

= Even Worse =

Even Worse is the fifth studio album by "Weird Al" Yankovic, released in 1988. The album was his fifth, produced by former The McCoys guitarist Rick Derringer. Recorded between November 1987 and February 1988, this album helped to revitalize Yankovic's career after the critical and commercial disappointment of his previous album *Polka Party!* (1986).

The music on *Even Worse* is built around parodies and pastiches of pop and rock music of the mid-@-@ 1980s. Half of the album is made up of parodies, featuring jabs at Michael Jackson, George Harrison, Tiffany, Los Lobos' version of the folk song "La Bamba", and Billy Idol. The other half of the album is original material, featuring many "style parodies", or musical imitations that come close to, but do not copy, existing artists. These style parodies include imitations of specific artists such as Oingo Boingo, Beastie Boys, and James Taylor. *Even Worse* has the distinction of being one of two albums by Yankovic lacking any polka renditions of pop songs or medleys, the other being his debut album "Weird Al" Yankovic (1983). This album's title and cover art are spoofs of Michael Jackson's 1987 album *Bad*.

Even Worse was met with mostly positive reviews and peaked at number 27 on the *Billboard* 200, becoming Yankovic's best-selling album. The album also produced one of Yankovic's hit singles, "Fat", a parody of Michael Jackson's "Bad", which peaked at number 99 on the *Billboard* Hot 100 and became a staple on MTV. The album was quickly certified as a gold record, and later as a platinum record with sales of over one million copies in the United States, becoming Yankovic's first platinum record. "Fat" later won a Grammy Award for Best Concept Music Video at the 1989 Grammy Awards.

= = Production = =

= = = Background and recording = = =

After success in the early 80s, Yankovic released *Polka Party!* in 1986. Despite featuring parodies of hit songs like "Living in America" and "Addicted to Love" the album was a critical and commercial failure, not producing a charting single and peaking at number 177 on the *Billboard* 200. After the disappointment with *Polka Party!*, Yankovic went on record saying, "I thought it was the end of my career." For most of 1987, Yankovic took a break from recording.

In November 1987, Yankovic returned to the studio to craft his follow-up to *Polka Party!* Once again, former The McCoys guitarist Rick Derringer was brought in as producer. During the first session, two songs were recorded: "Stuck In A Closet With Vanna White", and "Melanie". The next month, three songs were recorded: "Good Old Days", "You Make Me", and "Velvet Elvis". Finally, in early 1988, the remaining songs were recorded.

= = = Originals = = =

One of the first original songs recorded for the album was "Stuck in a Closet With Vanna White", describing a bizarre recurring dream about Vanna White. Allmusic described the song as a "real winner for Yankovic" because it "was the first song [Yankovic] wrote that his [...] target audience [...] actually liked as much or even more than his parodies." "You Make Me" is a song involving a person's desire to engage in strange and / or violent behavior compelled by the weirdness of another person. According to the liner notes of *The Permanent Record*, "It's about as close as [Yankovic has] ever come to writing a real love song." Musically, the song is a style parody of Oingo Boingo.

"Melanie" is a stalker's twisted love song to his neighbor Melanie. According to Yankovic, he wrote several additional verses for "Melanie" that he would only sing to his friends. "Twister" is an ode to the Milton Bradley game Twister. The song is a style parody of the Beastie Boys. When Yankovic was recording the song, he initially recorded about 20 vocal takes. However, when it

came time to pick the right take , he opted for the first because it sounded " more raw and more off @-@ the @-@ cuff . " The album 's closer , " Good Old Days " is about a psychopath fondly remembering his childhood . Yankovic described the song as an " experiment " . He " wanted to see if [he] could write a song as if Charlie Manson and James Taylor were collaborating . "

= = = Parodies = = =

The first parody recorded for Even Worse was " I Think I 'm a Clone Now " . The song , a spoof of " I Think We 're Alone Now " as covered by Tiffany , is the story of a man who details his life as a clone of himself . The second parody recorded was " Alimony " , a parody of " Mony Mony " as covered by Billy Idol . The song is a diatribe about the narrator 's ex @-@ wife , who takes everything he owns for alimony payments . Although the song sounds as if it were recorded live ? complete with clapping , screaming , and yelling ? the track was entirely recorded in the studio . This is the only instance of Yankovic covering two songs originally made famous by the same artist on one album , as both " Mony Mony " and " I Think We 're Alone Now " were songs first performed by Tommy James and the Shondells .

