= OK Computer =

OK Computer is the third studio album by the English alternative rock band Radiohead , released on 21 May 1997 by Parlophone Records internationally and by Capitol Records in the United States . It was the first album to be self @-@ produced by Radiohead with assistance from the producer Nigel Godrich . The album was recorded in Oxfordshire and Bath between 1996 and early 1997 , with most of the recording completed in the historic mansion St Catherine 's Court . The band made a deliberate attempt to distance themselves from the guitar @-@ oriented , lyrically introspective style of their previous album , The Bends . OK Computer 's abstract lyrics , densely layered sound and wide range of influences laid the groundwork for Radiohead 's later more experimental work .

OK Computer received unanimous critical acclaim and has since been cited by critics and musicians as one of the greatest albums of the 1990s . The album was nominated in the Album of the Year and Best Alternative Music Performance categories at the 1998 Grammy Awards , ultimately winning the latter . The album initiated a shift away from the popular Britpop genre of the time to the more melancholic and atmospheric style of alternative rock that would be prevalent in the next decade . Critics and fans have commented on the underlying themes found in the lyrics and album artwork , emphasising Radiohead 's views on rampant consumerism , social alienation , emotional isolation , and political malaise ; in this capacity , OK Computer is often interpreted as having prescient insight into the mood of 21st @-@ century life .

Upon the album 's delivery to the band 's United States record label Capitol Records , label representatives lowered their sales estimates , deeming the record uncommercial . Nevertheless , OK Computer reached number one on the UK Albums Chart and became Radiohead 's highest album entry on the United States charts at the time , debuting at # 21 on the Billboard 200 . " Paranoid Android " , " Karma Police " , " Lucky " , " No Surprises " and " Airbag " were released as promotional singles from the album .

= = Background = =

In 1995 , Radiohead toured in support of their second album The Bends . Midway through the tour , Brian Eno commissioned the band to contribute a song to The Help Album , a charity compilation organised by War Child . The Help Album was to be recorded over the course of a single day , 4 September 1995 , and rush @-@ released that week . That day Radiohead recorded " Lucky " in five hours with engineer Nigel Godrich , who had assisted producer John Leckie with The Bends and had produced several Radiohead B @-@ sides . Godrich said of the Help Album session : " Those things are the most inspiring , when you do stuff really fast and there 's nothing to lose . We left feeling fairly euphoric . So after establishing a bit of a rapport work @-@ wise , I was sort of hoping I would be involved with the next album . " To promote The Help Album , " Lucky " featured as the lead track on the Help EP , which charted at number 51 after BBC Radio 1 chose not to play it . This disappointed Radiohead singer Thom Yorke , but he later said " Lucky " shaped the nascent sound and mood of their upcoming record : " ' Lucky ' was indicative of what we wanted to do . It was like the first mark on the wall . "

Radiohead found The Bends tour stressful and decided to take a break in January 1996 . The band sought to distance their new material from the introspective style of The Bends . Drummer Phil Selway said , " There was an awful lot of soul searching [ on The Bends ] . To do that again on another album would be excruciatingly boring . " Yorke said : " The big thing for me is that we could really fall back on just doing another miserable , morbid and negative record lyrically , but I don 't really want to , at all . And I 'm deliberately just writing down all the positive things that I hear or see . I 'm not able to put them into music yet and I don 't want to just force it . " The critical and commercial success of The Bends gave the band confidence to self @-@ produce their third album . Their label Parlophone gave them a £ 100 @,@ 000 budget for recording equipment and an open @-@ ended deadline . Guitarist Jonny Greenwood said " the only concept that we had for this album was that we wanted to record it away from the city and that we wanted to record it ourselves . " Guitarist Ed O 'Brien , said : " Everyone said , ' You 'll sell six or seven million if you bring out The

Bends Pt 2 , ' and we 're like , we 'll kick against that and do the opposite . " A number of producers , including major figures such as Scott Litt , were offered for the producer role , but the band were encouraged by the sessions with Godrich . They consulted him for advice on what equipment to use , and prepared for the sessions by buying their own equipment , including a plate reverberator purchased from Jona Lewie . Although Godrich had sought to focus his work on electronic dance music , he outgrew his role as advisor and became the album 's coproducer .

= = Recording = =

In July 1996 , Radiohead started rehearsing and recording OK Computer in their studio Canned Applause , a converted shed near Didcot , Oxfordshire . Even without the deadline that contributed to the stress of The Bends , the band had difficulties , which Selway blamed on their choice to self @-@ produce the album : " [ We 're ] jumping from song to song , and when we started to run out of ideas , we 'd move on to a new song ... the stupid thing was that we were nearly finished when we 'd move on , because so much work had gone into them . " The members worked with nearly equal roles in the production and formation of the music , though Yorke was still firmly " the loudest voice " according to O 'Brien . Selway said " we give each other an awful lot of space to develop our parts , but at the same time we are all very critical about what the other person is doing . "
Godrich worked as a collaborator and a managerial outsider . He said that Radiohead " need to have another person outside their unit , especially when they 're all playing together , to say when the take goes well . ... I take up slack when people aren 't taking responsibility ? the term producing a record means taking responsibility for the record . ... It 's my job to ensure that they get the ideas across . " From the OK Computer sessions onward , Godrich has been characterised as Radiohead 's unofficial " sixth member " .
Radiohead decided that Canned Applause was an unsatisfactory recording location , which Yorke attributed to its proximity to the band members ' homes , and which Jonny Greenwood attributed to its lack of dining and bathroom facilities . The group had nearly completed recording four songs : " Electioneering " , " No Surprises " , " Subterranean Homesick Alien " and " The Tourist " . At their label 's request , the band took a break from recording to embark on a 13 @-@ date American tour in 1996 , opening for Alanis Morissette , and performed early versions of several new songs . One song , " Paranoid Android " , evolved from a fourteen @-@ minute song featuring long organ solos to one closer to the six @-@ minute album version .
During the tour , filmmaker Baz Luhrmann commissioned Radiohead to write a song for his upcoming film Romeo + Juliet . Luhrmann gave the band footage of the final 30 minutes of the film ; Yorke said " When we saw the scene in which Claire Danes holds the Colt .45 against her head , we started working on the song immediately . " Soon afterwards , the band wrote and recorded " Exit Music ( For a Film ) " ; the track plays over the film 's end credits but was not included on the soundtrack at the band 's request . Yorke later said the song helped shape the direction of the rest of the album , and that it " was the first performance we 'd ever recorded where every note of it made my head spin ? something I was proud of , something I could turn up really , really loud and not wince at any moment . "
Radiohead resumed their recording sessions in September 1996 at St Catherine 's Court , a historic mansion near Bath owned by actress Jane Seymour . Greenwood said the new location was unlived @-@ in but sometimes used as " a kind of corporate convention hangout . " The change of setting marked an important transition in the recording process . Greenwood , comparing the mansion to previous studio settings , said recording at St. Catherine 's Court " was less like a laboratory experiment , which is what being in a studio is usually like , and more about a group of people making their first record together . "
The group made extensive use of the different rooms and acoustics throughout the house . The vocals on " Exit Music ( For a Film ) " featured an echo effect achieved by recording on a stone staircase , and " Let Down " was recorded at 3 A.M. in a ballroom . The isolation allowed the band to work at a different pace , with more flexible and spontaneous working hours . O 'Brien said that " the biggest pressure was actually completing [ the recording ] . We weren 't given any deadlines and we

