

## = Lights and Sounds =

Lights and Sounds is the fifth studio album by the American rock band Yellowcard , released on January 24 , 2006 , in the United States through Capitol Records . Lights and Sounds is Yellowcard 's first concept album , which was inspired to reflect what the band was feeling at the time of production and how they have matured in the process . Lights and Sounds also departs from the sounds on Yellowcard 's previous album , Ocean Avenue ( 2003 ) , which broke away from its pop punk sound to a more alternative rock album .

Lights and Sounds debuted to mixed reviews from contemporary music critics , receiving criticism as the album fell short from the standard set by its predecessor , Ocean Avenue . Upon the album 's release , it charted at number five on Billboard 's 200 and Top Internet Albums ' charts , making it the band highest charting album to date . The album accumulated sales of just over 315 @, @ 000 copies , which failed to match the 2 million sales of their previous album . Yellowcard went on to explain that the disappointment of the sales were due to their going " a bit too far " with the expectations they had thought the album would exceed . Lights and Sounds was certified Gold by the Recording Industry Association of America ( RIAA ) .

The album yielded two singles , " Lights and Sounds " and " Rough Landing , Holly " . While the band was promoting the album , lead guitarist Ben Harper parted ways with the band . Following Harper 's departure , the band revealed that they had entered their " highest and lowest " points because of Harper 's departure from the band . To accommodate the album 's promotion , Yellowcard replaced Harper with guitarist Ryan Mendez .

## = = Background = =

After almost two years of touring in support of their 2003 album , Ocean Avenue , Yellowcard took a few months off . In December 2004 , vocalist Ryan Key and bassist Peter Mosely moved to New York City to write songs for their upcoming album , while the rest of the band remained in Los Angeles .

As Key and Mosely stayed in New York , they admitted that there was a delay when it came to start writing songs for the album . Key , however , did explain that they were writing " weird , obscure , not @-@ too @-@ mellow " tracks and working on notebooks that he compiled while the band was touring . He also noted that he was able to write for a couple of hours and would receive over " 15 @-@ 20 ideas " that he could take out for the band , so once they all got together , they can start collaborating on the record . Mosely , also in discussion of this , added that the reason it took them so long was because they were " scared to death " with the writing . Mosely concluded that once the writing had begun , the process was easier on them . It was also during this time that Key and Mosely began to turn their apartment into a studio , adding a drum kit , guitar amps , and even including a piano . While Key and Mosely began the development of the songs , the rest of the members would occasionally fly to New York to check on the progress .

In April 2005 , the band met in Los Angeles and began recording at the Sunset Sound studios . The following month in an interview with MTV News , lead guitarist Ben Harper revealed that the writing process was finished . In addition , Harper commented that the band recorded 19 songs for the album , 13 of which made the final cut . In August 2005 , Yellowcard announced the songs , " Lights and Sounds " , " Sure Thing Falling " , and " Two Weeks from Twenty " , that were going to be featured in the album . It was also revealed that the album would feature an instrumental and hidden track . In September 2005 , the band announced a release for Lights and Sounds in January 2006 .

## = = Music = =

## = = = Musical style = = =

With Lights and Sounds , Yellowcard broke away from their original pop punk sound to a more

alternative rock album . The album is somewhat of a concept album , made to reflect what Yellowcard was feeling at the time of production . Ryan Key , in discussion of this , said that Ocean Avenue was about " finding your place in the world " and explained that Lights and Sounds was about " realizing that you 've gotten lost " . The band has cited Radiohead 's Kid A ( 2000 ) and Guns N ' Roses ' 1991 albums Use Your Illusion I and Use Your Illusion II as major influences for the album . Yellowcard also credit Aphex Twin , Mouse on Mars and Explosions in the Sky for inspiration , regarding the music sound in the album .

In an interview in August 2005 , Key explained that the album was a " definite departure " and " more political " than what Ocean Avenue had contained . In discussion of the album , Key said that the band had matured and that the music in Lights and Sounds would be different from their previous album . Though , Key added , " ... we have to be careful , we have to try and write songs [ in the style of the ones ] we wrote before . We have to make a conscious effort not to think about the fact that we went from being a nothing band ... to having a bunch of hit singles in like , one year . " Printz Board of The Black Eyed Peas collaborated with Yellowcard on the song " Two Weeks from Twenty " where he played a trumpet solo . The song , " How I Go " , features a duet with Dixie Chicks ' lead vocalist Natalie Maines , and features a twenty @-@ five piece orchestra , which was conducted by violinist Sean Mackin . According to Peter Mosely , the band liked the Dixie Chicks ' and even thought of collaborating with Maines on Ocean Avenue for the song " View from Heaven " . Mosely also revealed that the band approached Maines about singing on " How I Go " ; " The original plan was just for her to sing back @-@ up ( on the song ) . [ But ] it ended up turning into a duet . " He also added that Maines took a demo of the song and returned to the studio , Sunset Sound , where the band were working , in addition to the Dixie Chicks working on their album , with lyrics and vocals of her own .

