

= Intimacy ( Bloc Party album ) =

Intimacy is the third studio album by British indie rock band Bloc Party . It was recorded in two weeks at several locations in London and Kent during 2008 and was produced by Jacknife Lee and Paul Epworth . Inspired by the release options available in the Internet age , the band members made the album available for purchase on their website as a digital download on 21 August 2008 . Minimal promotion was undertaken in the UK . The record was released in compact disc form on 24 October 2008 , with Wichita Recordings as the primary label . It peaked at number 8 on the UK Albums Chart and entered the Billboard 200 in the United States at number 18 .

Bloc Party wanted to create an album that further distanced the band from the traditional rock set @-@ up by incorporating more electronic elements and unconventional musical arrangements . As the record 's title suggests , its tracks are about personal relationships and are loosely based on one of frontman Kele Okereke 's break @-@ ups in 2007 . Three songs were released as singles : " Mercury " , " Talons " , and " One Month Off " ; the first two tracks entered the UK Top 40 . Intimacy was generally well received by critics . Reviewers often focused on its rush @-@ release and central theme , and considered them either bold steps or poor choices .

= = Origins and recording = =

Bloc Party 's second album A Weekend in the City , released in 2007 , allowed the quartet to evolve sonically by including more electronically tampered soundscapes , but the band members were not entirely comfortable with more daring musical arrangements when making the record . According to multi @-@ instrumentalist Gordon Moakes , the impromptu November 2007 single " Flux " " opened a door to the fact that we could go in any direction " in future works . After the NME Big Gig in February 2008 , the band members took a month off from touring and did not interact with each other during that period . Moakes felt that there were no rules when the band re @-@ assembled for studio work . Chief lyricist Okereke completed most of the songwriting before the recording process .

In mid @-@ 2008 , Bloc Party attended secret sessions at studios in the south @-@ east of England . The band aimed to use a similar process to the creation of " Flux " , which was crafted in a week . Paul Epworth and Jacknife Lee ? from Bloc Party 's previous albums , Silent Alarm and A Weekend in the City , respectively ? returned to the production staff for Intimacy , because the band members felt that they had " unfinished business " with both . Okereke has stated that having two producers allowed for musical experimentation . Epworth focused on capturing the dynamic of a live band by working on fully developed songs and emphasising the rhythm section in the mix . Lee aided the band members ' evolution towards a more electronic style by creating tracks with them . Each producer worked on five of the record 's original ten tracks .

According to Okereke , Bloc Party wanted to make something as stylised as R & B or electronica , combining the rawness of Silent Alarm and the recording experience gained from A Weekend in the City . The frontman drew inspiration from Siouxsie and the Banshees ' 1988 song " Peek @-@ a @-@ Boo " and aimed to create " rock interpretations of dance " . The band worked by initially performing sound checks with only guitar chords , keyboard notes , and drum beats . Discussing the interplay between rhythm guitarist Okereke and lead guitarist Russell Lissack , Epworth has stated that " Kele will do one thing that creates a great deal of impact , whereas Russell 's very good at subtle embellishments and leading the melodic side of things outside of the vocal " . The band members decided to record the first ten tracks crafted after judging first ideas to often be the best . They " thrived " under the pressure of timed sessions , which lasted only two weeks .

Moakes has indicated that there was no worry about whether a song could be recreated live in concert in the same way as it would appear on record . A brass section and a chamber choir were hired as additional musicians . Drum machines and distorted guitars were used more extensively than in Bloc Party 's previous works to create a sense of manipulation to the basic rock palette . Drummer Matt Tong was initially sceptical of moulding songs with programmed drums , as opposed to using his physical output , but agreed to the idea when the band recorded some of the tracks in

their entirety . On some songs , the guitars were disregarded and the band focused solely on the beat . Okereke 's voice was often used as an instrument by being looped , vocoded , or run through effects pedals .

= = Promotion and release = =

After the studio sessions , Bloc Party embarked on a tour of North American and European summer festivals . One of the recorded tracks , " Mercury " , was released as a single on 11 August 2008 and peaked at number 16 on the UK Singles Chart . At the time , the band confirmed the existence of further material , but noted that a record release date was scheduled for the end of 2008 at the earliest . Bloc Party unexpectedly announced the completion of *Intimacy* on 18 August 2008 via a webcast and confirmed a release within 60 hours . The band members wanted to revive the importance of a new album 's release in an era in which the excitement has dissipated because of extensive Internet coverage . They were inspired by Radiohead 's marketing of *In Rainbows* in 2007 , but did not consider a " free " sale option . Little press was undertaken in the UK to promote the record because of Okereke 's reluctance to discuss personal aspects of his life .