had complete freedom to do what we wanted . We were delaying it because we were a bit frightened of actually finishing stuff . " Yorke was satisfied with the quality of the recordings made at the location , and said : " In a big country house , you don 't have that dreadful ' 80s ' separation ' . ... There wasn 't a desire for everything to be completely steady and each instrument recorded separately . " O 'Brien was similarly pleased with the recordings , estimating that 80 percent of the album was recorded live . He said : " I hate doing overdubs , because it just doesn 't feel natural . ... Something special happens when you 're playing live ; a lot of it is just looking at one another and knowing there are four other people making it happen . " Yorke recorded many of the album 's vocals in one take .

Radiohead returned to Canned Applause in October for rehearsals , and completed most of OK Computer in further sessions at St. Catherine 's Court . By Christmas , they had narrowed the track listing to 14 songs . The string parts were recorded at Abbey Road Studios in London in January 1997 . The album was mastered at the same location , and mixed over the next two months at various studios around the city . Godrich preferred a quick and hands @-@ off approach to his mixing work , and said " I feel like I get too into it . I start fiddling with things and I fuck it up ... I generally take about half a day to do a mix . If it 's any longer than that , you lose it . The hardest thing is trying to stay fresh , to stay objective . "

= = Music and lyrics = =


= = = Style and influences = = =


Yorke said that the starting point for the record was the " incredibly dense and terrifying sound " of Bitches Brew , the 1970 avant @-@ garde jazz fusion album by Miles Davis . He described the sound of Bitches Brew to Q : " It was building something up and watching it fall apart , that 's the beauty of it . It was at the core of what we were trying to do with OK Computer . " Yorke has identified " I 'll Wear It Proudly " by Elvis Costello , " Fall on Me " by R.E.M. , " Dress " by PJ Harvey and " A Day in the Life " by the Beatles as being particularly influential on the album 's songwriting . Radiohead drew further inspiration from the recording style of film soundtrack composer Ennio Morricone and the krautrock band Can , musicians Yorke described as " abusing the recording process " .

According to Yorke , the band hoped to achieve an " atmosphere that 's perhaps a bit shocking when you first hear it , but only as shocking as the atmosphere on The Beach Boys ' Pet Sounds . " The band expanded their instrumentation to include electric piano , Mellotron , cello and other strings , glockenspiel and electronic effects . The band 's exploratory approach to instruments was summarised by Jonny Greenwood as " when we 've got what we suspect to be an amazing song , but nobody knows what they 're gonna play on it . " One reviewer characterised OK Computer as sounding like " a DIY electronica album made with guitars " . Many of Yorke 's vocals were first takes ; he felt that if he made other attempts he would " start to think about it and it would sound really lame . "

= = = Lyrics = = =


The album 's lyrics , written by Yorke , are more abstract compared to his personal , emotional lyrics for The Bends . Critic Alex Ross said the lyrics " seemed a mixture of overheard conversations , techno @-@ speak , and fragments of a harsh diary " with " images of riot police at political rallies , anguished lives in tidy suburbs , yuppies freaking out , sympathetic aliens gliding overhead . " Recurring themes include transport , technology , insanity , death , modern life in the UK , globalisation and political objection to capitalism . Yorke said , " On this album , the outside world became all there was ... I 'm just taking Polaroids of things around me moving too fast . " He explained that " It was like there 's a secret camera in a room and it 's watching the character who walks in ? a different character for each song . The camera 's not quite me . It 's neutral ,

emotionless . But not emotionless at all . In fact , the very opposite . "

Yorke was inspired by books he read at the time , including Noam Chomsky 's writings , Eric Hobsbawm 's The Age of Extremes , Will Hutton 's The State We 're In , Jonathan Coe 's What a Carve Up ! and Philip K. Dick 's VALIS . Although the songs do share common themes , Radiohead do not consider OK Computer to be a concept album and have said that they had no intention to link the songs together with any underlying narrative . The album is intended to be heard as a whole ; O 'Brien said , " We spent two weeks track @-@ listing the album . The context of each song is really important ... It 's not a concept album but there is a continuity there . "

