

= Christ Illusion =

Christ Illusion is the tenth studio album by the American thrash metal band Slayer . Released on August 8 , 2006 , the album received generally favorable critical reviews , and it entered the Billboard 200 at number 5 ? the band 's second highest U.S. chart position as of 2015 . Christ Illusion includes the Grammy Award @-@ winning songs " Eyes of the Insane " and " Final Six " , and is the band 's first studio album to feature original drummer Dave Lombardo since 1990 's Seasons in the Abyss . It is also the first time since Divine Intervention that they recorded songs in D # tuning . The songs " Jihad " , " Flesh Storm " , " Catalyst " and " Consfearacy " were recorded in D # tuning , while the songs " Catatonic " , " Eyes of the Insane " , " Skeleton Christ " and " Supremist " were recorded in Drop B tuning . The remaining songs were recorded in C # tuning .

Depicting a mutilated Christ painted by longtime collaborator Larry Carroll , the album 's graphic artwork courted controversy . An alternative cover was issued to conservative retailers who felt uncomfortable with the original . The band also put out a censored cover which censored out the offensive artwork . Lyrics , particularly in the song " Jihad " , describe the September 11 attacks from the perspective of a terrorist . Following protests , all Indian stocks of the album were recalled and destroyed by EMI India .

= = Recording = =

Christ Illusion was recorded via computer between two studios : NRG Studios , North Hollywood , with assistant engineer Dave Colvin ; and Westlake Studios , Los Angeles , where Brian Warwick assisted . Guitarist Kerry King recalls nine of the eleven songs originally slated for Christ Illusion were demoed in 2004 , with Dave Lombardo at the drum kit . However , Lombardo recalls recording with King as far back as early 2003 , when two demos were completed at Lombardo 's home . In a July 2004 interview , guitarist Jeff Hanneman reported " Me and Kerry have a bunch of songs , " and expressed the band 's intent to finish the record that year . Slayer 's label American Recordings was at the time negotiating a switch of record distributors from Columbia Records to Warner Bros. Records , meaning the recording would have been temporarily shelved until the issue became resolved . For this reason the group did not finish a record at that time , as the distribution deal with Warner Records was not finalized until late July 2005 .

Slayer wished for Reign in Blood producer Rick Rubin to produce the album , and expected him to do so after Rubin expressed an initial interest . Rubin was busy , however , which caused a further delay to recording . While Christ Illusion 's recording was finally underway Rubin lent production to Metallica 's Death Magnetic , an action later described by King as a " slap in the fucking face . " Josh Abraham produced the album instead , and was praised by Blabbermouth 's Don Kaye " for capturing much more of the spark than has been apparent on the last few records . " Despite missing an opportunity to produce Christ Illusion , Rubin contributed in an " executive production " capacity . King was critical of his involvement , and said he cannot recall Rubin 's presence in the studio during the recording , and that Rubin 's main contribution was in providing suggestions during the final mix . Jamie Thomson of UK 's The Guardian newspaper was scornful of Rubin 's contribution , and observed Slayer " seem unwilling to ditch the nu @-@ metal tendencies that have made much of their recent output so resistible , which suggests Rubin 's involvement was considerably less hands @-@ on than in his remarkable redemptions of Johnny Cash and Neil Diamond . "

As with Slayer 's previous two albums , all rhythm guitar tracks on Christ Illusion were laid down by King . Using a Marshall JCM 800 as the main guitar sound throughout the album , King wrote roughly 80 % of his guitar solo parts prior to the sessions . The song " Catalyst , " meanwhile , almost saw inclusion on Slayer 's 2001 album God Hates Us All , existing in an alternative version which features former drummer Paul Bostaph on drums . Lombardo 's involvement marked the first time he , King , Araya and Hanneman had appeared together on record since the release of Seasons in the Abyss in 1990 , a reason cited by guitarist Jeff Hanneman for an alleged clearer punk vibe throughout the songs on the album . Lombardo personally described the album as " a

matured *Reign in Blood* ", while King described it as " a mix between *God Hates [Us All]* and *Seasons [in the Abyss]* . "