When it came time to record a lead single , Yankovic once again turned his attention to Michael Jackson . Jackson had just released his album Bad , a follow @-@ up to 1983 's immensely successful album Thriller . After Yankovic first heard the lead single , " Bad " , he immediately envisioned a parody entitled " Fat " . Initially , Yankovic didn 't want to record another Michael Jackson parody . He later said , " I was still primarily known as the ' Eat It ' guy and I didn 't want to become known as the guy who just rides Michael 's coattails . " He later relented and sought out Jackson for permission . Jackson , a fan of Yankovic 's work , had already let Yankovic parody his 1983 hit single " Beat It " . When presented with the new potential parody , Jackson not only approved it , but let Yankovic use his own Moonwalker subway set for the music video . Yankovic later presented Jackson with a gold record of Even Worse after the album sold over 500 @,@ 000 copies . Jackson was so pleased with the song and video , he ordered twelve copies to give to his friends . Yankovic later said , " He doesn 't have to let me do this kind of stuff . [...] The only reason he would let me is because he has a great sense of humor . "

The music video for the song features a leather @-@ clad Yankovic " expanding to 800 pounds and bouncing around a subway set . " To find suitable back @-@ up dancers , ads were placed in Los Angeles newspapers for " Very Fat Dancers " . One of the men used in the video was actually a pizza delivery man who had delivered food to the casting offices . Due to the music video , " Fat " became one of Yankovic 's biggest hits . Although only managing to peak at number 99 on the Billboard Hot 100 , the song 's music video got extensive play on MTV , which helped the album attain platinum status . In addition , " Fat " was later nominated and won a Grammy Award for Best Concept Music Video at the 1989 Grammy Awards , at the time , Yankovic 's second Grammy Award .

The last parody recorded for the album was " Lasagna " , a parody of the traditional folk song " La Bamba " . The song is mainly about Italian culture with a heavy emphasis on cuisine . When Yankovic began writing the song , he originally wanted it to be sung in Italian . He later said , " I was actually going through Italian phrase books and dictionaries until I realized that the humor would be lost on 99 % of the audience , so I decided to do the whole thing in English but with kind of a bad Italian accent . " When the song was released as a single , it did not have a music video . However , ten years later in 1997 a short video was made for the The Weird Al Show . Under U.S. law , Yankovic can parody any song he wants as long as he pays royalties to use the original music . However , as a personal rule , he asks for permission anyway in order to maintain good relations with the industry . This particular song is an exception to that rule . Although the song is a parody of the Los Lobos cover version , " Lasagna " marked Yankovic 's first parody that did not require either permission from an artist or a payment of royalties , since the song " La Bamba " is a traditional folk song that is not attributed to any specific writer . Thus , Yankovic is the only writer given credit in the liner notes .

According to the Dallas Morning News , both Prince and George Michael turned down parody ideas

that Yankovic asked permission to record for Even Worse . In addition , Even Worse did not contain a polka medley , Yankovic 's second ? after his debut ? and last album not to include one .

= = Reception = =

= = = Critical response = = =

Even Worse has received relatively favorable reviews . Allmusic awarded Even Worse four out of five stars , one of the highest ratings for Yankovic on the site . Reviewer Eugene Chadbourne said , " Trust Weird Al Yankovic to name an album Even Worse even as his recordings were getting better again . " Bruce Britt of Daily News of Los Angeles praised that album , and wrote that " It is tempting to dismiss ' Weird Al ' Yankovic as a joke [?] but those who dismiss Yankovic so easily overlook the fact that his lampoons are often wittier than the songs he spoofs . " Many critics praised the lead single , " Fat " . Chadbourne wrote that " the arrogance of ' I'm Bad ' [sic] was perfectly trumped by Yankovic 's musical pile of lard , the appeal of the video 's visuals clearly not the only ace in the hole . " Britt called the song and video " so absurd , they are almost certain to be a hit this spring . "

Unlike previous albums , which were praised for their parodies but criticized for their originals , Chadbourne wrote that " Yankovic even manages to shatter all previous barriers and comes up with some funny original material as well , " citing " Good Old Days " and " Stuck in a Closet With Vanna White " as some of his best originals . Both Even Worse and " Fat " were nominated for Grammys . Although Even Worse was not a winner , " Fat " won a Grammy Award for Best Concept Music Video in 1989 .

= = = Commercial performance = = =

Even Worse was released April 12 , 1988 , and , at the time of its release , was Yankovic 's best selling album . Even Worse peaked at number 27 on the Billboard 200 on July 2 , 1988 . The album spent a total of 25 weeks on the chart . On July 18 , 1988 ? less than three months after its release ? the album was certified Gold by the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) . On January 27 , 1994 , the album was certified Platinum by the RIAA . At the time of its certification , it was Yankovic 's first Platinum record and until 1992 it was his best @-@ selling album .

= = Track listing = =

The following is adapted from the album liner notes .

= = Credits and personnel = =

= = Charts and certifications = =

= = = Singles = = =