

= Seeing Sounds =

Seeing Sounds is the third studio album by American funk rock band N.E.R.D released June 10 , 2008 on Star Trak Entertainment and Interscope Records in the United States . After ending their contract with Virgin Records in 2005 , the band felt their previous album Fly or Die (2004) was too consistent . Using their own money , the band recorded the album in Florida and California . The album was produced solely by record production duo The Neptunes , consisting of Pharrell Williams and Chad Hugo , with additional assistance by rock band Spymob and was mainly written by Williams . The album 's title , as well as its content , revolves around the neurological phenomenon of synesthesia , the mixing of sensory modalities .

The album debuted at number seven on the U.S. Billboard 200 chart , selling 80 @,@ 000 in its first week . It peaked in the top 20 in Australia , Canada , the Netherlands , Switzerland and the United Kingdom , while also charting in the several other countries . Upon its release , Seeing Sounds received generally mixed to positive reviews from most music critics . Some writers called the record N.E.R.D 's best album to date and praised its production , while others negatively criticized Williams ' singing and the album 's lyrical content .

= = Concept = =

While touring in promotion of their previous album , Fly or Die , N.E.R.D ended their contract with Virgin Records in 2005 . After touring , Pharrell Williams felt that the album was too consistent ; he felt the band abandoned a sense of unpredictability . The band became " hooked " on the energy from their fans and began recording their third album . Williams and fellow band member Chad Hugo later established Star Trak Entertainment , a subsidiary of Interscope Records .

For the album , the band wanted to create the atmosphere of hyperactivity they knew their fans wanted . They wrote a few songs , but felt the songs " weren 't strong enough " and sent them to other musicians . Shay Haley , a member of the band , explained that in their new work , the band wanted to add energy to the emotional appeal of their past albums , though the band did not conceive a clear plan for the direction of the new album . N.E.R.D described the desired outcomes of the album as " a pre @-@ cognitive effort to make music that would make sense for us on while we 're on a stage and to recapture that feeling we love so much " and additionally , " to make something that was thought provoking and for people to listen to it and enjoy it on their own time " .

Originally titled N.3.R.D , the title was changed to Seeing Sounds . Williams explained that the title was based on synesthesia , a neurological phenomenon the band learned of while watching the Discovery Channel . They were inspired to create music that could be conceived as a live show . He was surprised to learn not everyone experienced while listening to music . He described synesthesia as the outcome when " one sense gets more information than what 's intended " , stimulated by sensory deprivation . Haley further elaborated , saying that it is a mixture of senses that causes a person to experience colorful hearing and auditory smell . When the band created the album , it was the music they envisioned and decided the appropriate title for the album , Seeing Sounds . Williams pointed out that the lyrics were also inspired by synesthesia . He said that his fans want to " rock out " and be taken on an " emotional roller coaster " , and the only way to do that is to give the fans some records they could blast out on their speakers . The European @-@ influenced music is layered and textured with many music modalities , differing from their past club @-@ oriented albums . Hugo called the album a " big album of LSD , sonic drug " . The band described the album of being an exercise in creative cohesion , band unity and a renewed purpose for themselves . Williams went on to add :

If you really analyze that , the most inspiration is probably deep inside a synesthesiatic . So for us , ' seeing sounds ' is what we relate to the most . We figured we 'd make an album out of it . Energy and emotion was the criteria [while recording] , but we made the music anticipating the [live] show . That was the most important thing ? [The song] ' Spaz ' is [an] old school , hip hop feeling with some drum and bass . It becomes a big , tall monster . It 's almost like this big gorilla looking down at you . If he smacks you , he kills you . His fingers are the size of your body . That 's kinda what we

're doing . We 're facing this big monster of , of what we know is out there , of what we see , that big monster of energy .

= = Recording and production = =

Spending their own money , N.E.R.D recorded the album at the South Beach Studios in Miami , Florida , and the Record Plant Studios in Los Angeles , California . Williams used a Triton Extreme , Triton Pro and Pro Tools in the production of the album , while Hugo worked in Access Virus TI , Roland JV @-@ 1080 , JV @-@ 2080 , XV @-@ 5080 , TR @-@ 808 and TR @-@ 909 as beatboxing was provided by Haley . Rock band Spymob further assisted production with guitar and drums . Production revolved around heavy rock , funk and soul music , which was first introduced in their debut album , In Search Of Hugo described the album as going back to the band 's roots , combining a classic rock sound with a 1970s funk swing . The typical process of recording was described as " Williams arrives at the studio , ideas in full flower , and lays down both a beat (either programmed or played on an assortment of buckets) and vocals . " Hugo then would add extra instrumentation . In an interview with MTV , Williams said that the band " didn 't care about genres ; we 're not doing this for the money . We 're doing this for people who pledge allegiance to our movement . " Hugo went on to say that they " just want to make people move " . On the album he said , " We had anger , quiet angst . We had something to get off our chest . And we wanted to show we could do it as a band . " Don Was , a musician and record producer , thought that the band was on a creatively fulfilling path , calling their musical style " really innovative " .