= = = Composition = = =

The album 's opening track " Airbag " was inspired by the music of DJ Shadow and is underpinned by an electronic drum beat programmed from a seconds @-@ long recording of Selway 's drumming . The band sampled the drum track with a digital sampler and edited it with a Macintosh computer , but admitted to making approximations in emulating Shadow 's style due to their programming inexperience . The bassline in " Airbag " stops and starts unexpectedly , achieving an effect similar to 1970s dub . The song 's references to automobile accidents and reincarnation were inspired by a magazine article titled " An Airbag Saved My Life " and The Tibetan Book of the Dead . Yorke wrote " Airbag " about the illusion of safety offered by modern transit , and " the idea that whenever you go out on the road you could be killed . " Music journalist Tim Footman notes the song 's technical innovations and lyrical concerns demonstrate the " key paradox " of the album : " the musicians and producer are delighting in the sonic possibilities of modern technology ; the singer , meanwhile , is railing against its social , moral , and psychological impact . ... It 's a contradiction mirrored in the culture clash of the music , with the ' real ' guitars negotiating an uneasy stand @-@ off with the hacked @-@ up , processed drums . "

" Paranoid Android " , split into four distinct sections , is among the band 's longest recorded studio tracks at 6 : 23 . The unconventional multi @-@ section song was inspired by the Beatles ' " Happiness Is a Warm Gun " and Queen 's " Bohemian Rhapsody " , which also eschew a traditional verse @-@ chorus @-@ verse structure . The song 's musical style was also inspired by the music of the Pixies . The song was written by Yorke after an unpleasant night at a Los Angeles bar , where he saw a woman react violently after someone spilled a drink on her . Its title and lyrics are a reference to Marvin the Paranoid Android from Douglas Adams 's The Hitchhiker 's Guide to the Galaxy series .

The use of electric keyboards in " Subterranean Homesick Alien " is an example of the band 's attempts to emulate the atmosphere of Bitches Brew .

" This is us desperate to be Miles Davis ? It 's got a groove . And it used to be called ' Uptight ' . " ? Thom Yorke

Its title a reference to the Bob Dylan song " Subterranean Homesick Blues " , the science fiction @-@ inspired song describes an isolated narrator who fantasises about being abducted by extraterrestrials . The narrator speculates that , upon returning to Earth , his friends would not believe his story and he would remain a misfit . The lyrics were inspired by an assignment from Yorke 's time at Abingdon School to write a piece of " Martian poetry " , a British literary movement of works that humorously recontextualises mundane aspects of human life from an alien " Martian " perspective .

William Shakespeare 's Romeo and Juliet inspired the lyrics for " Exit Music ( For a Film ) " . Initially Yorke wanted to work lines from the play into the song , but the final draft of the lyrics became a broad summary of the narrative .

" We wrote this for Romeo + Juliet . I saw the Zeffirelli version when I was 13 and I cried my eyes out , because I couldn 't understand why , the morning after they shagged , they didn 't just run away . It 's a song for two people who should run away before all the bad stuff starts . A personal song . " ? Thom Yorke

Yorke compared the opening of the song , which mostly features his singing paired with acoustic guitar , to Johnny Cash 's At Folsom Prison . Mellotron choir and other electronic voices are used

throughout the track . The song climaxes with the entrance of drums , and this section prominently features distorted bass run through a fuzz pedal . The climactic portion of the song is an attempt to emulate the sound of trip hop group Portishead , but in a style that bass player Colin Greenwood called more " stilted and leaden and mechanical " . The song concludes by fading back to Yorke 's voice , acoustic guitar and Mellotron .

" Let Down " contains multilayered arpeggiated guitars and electric piano . Jonny Greenwood 's electric piano part is in a different time signature to the other instruments . O 'Brien said the song was influenced by Phil Spector , a producer and songwriter best known for his reverberating " Wall of Sound " recording techniques . The song 's lyrics are , Yorke said , " about that feeling that you get when you 're in transit but you 're not in control of it ? you just go past thousands of places and thousands of people and you 're completely removed from it . "

" I was pissed in a club and I suddenly had the funniest thought I 'd had for ages : what if all the people who were drinking were hanging from the bottles ? If the bottles were hung from the ceiling with string , and the floor caved in , and the only thing that kept everyone up was the bottles ? It 's also about an enormous fear of being trapped . " ? Thom Yorke

Of the line " Don 't get sentimental / It always ends up drivel " , Yorke said , " Sentimentality is being emotional for the sake of it . We 're bombarded with sentiment , people emoting . That 's the Let Down . Feeling every emotion is fake . Or rather every emotion is on the same plane whether it 's a car advert or a pop song . " Yorke felt that scepticism of emotion was characteristic of Generation X and said that it informed not just " Let Down " but the band 's approach to the whole album .

Critic Steve Huey said the structure of " Karma Police " is " somewhat unorthodox , since there doesn 't seem to be a true chorus section ; the main verse alternates with a short , subdued break ... and after two cycles , the song builds to a completely different ending section . " The first portion is centred around acoustic guitar and piano , with a chord progression indebted to the Beatles ' " Sexy Sadie " . Starting at 2 : 34 , the song transitions into an orchestrated section with the repeated line " For a minute there , I lost myself " . The song ends with guitarist Ed O 'Brien generating feedback using a delay effect . The title and lyrics to " Karma Police " originate from an in @-@ joke during The Bends tour . Jonny Greenwood said " whenever someone was behaving in a particularly shitty way , we 'd say ' The karma police will catch up with him sooner or later . ' "

" Fitter Happier " is a short musique concrète track that consists of sampled musical and background sound and spoken word lyrics recited by a synthesized voice from the Macintosh SimpleText application .