Mackin also composed an entire string section and conducted an orchestra in the album . In an interview with Daily Nexus in June 2006 , Mackin revealed that the conducting was the easy part and that the composing part was much harder . In this interview , Mackin also commented , " composing was getting so frustrating since I wasn't writing as fast as my mind was thinking , so going back I wanted to make sure that each of my arrangements for this album and the 12 different songs were completely different " .

= = = Lyrical content = = =

Lights and Sounds primarily focuses on the band coping with the success they were enduring when writing songs for the album . The album also goes with what Key described as when he was preoccupied with making Lights and Sounds . Key said that one of the common themes that were written in the album was the band 's hatred in living in Los Angeles . Key said that the songs have " lost that adolescent bounciness -- they 've come into adulthood a bit " . In an interview with Rolling Stone magazine , Key revealed that during the time he and Mosely spent in New York , he said it " brought out some darker places " in them and that it was " not in a ' now I 'm going to start wearing eyeliner ' kind of way , but emotionally darker . " In addition , many of the song 's themes deal with Key 's battle with drugs and alcohol .

While making the album , Yellowcard had also developed a character , Holly Wood , who served as a narrator and protagonist for the album 's storyline . The character is featured in the songs " Rough Landing , Holly " and " Holly Wood Died " . The band explained the meaning of the title track , which they said is based on a " whirlwind rocker about the pressures on the band members " and how they have changed as they have aged after the release of Ocean Avenue . Key also commented that when he was preoccupied with making the album , there were distractions while in the process ; he simply referred to the distractions as " lights and sounds " , which ultimately resulted in the band naming the album just that . He also says that the main reason behind that was how it affected the band during that particular time .

During discussion of the track listing in Lights and Sounds , Yellowcard revealed that " Two Weeks from Twenty " stretched the " limits " for them and explained that it was a " jazz @-@ lounge anti @-@ war song " . The band also explained that the song is a narrative of a young soldier named

Jimmy , from New Jersey , who is killed in the Iraq war . Other songs such as " Down on My Head " , " City of Devils " , and " Holly Wood Died " , had a theme that spoke about bitterness and disillusionment . " How I Go " is based on both lament of a father over the life that has flowed past him and the 2003 film , Big Fish . Another song , " Words , Hands , Hearts " , is written about the events that occurred during the September 11 attacks .

= = Release and promotion = =

In September 2005 , the band announced the album 's title and revealed that the title track , " Lights and Sounds " , was confirmed to be the first single from the album , with a video shot in Van Nuys , California and a release date of November 15 , 2005 . Lights and Sounds was released worldwide on January 24 , 2006 , issued by the band 's record label , Capitol Records .

On October 24 , 2005 the band began a tour in support of the album , during which they began playing at small venues at college arenas . The tour lasted for six weeks . The album 's title track was included in the video game Burnout Revenge , as well as its spinoff Burnout Legends . The music video of " Lights and Sounds " was featured on a Verizon Wireless Vcast commercial around the time of the album 's release . The song " City of Devils " was featured in the episode , " I Love You But I 've Chosen Darkness " , on the CW 's One Tree Hill in October 2006 . The song , " Rough Landing , Holly " , was featured in the 2006 video game FlatOut 2 .

In November 2005 , it was announced that guitarist Ben Harper had parted ways with the band . Key explained that the band went through " a lot of the highest and lowest points " and that making an album " would be on the highest list , and losing a member would be on the lowest . " He also added , " It 's really been a long journey together , you know , so obviously , parting ways with Ben was a really unpleasant experience . It was either go on without him , or don 't go on at all . And , at the core , we decided that we had something too great to let go of , and that we had to kind of make a last resort and move on without him . " Harper was replaced by Ryan Mendez .

= = Reception = =

= = = Critical response = = =

The reviews for Lights and Sounds were mostly mixed upon release , particularly from mainstream media , but some critics have stated that the album had fallen well short of the standards of Ocean Avenue , the album 's predecessor . Kelefa Sanneh of the New York Times , in review of the album , wrote : " To listeners on either side of rock 's latest generational divide , there 's a big difference -- the difference of a decade -- between being a loser and being a twerp ... Lights and Sounds is Yellowcard 's attempt to split that difference . " Sanneh reports that the song " Two Weeks from Twenty " , one of the band 's anti @-@ war song , " sounds suspiciously like Green Day ; the lyrics echo the plot of the video for Green Day 's ' Wake Me Up When September Ends ' . " Despite this , Sanneh goes on to say that Yellowcard is still " pretty good " at " writing sweeping , upbeat punk @-@ rock love songs " . Ben Breier of Kent News wrote : " One thing is certain : The Yellowcard you grew to know and love circa Ocean Avenue is no longer with us . The band has vastly matured when compared to past records , but it comes at a price ? members forgot what made them occasionally catchy and addictive in the first place . It 's clearly the right direction for the band , but Yellowcard needs to further refine its new style before it can come up with something above average . " Mike Schiller of PopMatters , who was somewhat displeased with the album , wrote that the album does not " make up for the overabundance of flaccid mediocrity on display throughout most of the album " . Schiller went on to say , " Lights and Sounds may be Yellowcard ? s attempt at a big , serious album , but the band doesn ? t sound even remotely ready . " Nick Cowen from Drowned in Sound wrote : " Those who register for Pop @-@ Punk 101 will receive Yellowcard ? s Lights And Sounds as their first set @-@ work ; the Jacksonville quintet 's new album would be the perfect teaching aid , as it 's technically proficient while being boring and forgettable enough not to inspire

