

= MTV Unplugged (Thirty Seconds to Mars EP) =

MTV Unplugged is an extended play (EP) and live album by American rock band Thirty Seconds to Mars , released in the United States on August 19 , 2011 by Virgin Records . It features an acoustic performance taped at Sony Music Studios in New York City on May 13 of that year for the television series MTV Unplugged . The show 's purpose is to present name artists , and feature them stripped of studio equipment . The performance was accompanied by musicians from the Vitamin String Quartet , a gospel choir and included the contribution of the band 's fans .

The extended play includes rearranged versions of three songs extracted from Thirty Seconds to Mars ' third studio album , This Is War (2009) , and a cover version of a song by U2 . Upon release , MTV Unplugged received universal acclaim from music critics , many of whom complimented the band 's musicianship and the album 's production . Commercially , it debuted at number 76 on the Billboard 200 and experienced moderate success in some international markets .

= = Recording = =

Thirty Seconds to Mars recorded their performance on May 13 , 2011 at Sony Music Studios in New York City . The show featured a number of musicians from the Vitamin String Quartet and back @-@ up vocalists from The Late Show 's Gospel Choir . It marked the first live performance by the former . The show was produced by Lee Rolontz , Jay Peterson and Leah Culton @-@ Gonzales through the production company Original Media .

Thirty Seconds to Mars dedicated several days to rehearsals , in which they reworked and experimented with their musical repertoire . The band invited their fans to attend the rehearsal sessions to work on songs that needed background vocals . Jared Leto expressed his gratitude to the band 's fans , termed as the Echelon , emphasizing their strong collaboration . During rehearsals , musicians from the Vitamin String Quartet were also involved , with Leto stating that they were " really open and collaborative , [...] fluid and in the moment and improvisational . " Thirty Seconds to Mars explained the scrupulous process of deciding which songs to cover , considering tracks by artists as varied as Cyndi Lauper , Gheorghe Zamfir , Eminem , and Fleetwood Mac . The band stated that they also considered a song by Dolly Parton , before they decided on " Where the Streets Have No Name " by U2 , which is reputed a special song for Jared and Shannon Leto .

The show began with " Hurricane " , followed by " Alibi " , " Kings and Queens " , " Closer to the Edge " , " Night of the Hunter " , " Where the Streets Have No Name " , and " Message in a Bottle " , originally by The Police . Short instrumental versions of songs by The Cure , Pantera and Slayer were also played by Tomo Mili?evi? , Shannon Leto and Tim Kelleher . The Vitamin String Quartet musicians which took part al the recording included three violinists , a cellist and a conductor . The performance of " Where the Streets Have No Name " featured The Late Show 's Gospel Choir , consisting of five men and five women dressed in red . After filming , Jared Leto described the band 's excitement about being asked to record for MTV Unplugged stating , " I think our generation , it was kind of a rite of passage , and if you were invited to do MTV Unplugged , it certainly was a pretty big deal . So many of our favorite bands did ' Unplugged ' and still do it , so we were really thrilled to be asked . "

= = Release = =

The MTV Unplugged episode featuring Thirty Seconds to Mars premiered on MTV on July 19 , 2011 . The televised performance was shortened to five tracks , excluding " Alibi " and " Message in a Bottle " . The episode debuted on MTV.com as part of a live viewing event where fans had the opportunity to interact with others through instant messaging while watching the show . Beginning on July 21 , " Hurricane " went into music video rotations through MTV 's main channels . A thirty @-@ minute special debuted on the high @-@ definition music channel Palladia on July 29 , with an encore at midnight .

The concert 's success prompted Virgin Records to release it as a four @-@ track extended play on

August 19 , 2011 in digital format . The label also planned to release a video accompaniment package in time for the Christmas holidays . However , the deadline for the release was missed after some technical issues and Thirty Seconds to Mars decided to release it for download on VyRT in December 2011 . Aside from featuring the four tracks which appears on the extended play , it includes the performance of " Alibi " and some exclusive footage of the recording . Virgin later released the video to digital retailers on March 2 , 2012 .

= = Critical reception = =

Upon its release , MTV Unplugged received universal acclaim from music critics . Ryan Jones from Alternative Addiction gave the album four stars out of five , writing that " the final product has been touched up perfectly and the four songs on the EP are the perfect selections . " He described both " Where the Streets Have No Name " and " Kings and Queens " as " chilling " , but concluded his review saying that " it would have been nice to get a few more songs . " Joanna Bomberg from MTV commented that " Thirty Seconds to Mars have delivered a truly visual and sonically compelling performance that will inspire their fans and captivate new ones . " Kyle Anderson of Entertainment Weekly praised the show and felt that the band 's cover of " Where the Streets Have No Name " was " stellar . " Alex Easton of AltSounds called the show " emotional , powerful and stunning . " He praised Leto 's vocals and wrote that the album " not only brings a different element to some classic songs , but cements Thirty Seconds to Mars ' place as one of the finest acts of this generation . "

Amy Sciarretto from Loudwire praised the band 's musicianship and wrote , " While U2 songs are often sacred ground , Thirty Seconds to Mars handle their rendition of ' Where the Streets Have No Name ' perfectly . " Kayleigh Burn , writing for Chemical magazine , awarded the album five stars out of a possible five and felt that the band " conquer [s] the listener with a barrage of stunning vocals , memorable guitars and the recurring hum of the violins . " She opined that " Hurricane " was " the best representation of a steadfast performance " and commented that the album " lends the opportunity for a tranquil and calm display of their abilities and more importantly , their hearts . " At the end of 2011 , the Unplugged version of " Hurricane " won the MTV Award for Best Live Performance , with critic James Montgomery commenting that the band 's performance " is very much a communal thing , one where a celebration never seems all that far off . "

= = Commercial performance = =

In the United States , MTV Unplugged debuted at number 76 on the Billboard 200 and number 15 on the Digital Albums on the issue dated September 10 , 2011 . It also entered the Alternative Albums at number 12 and the Rock Albums at number 16 . On September 2 , 2011 , the album debuted at number 38 on the Ö3 Austria Top 40 . In Italy , it reached number 35 on the Musica e dischi singles chart on the week ending September 2 , 2011 . In Norway , MTV Unplugged entered the VG @-@ lista at number 38 during the week of August 30 , 2011 .

In Portugal , the album debuted at number ten , eventually peaking at number nine the following week . On the week dated October 8 , 2011 , the track " Where the Streets Have No Name " reached number ten on the national singles chart . After spending ten weeks on the chart , the album was certified gold by the Associação Fonográfica Portuguesa (AFP) , denoting sales of over 10 @,@ 000 units throughout the country . In the United Kingdom , the album debuted at number 133 on the UK Singles Chart , during the week dated September 3 , 2011 . It also entered the UK Rock Chart at number three .

= = Track listing = =

All songs written and composed by Jared Leto , except where noted .

= = Charts and certifications = =

