

= Pretty on the Inside =

Pretty on the Inside is the debut studio album by American alternative rock band Hole , released on September 17 , 1991 in the United States on Caroline Records . [1] Produced by Sonic Youth 's Kim Gordon , and Gumball frontman Don Fleming , the album was Hole 's first major label release after the band 's formation in 1989 by singer @-@ songwriter Courtney Love and lead guitarist Eric Erlandson .

The album features distorted and alternating guitar compositions , screaming vocals , " shock value " lyrics , and " sloppy punk ethics " , a style which the band would later distance themselves from , opting for a less abrasive sound on their subsequent releases . Love 's lyrics on the album are often narrative , graphic , and abstract , detailing issues of violence , self @-@ realization , and womanhood . The record was dedicated to Rob Ritter of the Los Angeles punk rock acts Bags and The Gun Club .

Pretty on the Inside was well received by alternative music critics , garnering favorable reviews in Spin , NME , and The Village Voice . It received considerable commercial success in the United Kingdom , where the record 's lead single , " Teenage Whore , " entered the UK Indie Chart at number one in September 1991 . It has sold over 200 @,@ 000 copies in the United States and gained a contemporary cult following among punk rock fans , and has been cited as a seminal influence for songwriters and musicians such as Brody Dalle and Scout Niblett . Despite its critical acclaim , frontwoman Courtney Love has , in later years , referred to the album as " unlistenable . " An LP version of the album was reissued in the United States in August 2011 to celebrate its twentieth anniversary .

= = Background = =

Hole formed in 1989 in Los Angeles , California when frontwoman Courtney Love , after years of fruitless attempts at forming bands , bought her neighbor Lisa Roberts a bass and posted an advertisement in a local paper stating : " I want to start a band . My influences are Big Black , Sonic Youth , and Fleetwood Mac . " Eric Erlandson , along with over a dozen other musicians , answered the ad . Love later said that she knew Eric was " the one " as soon as they met , and that he had a " Thurston Moore quality about him " that she liked .

Erlandson said that early in Hole 's career , they were more interested in " making noise " than achieving success and before drummer Caroline Rue joined the band that they used no percussion whatsoever . It was not until Love and Erlandson heard Mudhoney 's " Touch Me , I 'm Sick " that they began to think about taking the band to the next level . Early on , the band was most influenced by the New York No Wave art and music scene of the 1980s , which included visual artists , such as Richard Kern , as well as scuzz rock acts , such as Teenage Jesus and the Jerks , Sonic Youth , and Pussy Galore . The band also featured a third guitarist in its early days , first Mike Geisbrecht and then Errol Stewart . After the band 's first four shows , the original lineup disbanded and Hole recruited bassist Jill Emery in 1990 .

In the documentary film Not Bad for a Girl , Love , who had been in the erotic dancing industry for years prior , said that she worked as a stripper to help support the band in its early incarnation . She also cited her work as a dancer as being one of many inspirations for the songs on Pretty on the Inside : " I was blonde , wore makeup , had to support my band by dancing , and had to play this ridiculous archetype at work ... so I took , you know , high heels and white pumps , and I had a wiglet ? I just took that and messed with it . "

= = Recording and production = =

Hole had previously released two singles , " Retard Girl " on Sympathy for the Record Industry and " Dicknail " on Sub Pop . According to Love , she had initially wanted to release the album on Sympathy for the Record Industry , but was " talked into " signing on with Caroline Records . After signing , Love sought Sonic Youth 's Kim Gordon to produce the album . In January 1991 , Love

sent her letter , a Hello Kitty barrette , and copies of the band 's early singles , mentioning that the band greatly admired Gordon 's work and appreciated " the production of the SST record " (referring to Sonic Youth 's EVOL or Sister) . Gordon agreed on the condition that her friend , Gumball frontman Don Fleming , assist .

