

= Spiderland =

Spiderland is the second and final studio album by the American rock band Slint . It was released on March 27 , 1991 , through Touch and Go Records . Featuring dramatically alternating dynamics and vocals ranging from spoken word to shouting , the album contains narrative lyrics that emphasize alienation . Spiderland was Slint 's first release on Touch and Go , and the group 's only album to feature Todd Brashear .

Although Spiderland was not widely recognized on its initial release , it eventually sold more than 50 @, @ 000 copies and became a landmark album in underground music after Slint broke up . The album has been highly influential on the styles of many bands in the post @-@ rock and math rock genres , including Mogwai and Godspeed You ! Black Emperor , and has been named a favorite of several indie rock musicians . In 2007 , Slint reunited for a tour consisting of performances of Spiderland in its entirety .

= = Context = =

Slint formed in 1987 in Louisville , Kentucky , from the remnants of the punk rock band Squirrel Bait ; the founding members included Brian McMahan (guitar , vocals) , David Pajo (guitar) , Britt Walford (drums) and Ethan Buckler (bass guitar) . The band 's debut album , the Steve Albini @-@ produced Tweez , was released on the group 's self @-@ owned label Jennifer Hartman Records and Tapes . The album 's sound has been described as a combination of " scratchy guitars , thumping bass lines and hard hitting drums " . Buckler promptly left the band out of dissatisfaction with Albini 's production , and was replaced with Todd Brashear . The band 's second recording was for the instrumental extended play Slint , which included a new version of " Rhoda " from Tweez . The EP , which would not be released until 1994 , was a departure from Tweez 's sound and reflected the band 's new musical direction .

After the band ended its brief tour in support of Tweez , most of its members attended college . Around this time McMahan and Walford began writing together for the band 's next record , creating six new songs which the band practiced throughout the summer of 1990 . Slint entered River North Records in August 1990 to record Spiderland . At that time there were no vocals or lyrics prepared for the album , so the band wrote them while in the studio . The album 's producer , Brian Paulson , was known for his " live " recording style in the studio , with minimal takes . Paulson recalled " It was weird while I was doing [Spiderland] because I remember sitting there , and I just knew there was something about it . I 've never heard anything like this . I 'm really digging this but it 's really fucking weird . "

The recording sessions for Spiderland are reputed to have been difficult for the members of the band and were , according to AllMusic , " intense , traumatic and one more piece of evidence supporting the theory that band members had to be periodically institutionalized during the completion of the album . " Rumors circulated that at least one member of Slint had been checked into a psychiatric hospital . Walford later addressed these stories in an article in Select by saying , " [We were] definitely trying to be serious about things , pretty intense , which made recording the album kinda stressful . " The recording was completed in four days .

= = Music = =

The music of Spiderland is noted for its angular guitar rhythms , dramatically alternating dynamic shifts and irregular time signatures . McMahan 's singing style interchanges between mumbling spoken word and strained shouting . The lyrics of Spiderland are often written in a narrative style . Influences on the record included Gang of Four , Black Sabbath and Sonic Youth . Will Hermes of Spin summarized the album 's sound as " mid- ' 70s King Crimson gone emo : screeching guitar chords and gorgeous note @-@ spinning in odd @-@ metered instrumentals speckled with words both spoken and sung " .

The album 's opening track , " Breadcrumb Trail " , describes a day spent at a carnival with a

fortune @-@ teller . The song features a complex arrangement with sharp transitions , and the guitar fluctuates between a clean @-@ sounding riff with harmonics in the verse to heavy distortion featuring extremely high @-@ pitched notes in the chorus .

" Nosferatu Man " , the second track , is inspired by the 1922 German Expressionist silent film Nosferatu . The song 's verse includes a dissonant guitar riff , which uses high @-@ pitched notes similar to those in " Breadcrumb Trail " and a drumbeat based on snare and toms , absent of cymbals . The chorus , featuring " jagged " distorted guitar and a thrash @-@ influence beat , segues into an extended jam before the song ends with 30 seconds of feedback .

" Don , Aman " features Walford on lead vocals and guitar . Delivered in a hushed tone , the song 's ambiguous lyrics depict the thoughts of an " isolated soul " before , after and during an evening at a bar . The tempo quickens throughout , and then becomes loud and distorted before slowing back to the original tempo .

" Washer " , the album 's longest track , features a " barely audible " intro with guitar and cymbals before the rest of the band comes in . The song builds tension until the final verse , which features loud distortion , and is followed by a lengthy outro .

" For Dinner ... " is an instrumental track . Beginning with a quiet section of " brooding chords throb [bing] with the occasional rumble of muted toms and bass drum " , the song cycles through sections of building and releasing tension . One guitar chord is repeatedly strummed for the last minute of the song before ending .