" Fitter , happier . More productive . Comfortable . Not drinking too much . Regular exercise at the gym , three days a week . Getting on better with your associate employee contemporaries . At ease . Eating well , no more microwave dinners and saturated fats . A patient , better driver . A safer car , baby smiling in back seat . Sleeping well , no bad dreams . No paranoia . Careful to all animals , never washing spiders down the plughole . Keep in contact with old friends , enjoy a drink now and then . Will frequently check credit at moral bank , hole in wall . Favours for favours , fond but not in love . Charity standing orders on sundays , ring @-@ road supermarket . No killing moths or putting boiling water on the ants . Car wash , also on sundays . No longer afraid of the dark or midday shadows , nothing so ridiculously teenage and desperate . Nothing so childish . At a better pace , slower and more calculated . No chance of escape . Now self @-@ employed . Concerned , but powerless . An empowered and informed member of society , pragmatism not idealism . Will not cry in public . Less chance of illness . Tires that grip in the wet , shot of baby strapped in backseat . A good memory . Still cries at a good film . Still kisses with saliva . No longer empty and frantic . Like a cat tied to a stick that 's driven into frozen winter shit , the ability to laugh at weakness . Calm , fitter , healthier and more productive . A pig in a cage on antibiotics . "

Written after a period of writer 's block , " Fitter Happier " was described by Yorke as a checklist of slogans for the 1990s , which he considered " the most upsetting thing I 've ever written " .

" The others were downstairs , rockin ' , and I crept upstairs and did this in ten minutes . I was feeling incredible hysteria and panic , and it was so liberating to give the lyrics to this neutral @-@ sounding computer . " ? Thom Yorke

" Fitter Happier " was considered for the album 's opening track , but rejected because the band

considered the effect off @-@ putting . Steve Lowe called the song " penetrating surgery on pseudo @-@ meaningful corporations ' lifestyles " with " a repugnance for prevailing yuppified social values . " Among the loosely connected imagery of the lyrics , Footman identified the song 's subject as " the materially comfortable , morally empty embodiment of modern , Western humanity , half @-@ salaryman , half @-@ Stepford Wife , destined for the metaphorical farrowing crate , propped up on Prozac , Viagra and anything else his insurance plan can cover . " Sam Steele called the lyrics " a stream of received imagery : scraps of media information , interspersed with lifestyle ad slogans and private prayers for a healthier existence . It is the hum of a world buzzing with words , one of the messages seeming to be that we live in such a synthetic universe we have grown unable to detect reality from artifice . "

" Electioneering " , featuring a cowbell and a distorted guitar solo , is the album 's most rock @-@ oriented track and one of the heaviest songs the band has recorded . It has been compared to Radiohead 's earlier style on Pablo Honey . The cynical " Electioneering " is also the album 's most directly political song .

" I was thinking of the Poll Tax riots when I wrote this : the moment when the horses broke through the barriers and everyone started smashing windows . It 's also from watching too many MPs on telly . You just get this feeling of , ' Woah , I 've seen this once too many times . ' " ? Thom Yorke

It was partly inspired by Chomsky 's Manufacturing Consent , a book analysing contemporary mass media under the propaganda model . Yorke likened its lyrics , which focus on political and artistic compromise , to " a preacher ranting in front of a bank of microphones . " Regarding its oblique political references , Yorke said , " What can you say about the IMF , or politicians ? Or people selling arms to African countries , employing slave labour or whatever . What can you say ? You just write down ' Cattle prods and the IMF ' and people who know , know . " O 'Brien said the song was about the promotional cycle of touring : " When you have to promote your album for a longer period , in the United States for example , you fly around from city to city for weeks to meet journalists and record company people . After a while you feel like a politician who has to kiss babies and shake hands all day long . "

" Climbing Up the Walls " ? described by a critic as " monumental chaos " ? is layered with a string section , ambient noise and repetitive , metallic @-@ sounding percussion . The song 's string section , composed by Jonny Greenwood and written for 16 instruments , was inspired by modern classical composer Krzysztof Penderecki 's Threnody to the Victims of Hiroshima . Greenwood said , " I got very excited at the prospect of doing string parts that didn 't sound like ' Eleanor Rigby ' , which is what all string parts have sounded like for the past 30 years . " The combination of Yorke 's distraught vocals and the atonal strings was described by one critic as " Thom 's voice dissolving into a fearful , blood @-@ clotted scream as Jonny whips the sound of a million dying elephants into a crescendo . " For the lyrics , Yorke drew from his time as an orderly in a mental hospital during the Care in the Community policy of deinstitutionalizing mental health patients , and a New York Times article about serial killers .

" This is about the unspeakable . Literally skull @-@ crushing . I used to work in a mental hospital around the time that Care in the Community started , and we all just knew what was going to happen . And it 's one of the scariest things to happen in this country , because a lot of them weren 't just harmless ? It was hailing violently when we recorded this . It seemed to add to the mood . " ? Thom Yorke

" No Surprises " , recorded in a single take , is arranged with electric guitar ( inspired by the Beach Boys ' " Wouldn 't It Be Nice " ) , acoustic guitar , glockenspiel and vocal harmonies . The band strove to replicate the mood of Louis Armstrong 's 1968 recording of " What a Wonderful World " and the soul music of Marvin Gaye . Hoping to achieve a slower tempo than could be played well on their instruments , Godrich had the band record the song at a faster tempo , then slowed the playback for Yorke to overdub his vocals onto , creating an " ethereal " effect . Yorke identified the subject of the song as " someone who 's trying hard to keep it together but can 't . " The lyrics seem to portray a suicide or an unfulfilling life , and dissatisfaction with contemporary social and political order . Some lines refer to rural or suburban imagery . One of the key metaphors in the song is the opening line , " a heart that 's full up like a landfill " . According to Yorke , the song is a " fucked

@-@ up nursery rhyme " that " stems from my unhealthy obsession of what to do with plastic boxes and plastic bottles ... All this stuff is getting buried , the debris of our lives . It doesn 't rot , it just stays there . That 's how we deal , that 's how I deal with stuff , I bury it . " Critics have said the song 's gentle mood contrasts sharply with its harsh lyrics ; Steele said , " even when the subject is suicide ... Ed O 'Brien 's guitar is as soothing as balm on a red @-@ raw psyche , the song rendered like a bittersweet child 's prayer . "

" Lucky " was inspired by the recent conflict in Bosnia , and Sam Taylor said it was " the one track on [ The Help Album ] to capture the sombre terror of the conflict " , and that its serious subject matter and dark tone made the band " too ' real ' to be allowed on the Britpop gravy train " . The song was originally more politically explicit , but the first draft was pared down from " pages and pages and pages of notes " . The lyrics depict a man surviving an aeroplane crash and are drawn from Yorke 's anxiety about transportation . The musical centerpiece of " Lucky " is its three @-@ piece guitar arrangement , which grew out of the high @-@ pitched intro played by O 'Brien . Critics have compared its lead guitar to Pink Floyd and , more broadly , arena rock .