*Intimacy* was made available for download on Bloc Party 's website on 21 August 2008 . Ten MP3 tracks were sold with a plain black JPEG cover for £ 5 , and a £ 10 option for the online songs and the future expanded CD was also available . The album title was picked as a " double bluff " with regard to people 's expectations ; Okereke has explained , " You 'd think of wet balladeering . You don 't think it 's gonna be ugly or harsh . But that 's what relationships are really like . It 's not just about good times . " The release was called " rushed " by publications such as *Billboard* and *The Independent* . Tong disagreed with the label and stated that Bloc Party wanted to make a statement that was surprising to anyone interested in their work .

The band showcased tracks from *Intimacy* at Reading Festival at the end of August 2008 and embarked on a North American tour during September . UK appearances on the MTV2 *Gonzo Tour* and the release of the second single , " Talons " , preceded the physical release of the album in October , which entered the UK Albums Chart at number eight . In the U.S , the record sold 24 @,@ 000 copies during the first week of release and debuted at number 18 on the *Billboard* 200 . Comprehensive sales figures have not been published because the digital download data has not been publicly reported by Bloc Party . The chosen cover art is a stylised shot of a couple kissing , taken by freelance photographer Perry Curties . It was ranked at number 23 on *Gigwise* 's list of The Best Album Covers of 2008 , in which the publication called it " intimate and rather ambiguous " .

= = Content = =

= = = Lyrics = = =

The lyrics of *Intimacy* were inspired by a relationship break @-@ up Okereke went through at the end of 2007 . The lyricist told *Rolling Stone* , " I wouldn 't want anyone to think it 's the clichéd break @-@ up record but I haven 't written about true , personal experiences all that much in the past . " The move to more intimate subject matter was " semi @-@ conscious " because the band members did not want to focus on socio @-@ political issues as they had in their previous works . Three tracks allude to Greek mythology : " Ares " draws its name from the god of war , " Trojan Horse " is named after the Trojan War military ruse , and " Zephyrus " draws its name from the god of the west wind . The narrative in the songs occurs between two people and focuses on the relations between lovers , friends , and enemies ; Okereke indicated that " it 's about moments of shared vulnerability " . " Better Than Heaven " references the Garden of Eden and *Corinthians* ( 15 : 22 ) , because the lyricist wanted to explore the themes of sex and death , especially in a biblical context .

" Biko " means " Please " ( or more accurately " I implore you " ) in Igbo ? a language spoken in Nigeria , the homeland of Okereke 's parents ? and is used " when you 're beseeching someone to do something " . Okereke denied that it is about the murdered South African anti @-@ apartheid

protester Steve Biko . The lyrics of " One Month Off " reference feelings of anger and are about being in love with someone younger and unfaithful , while " Zephyrus " concerns an apology following neglect . The lyrics in the chorus of " Ion Square " , the last track on the original download release , are based on E. E. Cummings ' poem " I Carry Your Heart with Me " . Okereke considers the song a personal favourite because it evokes the initial exciting stages of a new relationship when everything is going right .

= = = Composition = = =

Okereke has discussed a natural progression in Bloc Party 's compositional style to a more explorative , electronic direction . For the opening track on *Intimacy* , " Ares " , Okereke was inspired to rap his lyrics after listening to the old @-@ school hip hop of Afrika Bambaataa . According to Heather Phares of AllMusic , the song includes siren @-@ like guitar chords and loud , complex drumming in the vein of dance acts The Prodigy and The Chemical Brothers . " Mercury " continues the complex drumming theme by incorporating layered percussion and contains a vocally manipulated chorus . The track is an attempt at drum and bass and features brass dissonance , effects Okereke has called " harsh , glacial , layered and energetic " . " Zephyrus " begins with a solitary vocal line accompanied only by a drum machine pattern , while the Exmoor Singers provide background vocals in the rest of the composition . " Signs " is the only song that does not include guitars ; instead , it is made up of a synthesiser pulse and multitracked samples of glockenspiel and mbira resembling the work of minimalist composer Steve Reich .

