

= Accelerated Evolution =

Accelerated Evolution is the sixth studio album by Canadian musician Devin Townsend , released in 2003 . The album , written and produced by Townsend , was a mix of musical styles from alternative and hard rock to progressive metal . Townsend , the lead vocalist and guitarist , assembled a group of Vancouver musicians to perform with him on the album : guitarist Brian Waddell , drummer Ryan Van Poederooyen , bassist Mike Young , and keyboardist Dave Young . This lineup , the Devin Townsend Band , was Townsend 's first dedicated lineup for his solo material , and was created as a counterpart to Townsend 's extreme metal project Strapping Young Lad .

Accelerated Evolution was written and recorded at the same time as Strapping Young Lad 's self @-@ titled album , with Townsend dividing his energy between the two . Accelerated Evolution was recorded in Vancouver , British Columbia from September to November 2002 , and was released on Townsend 's independent label , HevyDevy Records , in March 2003 . The album was well received by critics for its blend of genres and influences , its musical accessibility , and its large @-@ scale rock production style .

= Background =

During the creation of his early solo albums Infinity (1998) and Physicist (2000) , Devin Townsend went through personal struggles that affected his writing ability . These struggles were resolved on Terria (2001) , which Townsend described as " a really healing record " . After Terria , Townsend felt a newfound enthusiasm for his music , saying , " Bring it on . I 'm going to be so fucking sensitive but so intense , and be unafraid to be either . " In 2002 , Townsend began work on his next two albums . He reunited his extreme metal project Strapping Young Lad , which had been on hiatus for four years , and began writing the band 's new release , Strapping Young Lad (SYL) .

At the same time , Townsend formed a new , permanent band " on par with Strapping " to record and tour for his solo releases . The Devin Townsend Band consisted of Brian Waddell on guitar , Ryan Van Poederooyen on drums , and brothers Mike Young and Dave Young on bass and keyboards , respectively . Townsend performed guitar , vocals , and production , as he did in Strapping Young Lad . Townsend chose members of local bands who " hadn 't had the same experiences " and could give a fresh perspective on " all those emotions " that were present in his solo material . He found it " refreshing " to play with people who appreciated his solo material more than Strapping Young Lad 's . Notable was the absence of drummer Gene Hoglan of Strapping Young Lad , who had played on Townsend 's previous three solo albums .

Townsend wrote and produced the band 's first album at the same time he was working on SYL , spending half the week on one and half on the other . The album was engineered and mixed by Townsend and Shaun Thingvold , who has worked on many of Townsend 's and Strapping Young Lad 's albums . It had the working title Relationships , but was renamed Accelerated Evolution , a nod to the frantic pace of putting a new band together in under a year .

= Music =

Accelerated Evolution was written as " the polar opposite " of SYL . The album blended aspects of different genres , including alternative rock , hard rock , and progressive metal , with elements of " heaviness , ambience , humor , and experimentalism " . The album has been described as more melodic and more rock @-@ based than SYL or Physicist , yet " more song @-@ oriented " than Terria , with influences by John Lennon , Jimi Hendrix , and Rush . Songs such as " Storm " , " Suicide " , and " Sunday Afternoon " were compared to Townsend 's Infinity , but were noted as " less frantic and more mature " . Townsend wrote the album to be " commercially viable " , making his existing style more concise and accessible but without going so far as to write " pop songs " . Townsend utilized clean vocals much more than in his previous albums , and produced and mixed the album in his trademark " wall of sound " style , blending " layers upon layers of guitars , keyboards , and vocals " .

All tracks written by Devin Townsend , with additional arrangements by Brian Waddell , Ryan Van Poederooyen , Dave Young , and Mike Young .

The end of " Traveller " samples " Sister " from Ocean Machine . " Depth Charge " would later be referenced in " Decimator " from SYL 's The New Black .

= = Track listing = =

All songs written and composed by Devin Townsend .

Inside Out Music 's special edition of Accelerated Evolution included Project EKO , an electronica EP by Townsend .

= = Release = =

Accelerated Evolution was released in March 2003 on Townsend 's independent label , HevyDevy Records . It is distributed in Canada by HevyDevy , in Japan by Sony , and in Europe and North America by InsideOut . The album art was created by Travis Smith , who also did the art for Terria and SYL . InsideOut also released a special edition of the album which contained a 3 @-@ track EP called Project EKO , Townsend 's first foray into electronica . The album reached number 135 on the French albums chart and number 249 on the Japanese albums chart .

Prior to the formation of the Devin Townsend Band , Townsend had represented his solo releases live with the Strapping Young Lad lineup ; the band would play one set of Strapping Young Lad songs and one set of Devin Townsend songs . After the release of Accelerated Evolution , Townsend began touring with The Devin Townsend Band , at times separately from Strapping Young Lad and at times sharing the bill . After playing two release shows in Vancouver in July 2003 , The Devin Townsend Band toured Canada with Strapping Young Lad and Zimmers Hole in October 2003 . This was followed by a North American tour with progressive metal band Symphony X through November and December 2003 .

= = Critical reception = =

Accelerated Evolution was well received by critics . Mike G. of Metal Maniacs called Accelerated Evolution " the album of the year " , praising it for " the hard @-@ to @-@ accomplish trick of being extreme yet accessible , simultaneously heavy ' n ' rockin ' yet majestic and beautiful . " William Hughes of Sputnikmusic called it " amazing " , saying the album " has elements that will appeal to fans of all different genres , from progressive to metal . " Alex Henderson of Allmusic called the album " excellent " , and praised Townsend 's ability to blend genres and influences : " The Canadian rocker provides enough downtuned guitars to put this CD in the alt rock category . And yet Accelerated Evolution has a big sound that suggests the pop @-@ metal , arena rock and hard rock of the ' 70s and ' 80s ? big melodies , big harmonies , big guitars , big vocals , big production . " Chris Hawkins of KNAC.com said , " Like always , what Devin manages to do is take the most infectious rhythm , place his stamp upon it , and thus create something completely original . " Xander Hoose of Chronicles of Chaos compared the album favorably to SYL , noting that " there is more variation , and the songs are more memorable and layered than their one @-@ dimensional SYL counterparts . " Hoose added , " For those who thought Terria was going too much in the wrong direction , Accelerated Evolution will probably come as a relief . "

= = Chart performance = =

= = Personnel = =

Devin Townsend ? guitar , vocals , ambience

Ryan Van Poederooyen ? drums

Mike Young ? bass
Brian Waddell ? guitar
Dave Young ? keyboards

= = = Production = = =

Devin Townsend ? production , audio engineering , mixing
Shaun Thingvold ? engineering , mixing
Goran Finnberg ? mastering
Misha Rajaratnam , Dan Kearley , Carla Levis , Scott Cooke , Jay Van Poederooyen , Lori Bridger ,
Chris Guy ? assistance

= = = Artwork = = =

Omer Cordell ? photography (credited as Omer Shaked)
Travis Smith ? graphics , layout