The album ends with " The Tourist " , which Jonny Greenwood wrote as an unusually staid piece where something " doesn 't have to happen ... every 3 seconds . " He said , " ' The Tourist ' doesn 't sound like Radiohead at all . It has become a song with space . "

" The lyrics come from being in a beautiful square in France on a sunny day , and watching all these American tourists being wheeled around , frantically trying to see everything in ten minutes . You know : ' We 've got to be in Paris tomorrow morning ! ' And then I saw this old bloke on telly , saying that he couldn 't work out why the world had got so fast and in a hurry . I just had an image of him standing on a street corner , watching the traffic hurl by . " ? Thom Yorke

Yorke said it was chosen as the closing track because " a lot of the album was about background noise and everything moving too fast and not being able to keep up . It was really obvious to have ' Tourist ' as the last song . That song was written to me from me , saying , ' Idiot , slow down . ' Because at that point , I needed to . So that was the only resolution there could be : to slow down . " The " unexpectedly bluesy waltz " draws to a close as the guitars drop out , leaving only drums and bass , and concludes with the sound of a small bell .

= = Title and artwork = =

" OK Computer " was the original title for the song " Palo Alto " , which had been considered for inclusion on the album . Although the song was abandoned , its first title stuck with the band ; according to Jonny Greenwood , " [ it ] started attaching itself and creating all these weird resonances with what we were trying to do . " Yorke said it " refers to embracing the future , it refers to being terrified of the future , of our future , of everyone else 's . It 's to do with standing in a room where all these appliances are going off and all these machines and computers and so on ... and the sound it makes . " Yorke described the title as " a really resigned , terrified phrase " , to him similar to the Coca @-@ Cola advertisement " I 'd Like to Teach the World to Sing " . Wired writer Leander Kahney suggests that it is an homage to Macintosh computers , as " The Mac 's built @-@ in speech recognition software responds to the command ' OK Computer , ' as an alternative to hitting an OK button onscreen . " Other titles considered were Ones and Zeroes ? a reference to the binary numeral system ? and Your Home May Be at Risk If You Do Not Keep Up Payments .

The album 's artwork is a computer @-@ generated collage of images and text created by Stanley Donwood and Yorke , credited under the pseudonym " The White Chocolate Farm " . Donwood was commissioned by Yorke to work on a visual diary alongside the recording sessions . Yorke explained , " If I 'm shown some kind of visual representation of the music , only then do I feel confident . Up until that point , I 'm a bit of a whirlwind . " The colour palette is predominantly white and blue , according to Donwood , the result of " trying to make something the color of bleached bone . " Used twice on the artwork , once in the booklet and once on the compact disc itself , is the image of two stick figures shaking hands . Yorke explained the image as emblematic of exploitation , saying , " Someone 's being sold something they don 't really want , and someone 's being friendly because they 're trying to sell something . That 's what it means to me . " Explaining the artwork 's

themes , Yorke said , " It 's quite sad , and quite funny as well . All the artwork and so on ... It was all the things that I hadn 't said in the songs . "

Visual motifs in the artwork include motorways , aeroplanes , families with children , corporate logos and cityscapes . The words " Lost Child " feature prominently on the cover , and the booklet artwork contains phrases in the constructed language Esperanto and health @-@ related instructions in both English and Greek . The use of disconnected phrases led a critic for Uncut to say , " The non @-@ sequiturs created an effect akin to being lifestyle @-@ coached by a lunatic . " White scribbles , Donwood 's method of correcting mistakes rather than using the computer function undo , are present everywhere in the collages . The liner notes contain the full lyrics , rendered with atypical syntax , alternate spelling and small annotations . The lyrics are also arranged and spaced in shapes that resemble hidden images . In keeping with the band 's then emergent anti @-@ corporate stance , the production credits contain the ironic copyright notice " Lyrics reproduced by kind permission even though we wrote them . "

= = Release and promotion = =

Selway admitted that when the band delivered the album , the band 's American label Capitol saw " more or less , ' commercial suicide ' . They weren 't really into it . At that point , we got the fear . How is this going to be received ? " Capitol lowered its sales forecast from two million units to a half a million . In O 'Brien 's view only Parlophone , the band 's British label , remained optimistic while global distributors dramatically reduced their sales estimates . Label representatives were reportedly disappointed with the lack of potential marketable singles , especially the absence of anything resembling their initial hit , " Creep " .

Parlophone 's advertising campaign was unorthodox . The label took full @-@ page advertisements in high @-@ profile British newspapers and tube stations with lyrics for " Fitter Happier " pitched in large black letters against white backgrounds . The same lyrics , and artwork adapted from the album , were repurposed for shirt designs . Yorke said , " We actively chose to pursue the ' Fitter Happier ' thing " to link what a critic called " a coherent set of concerns " between the album artwork and its promotional material . More unconventional merchandise included a floppy disk with Radiohead screensavers and an FM radio in the shape of a desktop computer . In America , Capitol sent 1 @,@ 000 cassette players to prominent members of the press and music industry , each with a copy of the album permanently glued inside . When asked about the campaign after the album 's release , Capitol president Gary Gersh said , " Our job is just to take them as a left @-@ of @-@ center band and bring the center to them . That 's our focus , and we won 't let up until they 're the biggest band in the world . " Yorke states in an early interview , " When we first gave [ the album ] to Capitol , they were taken aback . I don 't really know why it 's so important now , but I 'm excited about it . "

Radiohead chose " Paranoid Android " as the lead single , despite its unusually long running time and lack of a catchy chorus . Colin Greenwood admitted the song was " hardly the radio @-@ friendly , breakthrough , buzz bin unit shifter [ radio stations ] can have been expecting , " but said that Capitol was supportive of the band 's choice . The song premiered on the Radio 1 programme The Evening Session in April 1997 and released as a single in May 1997 . On the strength of frequent radio play on Radio 1 and rotation of the song 's music video on MTV , " Paranoid Android " reached number three in the UK , giving Radiohead their highest chart position .