The band entered Music Box Studios with Gordon , Fleming and Holly Price in March 1991 and worked on the album for one week ; the songs were recorded over a period of four days , and were mixed over the course of a further three days . During the recording sessions for the album , Love gargled whiskey and smoked cigarettes excessively to " give a raw edge to her vocals . "

The sessions were said to be stressful , with an anonymous band member saying that Love was " on a total power trip " the entire time , making sure she had the final say of " everything in terms of album cover design , order of musicians ' credits in the liner notes , and even the spot where the price code went on the back . " Fleming was impressed by Love 's " focus and intensity , " especially while recording vocals for one song when Love " literally ripped her clothes off while she sang . " " Courtney was amazing , " said Fleming . " She was the most gung @-@ ho person I 've ever met . She was going to make the greatest record ever - I like that attitude in the studio . Courtney was like ' Let 's go , fuckers ' , and I loved that . " In a later interview , Fleming said :

Courtney was great at the time ? it was before she even knew Kurt [Cobain] . She gave 180 % . I 've worked with some people that you 've had to coax the performance out of them . With Courtney , there was no attitude . She was gonna give it all . And she did and it was really impressive to me [...] I loved the whole band ; they were a lot of fun . That early lineup of Hole ? I felt they were the real deal . They were Hollywood misfits ? all of them . I felt it really captured what they were .

Gordon said that Love " was either charming and nice or screaming at her band " but that she was " a really good singer and entertainer and front person . "

= = Composition = =

= = = Music = = =

The music of *Pretty on the Inside* is most often noted for its extreme abrasiveness , and for its sophisticated use of melody buried under arrangements . The album 's sonic elements are heavily influenced by Los Angeles hardcore punk as well as New York 's no wave scene ; many of the tracks are accompanied by overt use of feedback , experimental playing , wah pedals , and use of sampling and interpolation . Rapid sliding techniques and string muting are also heavily present on the album , as well as what Love and Erlandson describe as " Sonic Youth tunings . " Love 's vocals range from whispers to violent screaming , often in succession with the extreme shifts in speed and volume .

The album also contains multiple references to other musicians , specifically in its two noise tracks , " Sassy " and " Starbelly " : the main riff to " Starbelly " is based on Neil Young 's " Cinnamon Girl " and features analog cassette excerpts from " Rhiannon " by Fleetwood Mac and an early recording of " Best Sunday Dress " by Pagan Babies , one of Love 's earlier bands with Kat Bjelland ; " Sassy " includes snippets from an angry message left by Nymphs singer Inger Lorre on Love 's answering machine , accompanied by one chord progression repeated throughout . Love has admitted that the main riff to " Mrs. Jones " was copied verbatim from " Dark Entries " by the goth rock group Bauhaus , one of her favorite bands as a teenager .

In a 1991 Canadian television interview , Love commented on the album 's coarse musical structure . She said that since the band was from Los Angeles , the " metal capital of the US " , they thought they were making a " pop record with an edge , " and were surprised by people 's reactions when they were told it was violent and extreme . Love also said , " It was all about the expression of my experience . I was not coming from a black void ; I was trying to create light ... I was trying to heal . " In an interview with *Spin* magazine several years after its release , Love said that she was " posing in a lot of ways " with the album : " It was the truth , but it was also me catching up with all my hip peers who 'd gone all indie on me , and who made fun of me for liking R.E.M. and The Smiths . I 'd

done the whole punk thing , sleeping on floors in piss and beer , and waking up with the guy with the fucking mohawk and the skateboards and the speed and the whole goddamned thing . But I hated it . I 'd grown out of it by the time I was seventeen . " In a 1994 interview with Kurt Loder , Love admitted to having been " consciously self @-@ conscious " when making the record due to her feeling the need to compete with her peers at the time . In a 2011 interview for Hit So Hard (2011) , a documentary on later Hole drummer Patty Schemel , Love referred to Pretty on the Inside as " unlistenable " .