The final song of the album , " Good Morning Captain " , is a tribute to the Samuel Taylor Coleridge poem The Rime of the Ancient Mariner . The song features a two chord guitar structure , a " spindly , tight riff " from the rhythm section and a " jerky " beat . During the recording of the song 's final chorus , McMahan became physically sick due to the strain of yelling over the guitars . David Peschek of The Guardian compared " Good Morning Captain " to Led Zeppelin 's " Stairway to Heaven " , writing that " the extraordinary Good Morning Captain is [Slint 's] Stairway to Heaven , if it 's possible to imagine Stairway to Heaven bleached of all bombast . "

On the iTunes edition of the album , an additional track is added to the end of the album , entitled " Utica Quarry , Nighttime " . The track is , simply , 15 minutes of field recordings of Utica Quarry , the same place where the photos for Spiderland were taken .

= = Title and packaging = =

The name Spiderland originates from McMahan 's younger brother , who thought that the record sounded " spidery " . The album 's black @-@ and @-@ white cover photograph , which depicts the members of the band (Brashear , McMahan , Walford and Pajo , from left to right) treading water in the lake of an abandoned quarry , was taken by Will Oldham . An article in The Stranger credited the cover for creating a mystique surrounding Slint , noting " [m] ost people only had seen Slint as four heads floating in a Kentucky quarry on Spiderland 's cover . Listeners pondered the band 's sparsely adorned black @-@ and @-@ white covers as if they were runes bearing secrets . " Chris Gaerig of the Michigan Daily wrote , " the cover of Slint 's masterful Spiderland captures the joyous fear and violence of the album so precisely it shakes souls . The group ? submerged in a lake to their chins with deranged smiles ? seems to be stalking you , hovering out of the black @-@ and @-@ white façade . " Several other promotional images have been taken from the same photo session with Oldham .

A photo of a spider taken by Noel Saltzman is used on the back cover , reflecting the album 's title . The inside sleeve contains the message " interested female vocalists write 1864 douglas blvd. louisville , ky . 40205 " . McMahan confirmed that this message was serious , and said " We did get some responses and we did listen to CDs and tapes . We didn 't end up doing anything immediately , so that idea of adding someone sort of fell by the wayside . " The message " this recording is meant to be listened to on vinyl " is printed on some CD issues of Spiderland , demonstrating Slint 's preference of analog audio devices .

= = Reception = =

Spiderland received positive reviews from music critics , including Spin , NME , and The Village Voice . In a contemporary review for Melody Maker , Steve Albini , producer of Slint 's 1989 album Tweez , gave the album ten stars and called it " a majestic album , sublime and strange , made more brilliant by its simplicity and quiet grace . " Albini found its unadorned production impeccable and said that it vividly captures McMahan and Pajo 's playing so well that their guitars " seem to hover in space directly past the listener 's nose " , while " the incredibly precise @-@ yet @-@ instinctive drumming has the same range and wallop it would in your living room . "

In a retrospective review for AllMusic , Dean Carlson said that Spiderland is " one of the most essential and chilling releases in the mumbling post @-@ rock arena " . However , he felt that it is " slightly overrated " and that McMahan 's vocals convey " strangled pity instead of outright empathy . " Robert Christgau was less enthusiastic and wrote that , despite their " sad @-@ sack affect " , Slint are actually " art @-@ rockers without the courage of their pretensions " with poor lyrics . In The New Rolling Stone Album Guide , Rolling Stone journalist Mac Randall felt that the album 's music lacks songform , even though it sounds more accessible than Tweez : " [t] he absence of anything resembling a tune continues to nag . "

In 2003 , Pitchfork wrote of Spiderland : " a heady , chilling listen ; the irregularity of its hypnotic melodies , fractured beats and mismatched lyrics demand a new kind of appreciation , independent of traditional notions of songcraft . With its half @-@ mumbled , half @-@ hollered vocals , deliberate percussion and drone @-@ gone @-@ aggressive guitars , Spiderland 's urgency is almost traumatic to swallow : despondency never tasted so real . " They named it the twelfth best album of the 1990s . In 2014 , Spiderland was reissued with 14 previously unreleased tracks and received universal acclaim from critics .