Williams felt music lacked energy , citing Limp Bizkit 's " Nookie " as the last energetic record . Williams suggested his engineer , Andrew Coleman , to " put the drums and bass on the right , keys in the middle , and the mothafucking guitar and backgrounds on the left " . Coleman denied his request , saying , " those systems were different back then . If we do that , you 'll be in a club and all you will hear on one side of the club is drums and on the other side , just chords . "

The Hives ' members - Chris Dangerous (drums / percussion) , Nicholaus Arson (guitar) , Vigilante Carlstroem (guitar) , Dr. Matt Destruction (bass) - contributed instrumentals on " Time For Some Action " and " Windows " , with The Hives ' frontman Howlin ' Pelle Almqvist providing guest vocals on " Time For Some Action " . On Seeing Sounds they are credited with their real names instead of the pseudonyms they use within the band .

= = Promotion = =

In promotion of the album , N.E.R.D performed in Kanye West 's Glow in the Dark Tour as well as the Isle of Wight Festival . The band also performed at the Austin City Limits festival , where they encouraged fans to dance on stage and urged them to vote in the 2008 United States elections . The song " Spaz " was used for commercials for the Zune Pass . The band performed at Vanderbilt University 's Rites of Spring Music Festival in April .

= = Reception = =

= = = Commercial performance = = =

The album debuted at number seven on the U.S. Billboard 200 , selling 80 @,@ 000 copies in its first week . It peaked in the top 20 in Australia , Canada , the Netherlands , Switzerland and the United Kingdom , while also charting in the several other regions , including Austria , Belgium , France and Italy .

= = = Critical response = = =

Upon its release , the album received generally mixed reviews from most music critics . At

Metacritic , which assigns a normalized rating out of 100 to reviews from mainstream critics , the album received an average score of 64 , based on 19 reviews , which indicates " generally favorable reviews " . Some writers noted and praised the heavy use of electronic , bass and funk beats , while others suggest The Neptunes were unable to blend R & B and rock . Anthony Henriques of PopMatters lauded the production , saying that " their signature drums and spaced @-@ out samples sound as good as ever here " , going on to say " [t] he overall balance between live and electronic instrumentation is also the best they have managed on any of the N.E.R.D. albums " . He compared the album to M.I.A. ' s Kala as " one of the best genre @-@ blurring club records " . However , Andy Kellman of Allmusic felt the songs " still have a way of seeming as easy and carefree as the moments when N.E.R.D. are simply bashing away ? blowing off steam , and talking ridiculous nonsense " . Alexis Petridis of The Guardian pointed out that the songs were " largely about sex " , calling it " wearisome " . Ian Cohen of Pitchfork Media called the album a " baffling , obnoxious mess " . Adrian Ruhi of Okayplayer gave the album a score of 88 out of 100 and called some of the songs " a dynamic mess " , but noted it was " a good thing " .

Some critics argued that the album was their most consistent and strongest album to date . Christian Hoard of Rolling Stone felt that the album was " experimental and expansive " . Sal Cinquemani of Slant Magazine felt that the album lacked " freshness or spontaneity " that was found in the band 's debut album , calling only two songs on the album " very visionary " . Jim Farber of the Daily News criticized Williams , saying " Even aided by studio correction , the guy can 't sing " , calling it " bad singing at its engaging best " . Cohen of Pitchfork Media bashed the lyrics , saying that the writing was " far down the list of what N.E.R.D. is actually good at " . Hoard of Rolling Stone felt he learned nothing from the lyrics except that Williams was sexually aroused . Henriques of PopMatters noted that Williams is not a " technically gifted rapper " , he " does not have a beautiful voice " and his lyrics are " typically inconsequential in a ' saying shit just to sound cool ' sort of way " , but found strengths in his choruses , which he pointed out " typically use a catchy phrase or recognizable melody as an anchor for his nonsensical verses " . Dan Charnas of The Washington Post commended N.E.R.D for their songwriting , writing that Seeing Sounds " combines the adolescent and clever " . The Times writer Priya Elan gave the album 4 out of 5 stars and wrote that band is " pushing the boundaries of the popular song " . In his Consumer Guide , Robert Christgau gave the album a three @-@ star honorable mention () and stated , " Beats of course , songs usually , singing barely--especially sincere @-@ type singing " ; he also picked out two songs from the album : " Anti @-@ Matter " and " Everyone Nose (All the Girls Standing in the Line for the Bathroom) " .

= = Track listing = =

= = Personnel = =

= = Chart history = =

= = Release history = =