

= Xtort =

Xtort (stylized as XTO?T) , released on June 25 , 1996 on Wax Trax ! / TVT , is the ninth studio album by industrial rock group KMFDM . It was recorded in Chicago , Illinois , from the end of 1995 through early 1996 , shortly after the death of Wax Trax ! co @-@ founder and band friend Jim Nash . Xtort features a variety of guest artists from the industrial music scene and studio musicians from other genres , but includes limited participation from core member En Esch .

The album was massively promoted by TVT Records , which pressed tens of thousands of free copies of the first single , " Power " . Band leader Sascha Konietzko created his own form of promotion , issuing a press release that both disparaged and lauded the coming set . Xtort was generally well received by critics , with many calling it superlative , and is the highest charting and best @-@ selling KMFDM album to date . After the original release went out of print , a remastered version was released in 2007 .

= = Background = =

In late 1995 , KMFDM had completed the " Beat by Beat " and " In Your Face " tours in support of their last album , Nihil . KMFDM frontman and founder Sascha Konietzko described Nihil as " the crown " , and said the band had come as close to mainstream popularity as he wanted . He felt the band needed to move away from its success . In 2007 , Konietzko recalled that he had " hated all the attention , interviews , photo shoots , etc . " . After the tours , Konietzko returned to Chicago in order to be with his friend , Jim Nash , co @-@ founder of Wax Trax ! Records , who was dying from AIDS . Konietzko referred to the death of Nash that October as " the end of an era " .

En Esch , one of the longtime core members of KMFDM , had almost nothing to do with Xtort , contributing to just two songs . With regard to Esch 's lack of participation , Konietzko said , " En Esch is just En Esch . He never made himself available to do this album , and so it 's always my belief that the thing must keep moving ; I had to do it without him . " He also said the two were not in communication around the time of the album 's release .

= = Production = =

Xtort was pre @-@ produced and tracked in Seattle at Hole in the Wall Studio , and recorded and mixed in Chicago at Chicago Recording Company . Konietzko contacted F. M. Einheit and had him come to Chicago in January 1996 to work on some tracks together . Konietzko also brought in a number of Wax Trax ! alumni , such as Chris Connelly of Revolting Cocks and Bill Rieflin of Ministry , to help with the album 's creation , along with assistance from more than a dozen studio musicians . Konietzko required all the album 's contributors to be on call thirteen hours a day during production , saying " I don 't care what they do on their own time , but when they do KMFDM , if they don 't comply with the schedule , they 're out . "

Konietzko said the ideas for songs began with individual sounds , which he then modified until he created a looped rhythm . " Craze " , for example , Konietzko called " an homage to Atari Teenage Riot , a band with two guys , one girl , a couple TR90S [sic] drum machines and a bass machine . " He said he was inspired by touring with the band in Europe in support of Nihil in 1995 . After creating the base tunes , the songs went to Günter Schulz , another longtime member , to add guitars . With the completed songs , Konietzko then allowed guest artists , such as Connelly , to pick songs they wanted to contribute to , and added their vocals or other instrumentation . For Xtort , Konietzko used Macintosh products to do all the synchronization .

Connelly contributed to four tracks , including " Blame " , which also featured the horn section from the Oakland , California based group Tower of Power . Nicole Blackman , KMFDM 's publicist at the time , contributed spoken word vocals to the track " Dogma " , which was adapted from the ten @-@ minute live performance she provided while touring with the band . " Power " , meanwhile , was made to fulfill a request by the band 's label , Wax Trax ! , for a radio promo song . Konietzko said he 'd heard " radio didn 't like big female choruses " , so he got voiceover commercial singer Cheryl

Wilson to help with the song , which he called " dumb and catchy " . The hidden track of the album , " Fairy " , is a story narrated by Jr . Blackmail , who had worked with the band previously in the 1980s . Konietzko said it was inspired by Blackmail 's " dirty fantasies " . He also said it was not a serious track : " it was more like kids at play " . For the background sounds , the group did things like roll screws on the floor while Schulz played piano .