= = = Lyrics and themes = = =

Many of the album 's lyrics are narrative and diaristic in nature , and were heavily drawn from Love 's personal life and experiences in her teenage and young adult years . In a press release promoting the album , Love said : " These songs are about my own weaknesses and impurities ; things about myself that I hate ... paranoid , petty concerns , and pithy , pathetic things that are inside of me . " The songs are often lyrically abstract and describe shocking scenes of violence , and , particularly , violence against women . Prominent themes discussed in the lyrics include elitism , beauty and self @-@ image , as well as the more disconcerting themes of abortion , prostitution , suicide , murder , " red lights " , and self @-@ destructiveness . Q Magazine described the lyrics on the record as " confrontational " and " genuinely uninhibited . "

The Seattle publication The Stranger analyzed the lyrics to the track " Mrs. Jones " , calling it a " particularly rattling sketch of what appears to be a rape scene , with Love seamlessly handling three perspectives : the ugly attacker (" Look into the bloodrot , you suicide bitch / It takes an hour with you to make me want to live ") , the vengeful victim (" The abortion left an abscess / Don 't ever talk to me like that again ") , and the supportive narrator (" Just like a pro , she takes off her dress / And she kicks you down in her snow white pumps ") . " The song also makes direct references to The Ballad of East and West , a poem by Rudyard Kipling , specifically with the line : " East is east and west is west , and mine was you and mine was best , " which is a partial quote from the poem .

" Garbadge Man " , discusses abandonment and alienation , as well as crisis of spirituality , and is one of the few songs on the album to feature a verse @-@ chorus @-@ verse composition . The album closes with two songs that are bridged together as a single piece : " Pretty on the Inside " , noted for its hostile lyrics and allusions to vanity , and " Clouds " , a dark and raucous cover of Joni Mitchell 's " Both Sides , Now " from her 1969 album Clouds . The cover of the song features altered lyrics that appear to illustrate a suicide scene .

The explicitness of the album 's lyrics mandated a Parental Advisory logo in the United States , largely due to the lurid nature of the songs as well as their usage of profanity . Female @-@ aimed curse words such as " bitch " , " slut " , and " whore " are prominent in the songs , though in a presumably subversive manner . " I try to place [beautiful imagery] next to fucked up imagery , because that 's how I view things , " said Love in a 1991 interview with Everett True . " I sometimes feel that no one 's taken the time to write about certain things in rock , that there 's a certain female point of view that 's never been given space . " In spite of its graphic lyrics , the underlying pro @-@ feminist slant that is found in many of the songs led some to tag the band as being part of the riot grrl movement , which Love was not directly associated with .

= = Packaging and artwork = =

The artwork for Pretty on the Inside is abstract in comparison to Hole 's later album artwork . The front cover of the album features a heavily saturated pink press photo of the band amidst forest underbrush , taken by photographer Vickie Berndt . Berndt said that " Courtney wanted something striking and unusual " and Berndt was experimenting with color infrared film during the shoot , testing exposure settings with Love . The photo is similar to several others taken during the same shoot , one of which was featured in a Spin article in 1991 .

The font design featured on the front cover was created by Pizz , a graphic artist from Long Beach , who also designed album cover art for several other indie rock bands . The back side of the album

features a painting by bassist Emery , depicting a topless woman looking at herself through a hand mirror . On her chest is a red heart surrounded by arrows , and below , her ribs protrude from her sides , possibly a reference to anorexia and body image issues , a major theme of the album and its successor Live Through This .

The interior artwork , presented in a booklet on the CD version of the album and on the record sleeve on vinyl releases , features an assemblage of scribbled and typewritten lyrics , personal " thank you " notes , cutouts of Catholic and Renaissance artwork , as well as childlike drawings and storybook pictures juxtaposed with photos of women in bondage . The collages in the album 's liner notes have been described as looking like " the scrapbook of an incest victim . " In the liner notes , the album is dedicated to Rob Ritter of the LA punk group Bags .