Okereke has conceded that *Intimacy* covers Bloc Party 's typical indie rock elements , but noted that the guitars have an artificial and manipulated sound , " almost like all the humanity has been bleached out " . " Halo " has a fast tempo coupled with a guitar melody that uses only four chords , while " Trojan Horse " features syncopated guitars and distortion . " Talons " also incorporates distortion from both lead and rhythm guitars , while the final single " One Month Off " consists of tribal rhythms and sixteenth note guitar riffs . " Biko " has a slower tempo and includes guitar arpeggi throughout , while " Ion Square " incorporates guitar overdubbing and the use of hi @-@ hat patterns throughout . According to Nick Southall of *Drowned in Sound* , " Better Than Heaven " encapsulates what Bloc Party had been trying to achieve in their previous works , " namely aligning all their different directional desires : to swoon , to rock , and to experiment all at once " . The track features broken beats and layered vocals .

= = Critical reception = =

Media response to *Intimacy* was generally favourable ; aggregating website Metacritic reports a normalised rating of 69 % based on 27 critical reviews . Steven Robertshaw of *Alternative Press* described the album as arguably Bloc Party 's finest career moment and noted that it offers " sweat and circuitry , savagery and submission , and a captivating energy that 's severely lacking in many music scenes on the planet " . Kyle Anderson of *Rolling Stone* claimed that by " replacing Bloc Party 's distant cool with vivid honesty , Okereke makes *Intimacy* a confident new peak for his band " , while *PopMatters* ' Ross Langager explained that the record " might not actually be all that intimate , but it is a thing of rough , recycled beauty " . Adam Mazmanian of *The Washington Times* commented that the album 's final mix showed that producers Epworth and Lee preserved the essence of Bloc Party 's signature sound ? " minor key rock thrumming with rhythmic intensity " ? while taking the band in new musical directions . Dave Simpson of *The Guardian* concluded that it would please old and new fans alike by being " brave , individual and heartfelt " .

Pitchfork Media 's Ian Cohen was less receptive and asserted that the record seems like a document of a band disconnected from its musical strengths . Josh Modell of *Spin* felt that *Intimacy* sometimes gets " sonically or lyrically precarious " , while John Robinson of *Uncut* commented that " there 's an air of slightly hedged bets " . *Drowned in Sound* 's Nick Southall claimed that the record is not quite the radical statement Bloc Party set out to achieve , but concluded that it is " definitely a little bit of invigorating redemption at a time when doubts were beginning to cloud what was , initially

, a flawless reputation " . In its year @-@ end music review for 2008 , Under the Radar stated about the band members , " They are so solid and so confident that it seems inevitable that they will get many chances to slowly drift into more daring lands . But without more risk , they may be destined to make albums like Intimacy ? accomplished and intriguing , but not life changing , not classic . " The record figured in several publications ' end @-@ of @-@ year best album lists for 2008 ? notably , at number 14 by Gigwise , at number 36 by Drowned in Sound , and at number 49 by NME .

= = Track listing = =

All songs written and composed by Bloc Party .

The download @-@ only release in August 2008 did not include " Talons " .

The iTunes version of the October release included an extra Bloc Party EP , Live from London , which contains six songs from Intimacy performed live .

The deluxe edition includes access to an online exclusive film , Live and Intimate , which contains footage of Bloc Party performing several Intimacy tracks plus " Banquet " live at The Pool , Miloco Studios .

In 2009 , the deluxe edition of Intimacy was remixed as Intimacy Remixed by artists including Mogwai , Armand Van Helden , and No Age .

The Gold Panda remix of " Letter to My Son " was erroneously labelled as being by Golden Panda on the Rolling Stone CD .

= = = Vinyl = = =

A standard black LP copy in a gatefold sleeve was released in October 2008 with the normal track listing , but with an original mix of " Mercury " instead of the CD version . The North American edition also included a code for the free online download of the tracks in MP3 format .

A limited edition picture disc vinyl version was additionally released in the UK ; it had the album cover printed on Side A and the track listing printed on Side B.

= = Personnel = =

The people involved in the making of Intimacy are the following :

= = Release history = =

= = Chart positions = =