= = Release = =

The first track on the album , " Power " , was featured on the " Wax Trax ! Summer Swindle " , a cassette sampler included with 45 @,@ 000 issues of the July 1996 issue of Alternative Press . Another 50 @,@ 000 copies of the sampler were to be handed out at summer college and beach events and given away at radio stations . 90 @,@ 000 pre @-@ release posters and information sheets were mailed out to fans .

Blackman wrote the promotional piece for the album 's press kit , and at Konietzko 's request , wrote the first half of the promo as an insulting take down of the album rather than as a standard promo . The first letter of each line of the first section of the promo spelled out the phrase " April Fools Day Fucker " and included lines such as " It 's been 100 years and fifty albums for the German / American rock squad ? are they running out of gas or what ? " and " KMFDM can 't suck hard enough " , a quote from the track " Inane " . The second half of the promo included phrases such as " XTORT is a supersonic soundtrack " and " The new album is the sound of a band at the height of their powers . " Carrie Borzillo of Billboard stated KMFDM was " poised to make a significant commercial breakthrough . " Konietzko said at the time there were no plans to tour in support of the album 's release . He later said this was due to the fact that the band as a touring unit had ceased to exist .

Xtort was released on June 25 , 1996 on Wax Trax ! / TVT on cassette , CD , and vinyl . The album was also released in CD format in Europe and Japan . In addition to being the first KMFDM album to chart in the Billboard 200 , staying there for three weeks and peaking at No. 92 the week of July 13 , 1996 , Xtort sold over 200 @,@ 000 copies , making it the best @-@ selling album in the band 's history . The song " Son of a Gun " was made into an animated video by visual artist Aidan " Brute ! " Hughes , who also did the album 's cover artwork . On March 6 , 2007 , Metropolis Records released a digitally remastered version of the album on CD and MP3 . Looking back on the album at the time of its re @-@ release , Konietzko said it was his favorite album of the 1990s .

= = Critical reception = =

Reviews for Xtort were almost universally positive . Jon Wiederhorn of Entertainment Weekly called it " the heaviest and most danceable disc in [KMFDM 's] 12 @-@ year career " while giving it an A- . Heidi MacDonald of CMJ New Music Monthly compared Xtort to getting hit with a wrecking ball , saying , " When KMFDM does what it does best , it is the best at what it does , namely jack @-@ hammer industrial anthems that hit with stunning precision and power . " Sandy Masuo of Rolling Stone called the album " the product of a first @-@ rate lineup , " and praised the album 's diversity , saying , " The 10 tracks on Xtort are grounded in KMFDM 's smart synthesis of metallic crunch , swiveling rhythms and sophisticated electronics , but it 's the organic elements that give the album a zesty twist . " Kevin M. Williams of the Chicago Sun @-@ Times gave the album an " essential " rating , and said , " KMFDM has some major mojo working with Xtort " .Stephen Thomas Erlewine of AllMusic was less enthusiastic , saying , " it would be nice to hear [KMFDM] branch out and start to experiment a little bit more " , and commenting that while Xtort did not sound much different from previous releases , " KMFDM sounds as good as they ever have , and several tracks rank among their best . " Liz Armstrong of the Daily Herald thought the guest contributors added significant differences to their individual songs .

Larry Flick of Billboard said " Power " , the opening track , " finds front man Sascha Konietzko snarling and growling with palpable force , while Cheryl Wilson softens the edges with splashes of soul @-@ mama vamping during the chorus . " Williams called the song " irresistible " . Masuo

noted in particular the use of horns and the Hammond B3 organ , and concluded by stating , " In their insidiously arty and intellectually sassy music , KMFDM continue to bring diverse elements together to create a unified whole . " Armstrong called " Dogma " a song that crossed over from being industrial to " frightening " , while MacDonald described it as " blistering " and Williams said it was " captivating " . Armstrong said " Son of a Gun " was the album 's " truly explosive track " , but Williams thought " Inane " was the best song .

= = Track listing = =

All information from 2007 release CD booklet .

= = Personnel = =

All information from 2007 release CD booklet except where noted .