= = Release = =

Pretty on the Inside was released on September 17 , 1991 in the United States on Caroline Records and on City Slang in Europe . The album 's lead single , " Teenage Whore " , was released in Europe on September 23 , and entered the UK Indie Chart 's Top 10 at number one on September 28 , 1991 , beating out " Heaven Sent An Angel " by Revolver , " Let It Slide " by Mudhoney , and " Love to Hate You " by Erasure , among others . On The Chart Show on Channel 4 , the song 's title was censored with ellipsis in place of the word " whore " .

The single 's success in the United Kingdom led the band to perform a twelve @-@ date tour of the country supporting Mudhoney . The subsequent success of both the album , single , and tour saw Hole embark on a further three tours of the United States , Germany and Western Europe in the latter half of 1991 , playing again with Mudhoney , as well as alternative rock acts Daisy Chainsaw and Therapy ? . In spite of the album 's popularity in the United Kingdom , it failed to chart in the United States despite extensive touring , though it was known to be outselling Nirvana 's output before the band 's release of Nevermind the following week .

The band played their final show of the tour in San Francisco opening for The Smashing Pumpkins , which ended with Love infamously smashing her guitar headstock onstage at the end of their set after the audience failed to respond well .

Los Angeles Times journalist David Cromelin noted in his review of the concert :

Smashing Pumpkins ' singer @-@ guitarist Billy Corgan referred to himself as " a frustrated Midwestern youth " at the Whisky on Tuesday [...] Smashing Pumpkins was preceded by smashing guitars , courtesy of Hole . The tortured , transfixing L.A. group 's pairing with the headliners should have made this a bill to remember , but the audience was primed for Pumpkin and didn 't take to Courtney Love 's powerful howls of anguish . Hole ended its set in a tantrum , as Love ordered the band to halt and hurled her guitar to the ground . Guitarist Eric Erlandson finished things off by demolishing his instrument with a few impressive swings . Frustrated Midwestern youth , meet frustrated California youth .

After the tour concluded , a music video for the track " Garbadge Man " was released , though the album 's only single , " Teenage Whore " , did not receive a music video . The video is fairly abstract and a reflection of Hole 's no wave influence at the time , with shots of Love and other band members in a car interspersed with shots of them performing outside the window . According to Love , she tracked down original rolls of radiographic medical film from Denver , Colorado that had been used in the Vietnam war , which the music video was then shot on , giving the images an X @-@ ray @-@ like appearance . The video was shown on MTV 's 120 Minutes in 1992 during an interview with Love and Kim Gordon , and was broadcast again on the show in 1994 and 1995 but was never as popular as the band 's later videos . For the music video , an alternate mix of the song by Gordon was used to eliminate profanity .

The album was released on CD and cassette in the United States , but received a release on vinyl LP throughout Europe by City Slang , based in Berlin , Germany . The first 3 @, @ 000 pressings of the LP featured blue vinyl , while the following pressings were in standard black . In June 2011 , Plain Recordings , an independent American record label specializing in cult album re @-@ issues , announced that a 180 gram vinyl re @-@ release of Pretty on the Inside was being introduced to

their catalogue ; it was released on August 2 , 2011 .

= = = Critical reception = = =

Pretty on the Inside was received with positive acclaim by many British and American alternative press . In a review by NME , the album was positively compared to Patti Smith 's *Horses* , as well as the debut albums of The Ramones , Television , and New York Dolls , and was branded as being in " a class of its own , " while Elizabeth Wurtzel wrote in *The New Yorker* that " *Pretty on the Inside* is such a cacophony ... very few people are likely to get through it once , let alone give it the repeated listenings it needs for you to discover that it 's probably the most compelling album to have been released in 1991 . "

Q called the album " loud , ugly , and deliberately shocking , " awarding it three out of five stars . Spin noted in their review :