Radiohead embarked on a world tour in promotion of OK Computer called the " Against Demons " tour , commencing at the album launch in Barcelona on 22 May 1997 . OK Computer was released in Japan on 21 May , in the UK on 16 June , in Canada on 17 June and in the US on 1 July . In addition to the dominant CD format , the album was released as a double @-@ LP vinyl record , cassette and MiniDisc . The album debuted at number one on the UK , where it held for two weeks . It stayed in the top 10 for weeks and became the country 's eighth @-@ best selling record of the year . Meanwhile , the tour took the band across the UK and Ireland , continental Europe , North America , Japan and Australasia , concluding on 29 August 1998 in New York . The tour was mentally taxing for the band , particularly Yorke , who later said " That tour was a year too long . I

was the first person to tire of it , then six months later everyone in the band was saying it . Then six months after that , nobody was talking any more . "

" Karma Police " was released in August 1997 and " No Surprises " in January 1998 . Both singles charted in the UK top 10 , and " Karma Police " peaked at number 14 on the Billboard Modern Rock Tracks chart . " Lucky " was released as a single in France , but did not chart . " Let Down " , considered for release as the lead single , charted on the Modern Rock Tracks chart at number 29 . The band planned to produce a video for every song on the album to be released as a whole , but the project was abandoned due to financial and time constraints . Also considered , but ultimately scrapped , were plans for trip hop group Massive Attack to remix the entire album . Meeting People Is Easy , Grant Gee 's rockumentary following the band on its OK Computer world tour , premiered in November 1998 .

By February 1998 , the album had sold at least half a million copies in the UK and 2 million worldwide . To date , at least 1 @.@ 4 million copies have been sold in the US , 3 million across Europe and over 3 million worldwide . OK Computer has been certified triple platinum in the UK and double platinum in the US , in addition to certifications in other markets .

= = Reception = =

OK Computer received near @-@ unanimous critical acclaim . Critics in the British and American press generally agreed that the album was a landmark of its time and would have far @-@ reaching impact and importance , and that the band 's willingness to experiment made it a challenging listen . According to Footman , " Not since 1967 , with the release of Sgt. Pepper 's Lonely Hearts Club Band , had so many major critics agreed immediately , not only on an album 's merits , but on its long @-@ term significance , and its ability to encapsulate a particular point in history . " In the English press , the album garnered favourable reviews in NME , Melody Maker , The Guardian , and Q. Nick Kent wrote in Mojo that " Others may end up selling more , but in 20 years time I 'm betting OK Computer will be seen as the key record of 1997 , the one to take rock forward instead of artfully revamping images and song @-@ structures from an earlier era . " " Every word sounds achingly sincere , every note spewed from the heart , " wrote John Harris in Select , " and yet it roots itself firmly in a world of steel , glass , random @-@ access memory and prickly @-@ skinned paranoia . "

In an otherwise positive review , Andy Gill wrote for The Independent , " For all its ambition and determination to break new ground , OK Computer is not , finally , as impressive as The Bends , which covered much the same sort of emotional knots , but with better tunes . It is easy to be impressed by , but ultimately hard to love , an album that luxuriates so readily in its own despondency . "

The album was well received by critics in North America . Rolling Stone , Spin , and Pitchfork Media published positive reviews . In The New Yorker , Alex Ross praised its progressiveness , and contrasted Radiohead 's risk @-@ taking with the musically conservative " dadrock " of their contemporaries Oasis . Ross wrote that " Throughout the album , contrasts of mood and style are extreme ... This band has pulled off one of the great art @-@ pop balancing acts in the history of rock . "

Reviews for Entertainment Weekly , the Chicago Tribune , and Time were mixed or contained qualified praise . Robert Christgau from The Village Voice said Radiohead immersed Yorke 's vocals in " enough electronic marginal distinction to feed a coal town for a month " and to compensate for how soulless the songs are , resulting in " arid " art rock .

The album appeared in many 1997 critics ' lists and listener polls for best album of the year . It topped the year @-@ end polls of Mojo , Vox , Entertainment Weekly , Hot Press , Muziekkrant OOR , HUMO , Eye Weekly and Inpress , and tied for first place with Daft Punk 's Homework in The Face . The album came second in NME , Melody Maker , Rolling Stone , Village Voice , Spin and Uncut . Q and Les Inrockuptibles both listed the album in their unranked year @-@ end polls . It was a nominee for the 1997 Mercury Prize , a prestigious award recognising the best British or Irish album of the year .

The near universal positive reception to the album overwhelmed the band , and some members thought the press was excessively congratulatory . Particularly irksome to the band were links to progressive rock and art rock , with frequent comparisons to Pink Floyd 's 1973 album The Dark Side of the Moon . Yorke responded : " We write pop songs ... there was no intention of it being ' art ' . It 's a reflection of all the disparate things we were listening to when we recorded it . " He was nevertheless pleasantly surprised that many listeners identified the album 's musical influences : " What really blew my head off was the fact that people got all the things , all the textures and the sounds and the atmospheres we were trying to create . " " In England , I think a lot of the reviews have been slightly over @-@ the @-@ top , " remarked Jonny Greenwood , " because the last album [ The Bends ] was somewhat under @-@ reviewed possibly and under @-@ received . "