Although eleven songs were originally slated for the album , only ten made the final track listing . A song penned by Hanneman , entitled " *Final Six* , " was meant for inclusion , with the song name originally declared as the album 's title by vocalist Tom Araya to George Stroumboulopoulos of CBC 's *The Hour* . Questioned about the album 's title by Kevin and Bean of Los Angeles KROQ @-@ FM , King replied " I 'm not positive it 's been nailed yet . I think last week was the deadline and I 'm not sure where it ended up , so I 'm gonna have to take the fifth on that one . The way it was going , my vote was overlooked , so ? That 's why I 'm not real thrilled about it . " However , Araya took one weekend off for vacation during the recording of the album and required a two @-@ hour gall bladder operation the following Monday on May 5 , 2006 . Thus , he was unable to finish the vocals for the song in time for the album 's release . King hinted " *Final Six* " might appear on a special digipack release of *Christ Illusion* , a release which eventually surfaced in July 2007 .

= = Marketing and promotion = =

Being Slayer 's ninth studio album , *Christ Illusion* was originally scheduled for release on June 6 , 2006 , the sixth day of the sixth month of the sixth year of the 2000s decade . This connotation with the Book of Revelation 's Number of the Beast was being used as a marketing ploy to hype a number of media releases at the time , most notably the remake of the horror film *The Omen* . King said the idea was scrapped because of the number of other bands that had the same idea , but USA Today reported that the release date was thwarted because the band had failed to secure sufficient studio recording time . Having missed the " *Satanic* " date , the release was pushed back to July 25 ; however , this date was not met either . Despite this , an exclusive T @-@ shirt , limited to 666 units and only available via the band 's store , was released in commemoration of " the sixth day of the sixth month of the sixth year " . Five thousand copies of the limited edition EP " *Eternal Pyre* " were also released on this date , and made available via Hot Topic stores in the US . The EP previewed the song " *Cult* " , and the track was made available for streaming on the band 's official website the same day . Issued in Europe on June 23 , the EP landed at number 48 on the Swedish charts and number 2 on the Finnish charts , while on June 30 , Nuclear Blast Records released a 7 " vinyl picture disc version limited to a thousand copies .

Not all media attention surrounding the group on June 6 was favorable . National Day of Slayer , LLC , which describes itself as " a non @-@ profit corporation in the State of Wyoming " , requested on their website that Slayer fanatics participate in " *The National Day of Slayer* " by coming together and listening to the group 's tracks . However , vandals attacked St. Joseph 's Seminary in Yonkers , New York , by spray @-@ painting a large pentagram in front of the doors , black inverted crosses in two columns in front of the main entrance , and the number six on three steps leading into the Seminary . The words " *Reign in Blood* " were scrawled on the seminary landing , while the phrase " *Better to reign in Hell than to serve in Heaven* " , taken from Book 1 of John Milton 's poem *Paradise Lost* , was found inscribed on two inside columns . The National Day of Slayer website took credit for inspiring the perpetrator (s) , and a media investigation discovered that the site had left instructions that fans " spray paint Slayer logos on churches , synagogues , or cemeteries " .

Fans were given an exclusive preview of further tracks culled from the upcoming album before its release . In addition to " *Cult* " , the tracks " *Jihad* " and " *Eyes of the Insane* " were made available for streaming on the Spanish website Rafabasa.com in late June . A listening party event for the album took place on July 22 at Duff 's Brooklyn in New York City 's Williamsburg neighborhood . Filmed on the set of *The Henry Rollins Show* , a live rendition of " *Disciple* " (taken from Slayer 's 2001 album *God Hates Us All*) was posted online , followed by " *Cult* " 's live performance which aired on the Independent Film Channel a few days later . BBC Radio 1 's " *Mike Davis Rock Show* " gave " *Skeleton Christ* " a premier airing on August 1 , and by August 4 the full album was available for streaming via Slayer 's official MySpace profile . AOL Radio complimented this by launching an " *All Slayer* " station in anticipation of *Christ Illusion* 's release , playing all of Slayer 's previously released songs and tracks from the upcoming record .

In late July 2006 , bus benches in several Californian cities were decorated with promotional artwork for Christ Illusion . City officials in Fullerton , California , demanded the artwork be immediately removed from seventeen bus benches located throughout the city , and contacted the hired company which had originally put the adverts in place to assume the task . The officials disliked the band 's name , which they felt referred to a murderer . They also took offense to the antichrist and skull logo adorning the bench artwork . Eventually , the artwork was removed . However , various Orange County , California areas surrounding the city of Fullerton still had benches sporting the cover artwork .

