thinking " (Tweedy , Glenn Kotche) ? 4 : 41

" Company in My Back " ? 3 : 46

" I 'm a Wheel " ? 2 : 37

" Theologians " (Tweedy , Jorgensen , Chris Girard) ? 3 : 36

Side four

" Less Than You Think " (Tweedy , John Stirratt , Kotche , Jorgensen , Leroy Bach , Jim O 'Rourke) ? 15 : 04

" The Late Greats " ? 2 : 31

= = Singles = =

" I 'm a Wheel " (July 26 , 2004)

7 " vinyl only , " I 'm a Wheel " b / w " Kicking Television "

= = Personnel = =

Wilco :

Jeff Tweedy ? vocals , guitar , bass , synthesizer , filters , loops

John Stirratt ? bass , guitar , piano , backing vocals , synthesizer , filters , loops

Glenn Kotche ? drums , percussion , hammered dulcimer , synthesizer , filters , loops

Leroy Bach ? piano , organ , guitar , bass , vibes , synthesizer , filters , loops

Mikael Jorgensen ? piano , rocksichord , Farfisa , organ , synthesizer , filters , loops , engineer

Jim O 'Rourke ? piano , guitar , bass , ARP 2600 , synthesizer , filters , loops , engineer , mixing , producer

Additional personnel :

Frankie Montuoro ? hammered dulcimer , production assistant , technical assistance

Karen Waltuch ? viola

Tim Barnes ? percussion

Steve Rooke ? mastering

Chris Shaw ? engineer

TJ Doherty , Tim Iseler ? assistant engineers

Stan Doty , Daniel Herbst , Deborah Miles Johnson , Haydn Johnston , Matt Zivich ? production assistants , technical assistance

Dan Nadel ? graphic design

Peter Smith ? graphic design , photography

Mike Schmelling ? photography

Gladys Nilsson ? drawing

Ken Waagner ? digital supervisor