= = Legacy = =

Though largely ignored upon its initial release , Spiderland has attracted greater attention through time . This growth in popularity has been attributed in part to the appearance of the track " Good Morning , Captain " on the soundtrack to the 1995 film Kids . The soundtrack has sold over 50 @, @ 000 copies , though Kory Grow of the College Music Journal suggested that the album " has inspired countless bands (and therefore fans) far beyond its SoundScan numbers " . Spiderland has become a landmark indie rock album and is considered , along with Talk Talk 's Spirit of Eden and Laughing Stock , to have been the primary catalyst of the post @-@ rock genre . The album is also regarded as being essential to " the fabric of math @-@ rock genre " . David Peschek said that the album is " the ur @-@ text for what became known as post @-@ rock , a fractured , almost geometric reimaging of rock music stripped of its dionysiac impulse . " Rachel Devine of The List called Spiderland " arguably the most disproportionately influential [album] in music history " . Pitchfork Media reviewer Stuart Berman commented : " Spiderland ? s greatest legacy is not that it motivated a cluster of semi @-@ popular bands in the late @-@ 90s and early 2000s to adopt its whisper @-@ to @-@ scream schematic . It ? s the boundless inspiration it perpetually provides for all the bands that have yet to emerge from the basement . "

McMahan reflected on the album 's success : " We worked really hard on Spiderland . I mean , I definitely felt much more personal about it . I thought it represented us as people , musically , a lot more than Tweez did . That 's about it . It seemed like when we were around , and actively playing and stuff , that people 's responses to us were fairly ambivalent . I thought it was funny when the press picked up on it . For an independent release , it had a strange sort of audience and kept selling three or four years after we recorded it ; it still sells more copies than when it first came out . " Touch and Go founder Corey Rusk said that Spiderland is " like an icon now . But when it came out , nobody cared ! The band had broken up by the time the album came out , and it really didn 't sell particularly well or get written about all that much in the year it was released . But it was a revolutionary , groundbreaking record , and it 's one of the few instances where people catch up to it later on . "

Post @-@ rock bands Mogwai , Godspeed You ! Black Emperor , Isis and Explosions in the Sky

have been influenced by Spiderland . Dinosaur Jr and Sebadoh member Lou Barlow said of Spiderland , " It was quiet @-@ to @-@ loud without sounding like grunge or indie rock . It sounded more like a new kind of music . " PJ Harvey has named Spiderland as one of her favorite albums , and supposedly contacted Slint regarding the band 's request for a female vocalist . Bob Nastanovich of Pavement and Mark Clifford of Seefeel have also cited Spiderland as among their favorite albums . The album cover of Spiderland was recreated by The Shins in the music video for " New Slang " .

= = = Reunion = = =

Despite having plans for a tour of Europe to promote Spiderland , Slint broke up in 1991 for reasons that were not revealed . Members of the band went on to join other musical projects , including Tortoise , The Breeders , Palace and The For Carnation . Slint reunited briefly in 2005 for an eighteen @-@ date tour . Pajo said , " We don 't want to be a reunion band that keeps reuniting . [...] I know that this is going to be it . " However , in 2007 Slint reunited again for a tour featuring performances of Spiderland in its entirety as part of All Tomorrow 's Parties ' " Don 't Look Back " concert series celebrating classic albums . The tour included appearances at the 2007 Pitchfork Music Festival and Primavera Sound Festival . McMahan said in an interview at the Pitchfork Music Festival that performing the album live was " pretty cool . It moves a little slower than it does on the record , but it 's all there . [...] It took some getting used to , some revisiting the material and rehearsing . " In an August 2013 interview with Vish Khanna , former producer Steve Albini revealed that the band was working on remastering Spiderland with engineer Bob Weston .

Critical responses to Slint 's reunion has been mixed , with detractors commenting on the music 's unsuitability for a live setting . Chicago Sun @-@ Times music critic Jim DeRogatis wrote that although " fans greeted [Slint 's performance at the Pitchfork Music Festival] as manna from heaven . [...] the musicians ' fragile , intertwining guitar lines , mumbled attempts at poetry and uninspiring shoegazer personas were poor matches for the setting and the occasion , especially during the static , percussion @-@ deprived ' Don , Aman ' and the bloated anthem ' Good Morning , Captain ' . " According to members of The A.V. Club , Slint 's performance of " Don , Aman " at the festival " capture [d] the band 's greatness and its greatest weakness : Slint completely lacks stage charisma , and playing a deathly quiet , moody song on a big outdoor stage just doesn 't work . " Both DeRogatis and the A. V. Club review also noted that the band 's performance was plagued by sound problems . A New York review of a performance at Webster Hall opined " the deeply brooding , fussily @-@ executed album finally sounded , sixteen years later , like the existential , cosmos @-@ annihilating shrug it was envisioned as . Which is to say : It sounded fucking great . "

= = Track listing = =

All songs written by Todd Brashear , Brian McMahan , David Pajo , and Britt Walford , except where noted .

= = Personnel = =

Slint

Todd Brashear ? bass guitar

David Pajo ? guitar

Brian McMahan ? guitar , vocals

Britt Walford ? drums , vocals , guitar

Technical personnel

Will Oldham ? photography

Brian Paulson ? engineering

Noel Saltzman ? photography

= = Accolades = =