= = Commercial performance = =

Christ Illusion was released on August 8 , 2006 by American Recordings / Warner Bros. Records . In its first week of release , the album sold 62 @, @ 000 copies in the United States and debuted at number 5 on the Billboard 200 Chart . Though this ranked as the band 's highest chart position as of 2015 , and was their first top 10 charting since 1994 's Divine Intervention , the album dropped to number 44 the following week . Christ Illusion reached number 9 in Australia , number 3 in Canada , number 6 in Austria , number 8 in the Netherlands , number 10 in Norway , number 9 in Poland and debuted at number 2 in Finland and Germany . The single " Eyes of the Insane " won the " Best Metal Performance " category at the 49th Grammy Awards . The song " Final Six " also won in the same category at the 50th Grammy Awards .

= = Critical reception = =

The album was met with mostly favorable reviews . On Metacritic , it was given a score of 72 out of 100 based on 21 reviews . Thom Jurek of AllMusic hailed the album as " raging , forward @-@ thinking heavy metal melding with hardcore thrash " , and wrote that Christ Illusion marked a return to " what made them such a breath of fresh air in the first place . " Ben Ratliff of The New York Times described the album as possessing " a kind of demented gravity , and the music bears it out : it is the most concentrated , focused Slayer record in 20 years . " PopMatters critic Adrien Begrand called it " Slayer 's best album in sixteen years and their most thought @-@ provoking work to date " , and the album was placed at number 15 on PopMatters ' list of The Best Metal Albums of 2006 . Drummer Lombardo came in for particular praise ; though Rolling Stone panned the album , the reviewer acknowledged that " at least their awesome drummer Dave Lombardo shows off some chops . " Blabbermouth 's Don Kaye thought that " while flawed " , Christ Illusion " proves that the band still has a few tricks up its sleeve and one very potent weapon behind the kit . " Peter Atkinson of KNAC.com felt similarly , and reported Lombardo 's " performance is top notch throughout and does give the album a looser feel than Paul Bostaph 's technical precision offered . " In 2011 , Complex Media Network 's music website , Consequence of Sound , honored Christ Illusion on a List ' Em Carefully installment dedicated to writer David Buchanan 's top thirteen metal records released between 2000 and 2010 , citing foreign controversy and overall sonic brutality during drummer Dave Lombardo 's powerful return . Decibel Magazine gave it a favorable review , stating , " Their hatred for religion in general , Christianity in particular , unwitting Americans , and anyone on the other side of a soldier 's gun has inspired Slayer to record their most vital album in years . " Chris Campion of The Observer stated that the album is " their most rigorously conceived and focused for years . "

Not all critics were positive . Chris Steffen of Rolling Stone magazine dismissed the album , noting that it " mines much of the same territory as its predecessor , God Hates Us All , just without the memorable riffs . " Jamie Thomson of The Guardian described the album as " wholly disappointing , " and thought the band sounded " unwilling to ditch the nu @-@ metal tendencies that have made much of their recent output so resistible . " KNAC.com contributor Peter Atkinson felt that the album " demands OUTRAGE ? more calculatingly so than any other album the band has done , " and that " that , in a nutshell , is Christ Illusion 's glaring weakness . "

= = Album artwork = =

Several aspects of Christ Illusion 's content and promotion generated adverse attention and publicity . In particular the cover art , painted by Larry Carroll and depicting a mutilated , stoned Jesus . Carroll , who had painted the cover artwork to previous Slayer albums such as Reign in Blood , South of Heaven and Seasons in the Abyss , resumed duties on Christ Illusion . Working solely from track names and formative lyrics , Carroll produced the original on a 4 @-@ by @-@ 4 @-@ foot slab of wood using a combination of media . Having requested an image of Christ in " a sea of despair " , King commented that an early version seemed as though Christ was " chilling out in the water " . The final image portrays Christ with a missing eye and amputated hands , and standing amidst a sea of blood and severed heads . Araya deemed this version " much better because he looked like a drug addict ! " , while King admired the artwork enough to purchase the original . Certain album pre @-@ orders gave fans the chance to win one of ten autographed lithographs of the artwork , while an alternative , non @-@ graphic cover was made to appease retailers who had refused to stock the original version .