the temptation to plagiarise . " Cowen concluded that the album " is a substandard , second @-@ tier album with some strings thrown in for good measure . It 's really not worth the money in your wallet ? even if that wallet is attached to a very long chain . " Now magazine claimed that the band " may be in the right place , it 's clear they 're simply incapable of realizing this clumsy faux magnum opus . "

Despite the mixed reaction , many critics were fond of the album . Rolling Stone 's music critic Jenny Eliscu wrote that the album " has made what ends up being one of the best straight @-@ up pop @-@ rock albums of 2006 " . Eliscu also complimented the band , writing : " Like the Goo Goo Dolls ... Yellowcard have rightfully recognized the transcendent value of a big , fist @-@ pumping anthem coated with a light dose of romantic schmaltz . " Alternative Press gave the album a perfect rating , saying , " It may be one of the least ' punk ' albums a pop @-@ punk band will make this year--but it 's probably one of the best , too . " Sputnikmusic gave the album 3 @.@ 5 out of five stars , writing : " It 's pop @-@ punk , and fairly unambitious stuff at that ... What keeps this record on its feet is the lyricism , the production and the simplicity of it all . " Heather Phares of AllMusic wrote : " On Lights and Sounds , Yellowcard sounds light years away from its One for the Kids / Where We Stand days . Granted , the band still trades in the immediate melodies and heart @-@ on @-@ sleeve lyrics that they 've used since the beginning , but major @-@ label success suits them well . " Though , Phares went on to add that the band " ends up sounding self @-@ assured instead of compromised in its big @-@ budget surroundings . " Billboard magazine gave the album 8 out of 10 stars , and claimed that Yellowcard made a " strong effort that trades sunny @-@ sounding rockers and breakup songs for weightier concerns of war and family , ' Lights ' conveys that maturity without seeming strained . " Dan McClanahan of Iowa State Daily wrote : " ... This disc will likely change people 's opinion of Yellowcard . Much more angst and a drastically matured sound make for a pleasant surprise . " McClanahan revealed that he was not looking forward to listen to the album , but admitted once he heard he knew it embraced the band 's " strengths " and that they " greatly expanded the subject matter of its songs . "

= = = Commercial performance = = =

Lights and Sounds debuted at number five on the Billboard 200 and Top Internet Albums ' charts , and sold over 95 @,@ 000 copies in its first week of release . Since June 2006 , Lights and Sounds has sold over 315 @,@ 000 copies in the United States . The album did not exceed the expectations of Ocean Avenue , which approached 2 million in record sales . Internationally , Lights and Sounds peaked at number four on the Canadian Top Album Chart , making it Yellowcard 's highest debut in Canada . It also debuted at number six in the Australian chart , in which it spent six weeks , before retiring in the number 49 position . In the New Zealand chart it peaked in the number 11 position . Lights and Sounds charted on the number 59 spot in the United Kingdom and spent one week on the chart . In the United States , the album was certified gold by the RIAA on March 15 , 2006 , indicating shipment of 500 @,@ 000 .

When asked about the disappointment of sales that Lights and Sounds received , Sean Mackin said :

I think that the band went on ... maybe not a tangent , but we had a goal in mind , and at the end of the recording process , we were so proud of how artistic we were . And I think we showed too much . I think maybe we were a little too jaded and a little too dark , and I think that the lack of hope and faith that we put on this record made us a little less sparkly and light to people . But I think that it 's all part of our evolution . We all went a bit too far .

Mackin also insisted that the band did not see the album as a mistake , but more of a " learning experience " , so that it would not happen again whey they work on their next project .

Two singles were released from Lights and Sounds . The first , " Lights and Sounds " , the title track , was released on November 25 , 2005 . The song peaked at number four on Billboard 's Hot Modern Rock Tracks chart . The song also appeared on the Hot Digital Songs chart on the number 26 position . It also charted in Billboard 's Hot 100 and Pop 100 , respectively . The second single , " Rough Landing , Holly " , was released on May 6 , 2006 , reached 27 on Billboard 's Hot Modern

Rock Tracks , and peaked at number 49 on the Australian Recording Industry Association ( ARIA ) chart .

= = Track listing = =

All songs written and composed by Ryan Key , Sean Mackin , Ryan Mendez , Pete Mosely , and Longineu W. Parsons III , except where noted .

= = Personnel = =

= = Charts = =