= = Legacy = =


= = = Retrospective acclaim = = =

 OK Computer has appeared frequently in professional lists of greatest albums . A number of publications , including NME , Melody Maker , Alternative Press , Spin , Pitchfork Media , Time , Metro Weekly and Slant placed OK Computer prominently in lists of best albums of the 1990s or of all time . In 2003 , the album was ranked number 162 on Rolling Stone magazine 's list of The 500 Greatest Albums of All Time . Retrospective reviews from BBC Music , The A.V. Club Slant and Paste have received the album favourably ; likewise , Rolling Stone gave the album five stars in the 2004 Rolling Stone Album Guide , with critic Rob Sheffield saying " Radiohead was claiming the high ground abandoned by Nirvana , Pearl Jam , U2 , R.E.M. , everybody ; and fans around the world loved them for trying too hard at a time when nobody else was even bothering . " According to Acclaimed Music , a site which uses statistics to numerically represent reception among critics , OK Computer is the 10th most celebrated album of all time . NME listed OK Computer at 35 on its list of the 50 darkest albums .
 The album has been cited by some as undeserving of its acclaim , while others assert that Radiohead 's career was negatively impacted by the album 's critical success . In a poll surveying thousands conducted by BBC Radio 6 Music , OK Computer was named the sixth most over @-@ rated album " in the world " . David H. Green of The Daily Telegraph called the album " self @-@ indulgent whingeing " and maintains that the positive critical consensus toward OK Computer is an indication of " a 20th @-@ century delusion that rock is the bastion of serious commentary on popular music " to the detriment of electronic and dance music . The album was selected as an entry in " Sacred Cows " , an NME column questioning the critical status of " revered albums " , in which Henry Yates said of the album " There 's no defiance , gallows humour or chink of light beneath the curtain , just a sense of meek , resigned despondency , " and further criticised the record as " the moment when Radiohead stopped being ' good ' [ compared to The Bends ] and started being ' important ' . " In a Spin article on the " myth " that " Radiohead Can Do No Wrong " , Chris Norris argues that the acclaim for OK Computer created an inflated set of expectations for each successive Radiohead release .
 ( * ) designates unordered lists .

= = = = Awards = = = =

 The album won a Grammy Award for Best Alternative Music Album in the 40th Annual Grammy Awards in 1998 . The album was nominated in the 1998 Brit Awards and Mercury Prize for Best British Album and 1997 Album of the Year respectively . The album won the NME Awards and Q Awards for Album of the year and Best Album respectively . It was nominated for the Grammy Award for Album of the Year in 1998 .

= = = Commentary and interpretation = = =

OK Computer was recorded in the lead up to the 1997 general election and released a month after the victory of Tony Blair 's New Labour government . The album was perceived by critics as an expression of dissent and scepticism toward the new government and a reaction against the national mood of optimism . Dorian Lynskey wrote , " On May 1 , 1997 , Labour supporters toasted their landslide victory to the sound of ' Things Can Only Get Better . ' A few weeks later , OK Computer appeared like Banquo 's ghost to warn : No , things can only get worse . " According to Amy Britton , the album " showed not everyone was ready to join the party , instead tapping into another feeling felt throughout the UK ? pre @-@ millenial angst . ... huge corporations were impossible to fight against ? this was the world OK Computer soundtracked , not the wave of British optimism . "

In an interview , Yorke doubted that Blair 's policies would differ from the preceding two decades of Conservative government . He said the public reaction to the death of Princess Diana was more significant , as a moment when the British public realised " the royals had had us by the balls for the last hundred years , as had the media and the state . " The band 's distaste with the commercialised promotion of OK Computer reinforced their anti @-@ capitalist political viewpoint , which would be further explored on their subsequent releases .

Critics have compared Radiohead 's statements of political dissatisfaction to those of earlier rock bands . David Stubbs said that , where punk rock had been a rebellion against a time of deficit and poverty , OK Computer protested the " mechanistic convenience " of contemporary surplus and excess . Alex Ross said the album " pictured the onslaught of the Information Age and a young person 's panicky embrace of it " and made the band into " the poster boys for a certain kind of knowing alienation ? as Talking Heads and R.E.M. had been before . " Jon Pareles of The New York Times found precedents in the work of Pink Floyd and Madness for Radiohead 's concerns " about a culture of numbness , building docile workers and enforced by self @-@ help regimes and anti @-@ depressants . "

Many felt the tone of the album was millennial or futuristic , anticipating cultural and political trends . According to The A.V. Club writer Steven Hyden in the feature " Whatever Happened to Alternative Nation " , " Radiohead appeared to be ahead of the curve , forecasting the paranoia , media @-@ driven insanity , and omnipresent sense of impending doom that 's subsequently come to characterise everyday life in the 21st century . " In 1000 Recordings to Hear Before You Die , Tom Moon described OK Computer as a " prescient ... dystopian essay on the darker implications of technology ... oozing [ with ] a vague sense of dread , and a touch of Big Brother foreboding that bears strong resemblance to the constant disquiet of life on Security Level Orange , post @-@ 9 / 11 . " Chris Martin of Coldplay remarked that , " It would be interesting to see how the world would be different if Dick Cheney really listened to Radiohead 's OK Computer . I think the world would probably improve . That album is fucking brilliant . It changed my life , so why wouldn 't it change his ? "

The album inspired a radio play , also titled OK Computer , which was first broadcast on BBC Radio 4 in 2007 . The play was written by Joel Horwood , Chris Perkins , Al Smith and Chris Thorpe .

= = = Musical influence = = =

The release of OK Computer coincided with the decline of Britpop . Through OK Computer 's influence , the dominant style of UK guitar pop shifted toward an approximation of " Radiohead 's paranoid but confessional , slurry but catchy approach " . Many newer British acts adopted similarly complex , atmospheric arrangements . A prominent example of this trend , Post @-@ Britpop band Travis worked with Godrich to create the languid pop texture of The Man Who , which became the fourth best @-@ selling album of 1999 in the UK . Some in the British press accused Travis of appropriating Radiohead 's sound . Steven Hyden of AV Club said that by 1998 , starting with The Man Who , " what Radiohead had created in OK Computer had already grown much bigger than the band , " and that the album went on to influence " a wave of British @-@ rock balladeers that reached its zenith in the ' 00s " .