World Entertainment News Network reported Slayer were attracting controversy through issuing the artwork . Joseph Dias , general secretary of the Mumbai Christian group Catholic Secular Forum , (CSF) took " strong exception " to the original album artwork , and issued a memorandum to Mumbai 's police commissioner in protest . Chris Steffen of Rolling Stone magazine commented that " The album art takes it all over the top with an image axeman Kerry King dubs ' Christ in a Sea of Despair ' " , while KNAC.com 's Peter Atkinson deemed the artwork " defiantly sacrilegious " .

= = Lyrical themes = =

Lyrical themes explored on Christ Illusion deal with terrorism , warfare and religion , drew criticism from conservative groups . It includes a depiction of the September 11 attacks from the viewpoint of one of the terrorists (" Jihad ") , and a portrayal of a soldier 's experience of post @-@ traumatic stress (" Eyes of the Insane ") . The song " Cult " revolves around King 's perception of flaws in American religion , while " Consfearacy " has been described as a " government hating song " .

Critical reaction to the album 's lyrical content was mixed . Thom Jurek of Allmusic felt the " dark , unrelentingly twisted @-@ as @-@ fuck lyrics reflect a singular intensity , " and praised the band for connecting their anti @-@ religion stance with a belief that religion has underscored many wars throughout history . However , Rolling Stone 's Chris Steffen mourned that it had become " downright painful to hear Tom Araya ? at 45 years old ! ? continue to belt out the band 's increasingly self @-@ parodying , anti @-@ religious lyrics , " and singled out lyrics such as " Religion 's a whore " and " I 've made my choice : six six six ! " as over the top . Jamie Thomson of The Guardian wrote that the album left " no blasphemy ... unuttered " , while Peter Atkinson of KNAC.com observed that " when not fixating on religion , the band revisit their other favorite subject ? war ? in surprisingly familiar terms , " and remarked that Slayer had sunk " to the level of God @-@ repelling dunderheads Deicide . " He concluded the review with the opinion that " It 's déjà vu all over again from God Hates Us All ? and once you 've titled something God Hates Us All , haven 't you made your point enough already ? " .

The Catholic Secular Forum condemned the album 's lyrical content . Joseph Dias issued a statement in which he deemed the lyrics to " Skeleton Christ " to be an " insult to Christianity . " The memorandum was sent to Mumbai 's police commissioner , and further expressed concern that the track " Jihad " would offend " the sensibilities of the Muslims ... and secular Indians who have respect for all faiths . " EMI India met with the CSF , apologizing for Christ Illusion 's release and recalling the album with no plans of a reissue . On October 11 , 2006 it was announced all stocks had been destroyed . Though Araya had expected " Jihad " 's treatment of the events of 9 / 11 to create an American backlash , it failed to materialise , in part , he believes , due to peoples ' view that the song is merely " just Slayer being Slayer " .

= = Track listing = =

= = Credits = =

Writing , performance and production credits are adapted from the album liner notes .

= = = Personnel = = =

Slayer

Tom Araya ? bass , vocals

Jeff Hanneman ? guitar

Kerry King ? guitar

Dave Lombardo ? drums

Production

Rick Rubin ? executive production

Josh Abraham ? production , mixing

John Ewing Jr . ? engineering

Ryan Williams ? mixing engineer

Dave Colvin ? assistant engineer (at NRG)

Brian Warwick ? assistant engineer (at Westlake Studios)

Armand B. Crump ? guitar tech , bass tech

Norm Costa ? drum tech

Vlado Meller ? mastering

Artwork and design

t42design ? art direction , design

Josh Victor Rothstein ? photography

Larry Carroll ? cover art

Krucified Kittens ? art direction , cover design (special edition only)

= = = Studios = = =

NRG , Los Angeles , CA , USA ? recording

Westlake Studios , Los Angeles , CA , USA ? recording

Pulse Recording , Los Angeles , CA , USA ? mixing

Sony Music Studios , New York City , NY , USA ? mastering

= = = DVD credits = = =

Slayer on Tour ' 07

Matt Weston ? direction

Dave Wither ? direction

Brett Jordan ? direction

Andrew Deerin ? production

Kevin Flynn ? editing

" Eyes of the Insane "

Tony Petrossian ? direction , production , editing

Amanda Fox ? production

" South of Heaven "

Adam Rothlein ? direction , editing

Jen Rothlein ? production

= = Charts = =