[The album] revolves around a fascination of the repulsive aspects of L.A. ? superficiality , sexism , violence , and drugs . Love is the embodiment of what drives the band : the dichotomy of pretty / ugly ... The pretty / ugly dynamic also comes across in Hole 's music ... a song like " Teenage Whore " at first comes across like a ranting noisy rage , but underneath is a surprisingly lush melody . "

Melody Maker columnist Sharon O 'Connell said the album was " the very best bit of fucked up rock ' n ' roll [I 've heard] all year " , and it was named one of the 20 best albums of the year by Spin in December 1991 . Deborah Frost of *The Village Voice* , in her review of the album , called it " genre @-@ defying " , taking note of Love 's reputation on the album as " the girl who won 't shut up ... She is all the things that she should not be , and she shoves it , raw , right in your face . " The Seattle publication *The Stranger* took note of the album 's production work by Gordon and Fleming , stating that " despite *Pretty on the Inside* 's reputation as an unhinged , raw @-@ sounding debut , a great deal of professional calculation went into putting this record together . " They also applauded Love 's lyrics , and said the album " judiciously toes the line between the evasively obtuse and overtly obscene . "

In 1995 , *Alternative Press* magazine ranked the album at # 74 in their " Top 99 Of ' 85- ' 95 " list , noting that " Love works in extremes and wears that scarlet letter when she feels like it , and when she doesn 't she rips it off , never neglecting melody and language as the real medium for her message . " In 2009 *PopMatters* called it an album with " bold musical splendour on display " that " [leaves one feeling] nothing short of gobsmacked . "

In a 1994 article , *Rolling Stone* journalist David Fricke called the album " gloriously assaultive " and " a classic of sex @-@ mad self @-@ laceration , hypershred guitars and full @-@ moon bawling [...] in particular the spectacular goring of Joni Mitchell 's " Both Sides , Now " (aka " Clouds ") at the end of the record . You don 't really know the solitary despair at the core of that song until you 've heard Love 's embittered delivery of the last two lines ? " It 's life 's illusions I recall / I really don 't know life at all " ? over guitarist Eric Erlandson 's fading squall . "

= = = Legacy = = =

Pretty on the Inside has had an influence on multiple alternative rock acts , being specifically mentioned by Spinnerette frontwoman Brody Dalle in an interview as a seminal album in the development of her music . British rock band Nine Black Alps also noted the album as a major influence on their third release , *Locked Out from the Inside* (2009) , and indie singer @-@ songwriter Scout Niblett cited it as a major influence on her : " For me , the thing that I loved about them and her [Courtney Love] was the anger , and aggressiveness , along with the tender side , " said Niblett . " That was something I hadn 't seen before in a woman playing music . That was hugely influential and really inspiring . Women up ? til then were kind of one @-@ dimensional , twee , sweet , ethereal , and that annoys the shit out of me . "

Contemporarily , the album has also gained a cult following among rock and punk music fans .

The *Trouser Press Guide to ' 90s Rock* called the album a " surly milkshake of broken rock shards

... from the artistic misspellings of song titles to the lyric collage on the inner sleeve and the abrasive , abstract guitar noises on the songs , Pretty on the Inside reveals the band 's fascination with the New York no wave art and music scene of the ' 80s . " According to Billboard , the album had sold 27 @,@ 000 copies by 1994 , when the band released their wildly popular follow @-@ up album , Live Through This .

In more recent years , frontwoman Love stated that the album contains " nothing melodic " . In a 2011 interview for Hit So Hard (2011) , a documentary on later Hole drummer Patty Schemel , Love referred to Pretty on the Inside as " unlistenable " , going on to say : " That record was a calling card for rock critics and hardcorers , [saying] ' This is what I do , and I am not going to back down from it . I am announcing my persona as a cunt . Thank you very much . ' "

Nonetheless , the title track of the album was performed regularly at Hole concerts between 1993 and 1999 , and Love opened shows with the song during Hole 's 2010 tour .

= = Track listing = =

= = Personnel = =

All personnel credits adapted from the album 's liner notes .

= = Chart positions = =

= = = Singles = = =