Critics have said OK Computer 's popularity paved the way for the next generation of British alternative rock bands , and established musicians in a variety of genres have praised the album , including R.E.M. frontman Michael Stipe , former Smiths guitarist Johnny Marr , DJ Shadow , former Guns N ' Roses guitarist Slash , Manic Street Preachers member Nicky Wire , the Divine Comedy frontman Neil Hannon , Mo ' Wax label owner James Lavelle , former Depeche Mode member Alan Wilder and contemporary composer Esa @-@ Pekka Salonen . Members of Coldplay , Bloc Party and TV on the Radio said they were formatively influenced by OK Computer . TV on the Radio 's debut album was even titled OK Calculator as a lighthearted tribute . Radiohead described the pervasiveness of bands that " sound like us " as one reason to break with the style of OK Computer for their next album , Kid A.

Although OK Computer 's influence on rock musicians is widely acknowledged , several critics believe that its experimental inclination was not authentically embraced on a wide scale . Footman said the " Radiohead Lite " bands that followed were " missing [ OK Computer 's ] sonic inventiveness , not to mention the lyrical substance . " David Cavanagh said that most of OK Computer 's purported mainstream influence more likely stemmed from the ballads on The Bends . According to Cavanagh , " The populist albums of the post @-@ OK Computer era ? The Verve 's Urban Hymns , Travis 's Good Feeling , Stereophonics ' Word Gets Around , Robbie Williams ' Life thru a Lens ? effectively closed the door that OK Computer 's boffin @-@ esque inventiveness had opened " . John Harris believed that OK Computer was one of the " fleeting signs that British rock music might [ have been ] returning to its inventive traditions " in the wake of Britpop 's demise . While Harris concludes that British rock ultimately developed an " altogether more conservative tendency " , he said that with OK Computer and their subsequent material , Radiohead provided a " clarion call " to fill the void left by Britpop .

OK Computer did trigger a minor revival of progressive rock and ambitious concept albums , and a new wave of prog @-@ influenced bands credited OK Computer for enabling their scene to thrive . Brandon Curtis of The Secret Machines said " Songs like ' Paranoid Android ' made it OK to write music differently , to be more experimental . OK Computer was important because it reintroduced unconventional writing and song structures . " Steven Wilson of Porcupine Tree said , " I don 't think ambition is a dirty word any more . Radiohead were the Trojan Horse in that respect . Here 's a band that came from the indie rock tradition that snuck in under the radar when the journalists weren 't looking and started making these absurdly ambitious and pretentious ? and all the better for it ? records . " The band has rejected any affiliation with the genre and denies having attempted to make a coherent concept album . Jonny Greenwood dismissed such claims by saying " I think one album title and one computer voice do not make a concept album . That 's a bit of a red herring . "

= = Reissues = =

Radiohead left EMI , parent company of Parlophone , in 2007 after failed contract negotiations . EMI retained the copyright to Radiohead 's back catalogue of material recorded while signed to the label . After a period of being out of print on vinyl , EMI reissued a double @-@ LP of OK Computer on 19 August 2008 , along with later albums Kid A , Amnesiac and Hail to the Thief as part of the " From the Capitol Vaults " series . OK Computer became the year 's tenth best @-@ selling vinyl record , shifting just under 10 @,@ 000 units . The reissue was connected in the press to a general upswing in vinyl sales and cultural appreciation of records as a format .

OK Computer was reissued again on 24 March 2009 simultaneously with Pablo Honey and The Bends , without Radiohead 's involvement . The reissue came in two editions : a 2 @-@ CD " Collector 's Edition " and a 2 @-@ CD 1 @-@ DVD " Special Collector 's Edition " . The first disc contains the original studio album , the second disc contains B @-@ sides collected from OK Computer singles and live recording sessions , and the DVD contains a collection of music videos and a live television performance . All material on the reissue had been previously released .

In a March 2009 interview , O 'Brien claimed that EMI had not notified the band members of the reissue and said " I think the fans have got most of [ the material on the reissues ] , it 's all the stuff up on YouTube . This is just a company who are trying to squeeze every bit of lost money , it 's not

about [ an ] artistic statement . " Press reaction to the reissue announcement reflected the concern that EMI was exploiting Radiohead 's back catalogue . Larry Fitzmaurice of Spin accused EMI of planning to " issue and re @-@ issue [ Radiohead 's ] discography until the cash stops rolling in " , and Pitchfork 's Ryan Dombal said it was " hard to look at these reissues as anything other than a cash @-@ grab for EMI / Capitol ? an old media company that got dumped by their most forward @-@ thinking band . " Daniel Kreps of Rolling Stone defended EMI , saying " While it 's easy to accuse Capitol of milking the cash cow once again , these sets are pretty comprehensive . "

  The reissue was critically well received , although critics were mixed about the supplemental material . Reviews in AllMusic , Uncut , Q , Rolling Stone and PopMatters praised the supplemental material , but with reservations . A review written by Scott Plagenhoef for Pitchfork awarded the reissue a perfect score , arguing that it was worth buying for fans who did not already own the rare material . Plagenhoef said , " That the band had nothing to do with these is beside the point : This is the final word on these records , if for no other reason that the Beatles ' September 9 remaster campaign is , arguably , the end of the CD era . " The A.V. Club writer Josh Modell praised both the bonus disc and the DVD , and said of the album , " And what can be said about 1997 's OK Computer that hasn 't been said before ? It really is the perfect synthesis of Radiohead 's seemingly conflicted impulses . "

= = Track listing = =

 All songs written and composed by Radiohead ( Colin Greenwood , Ed O 'Brien , Jonny Greenwood , Philip Selway , and Thom Yorke ) .

= = Personnel = =


= = Charts and certifications = =