

= South of Heaven =

South of Heaven is the fourth studio album by American thrash metal band Slayer . Released on July 5 , 1988 , the album was the band 's second collaboration with record producer Rick Rubin , whose production skills on Slayer 's previous album Reign in Blood had helped the band 's sound evolve .

South of Heaven was Slayer 's second album to enter the Billboard 200 , and its last to be released by Def Jam Recordings , although the album became an American Recordings album after Rick Rubin ended his partnership with Russell Simmons . It was one of only two Def Jam titles to be distributed by Geffen Records through Warner Bros. Records because of original distributor Columbia Records ' refusal to release work by the band . The release peaked at number 57 and in 1992 was awarded a gold certification by the Recording Industry Association of America .

In order to offset the pace of the group 's previous album , Slayer deliberately slowed down the album 's tempo . In contrast to their previous albums , the band utilized undistorted guitars and toned @-@ down vocals . While some critics praised this musical change , others ? more accustomed to the style of earlier releases ? were disappointed . The songs " Mandatory Suicide " and the title track , however , have become permanent features of the band 's live setlist .

= = Background = =

South of Heaven was recorded in Los Angeles , California with Reign in Blood producer Rick Rubin . PopMatters reviewer Adrien Begrand observed that Rubin 's production " shoves [Dave] Lombardo 's drumming right up front in the mix . " Guitarist Jeff Hanneman has since said that South of Heaven was the only album the band members discussed before writing the music . Aware that they " couldn 't top Reign in Blood " , and that whatever they recorded would be " compared to that album " , he believed they " had to slow down " , something Slayer had never done on albums before , or since . Guitarist Kerry King cited the need to " keep people guessing " as another reason for the musical shift . " In order to contrast the aggressive assault put forth on Reign in Blood , Slayer consciously slowed down the tempo of the album as a whole " , according to Slayer 's official biography . " They also added elements like undistorted guitars and toned @-@ down vocal styles not heard on previous albums . "

King has since been critical of his performance , which he describes as his " most lackluster . " King attributes this to the fact he had recently married , and moved to Phoenix , Arizona . Describing himself as " probably the odd man out at that point " , he admitted he " didn 't participate as much because of that . " Hanneman said : " We go through dry spells sometimes , but the good thing about having two guitar players that can write music is that you are never gonna go without . I guess at that time , Kerry was hitting a dry spell . " King has also been critical of the album in general , describing it as one of his least favorite Slayer albums . He feels vocalist Tom Araya moved too far away from his regular vocal style , and " added too much singing . " Drummer Dave Lombardo has since observed : " There was fire on all the records , but it started dimming when South of Heaven came into the picture . And that 's me personally . Again , I was probably wanting something else . "

Judas Priest 's " Dissident Aggressor " is the only cover version to appear on a Slayer studio album . The song was chosen due to its war @-@ themed lyrics . Hanneman described the track as " more just like one of those odd songs that a lot of people didn 't know , but it was a favorite of Kerry and I , so we just picked that one . " Meanwhile , " Cleanse the Soul " has been heavily criticized by King who said that he hates the track : " That 's one of the black marks in our history , in my book . I just fucking think it 's horrible . [Laughs] I hate the opening riff . It 's what we call a ' happy riff . ' It 's just like ' la @-@ lala @-@ la @-@ la @-@ la . ' I can 't see myself playing it , but after that , where it gets heavier , I like that section . If we ever did a medley , I 'd put part of that in there . " The Slayer boxset Soundtrack to the Apocalypse featured , along with four songs of the album , an early version of the title track , recorded at Hanneman 's home .

= = Photography and illustration = =

Artist Larry Carroll and Illustrator Howard Schwartzberg designed the cover artwork for South of Heaven , having designed the artwork for Slayer 's previous album Reign in Blood . Photographer Glen E. Friedman took the promotional shot which surfaced as the back cover of South of Heaven around the time of 1986 's Reign in Blood . Lombardo felt it made Slayer seem as though they " had matured a little bit " , while Friedman himself deemed it " a really cool back cover " and " one of the most classic shots of them [Slayer] ever . "

= = Critical reception = =

South of Heaven was released on July 5 , 1988 , and was the final Slayer album distributed via Def Jam Records . When label co @-@ founders Russell Simmons and Rubin parted ways , Slayer signed to Rubin 's newly founded Def American Recordings label . The album peaked at number 57 on the Billboard 200 album chart , and on November 20 , 1992 , became Slayer 's second album to be certified gold in the United States . South of Heaven was awarded silver certification in the United Kingdom on January 1 , 1993 , Slayer 's first record to do so in that country . Slayer 's official biography states that " some critics praised the album as demonstrating Slayer 's desire to grow musically and avoid repeating themselves . " Alex Henderson of AllMusic described the record as " disturbing and powerful , " while Joe Matera of Ultimate Guitar deemed the album a slight departure ; he wrote that while the pace was slowed down , it " didn 't sacrifice any of the heaviness inherent in Slayer 's music . "

Reviewing the 2003 Slayer box set Soundtrack to the Apocalypse , Adrien Begrand of PopMatters described the album as " their most underrated , and on this set , its five selections show how highly the band thinks of the record . " KNAC.com 's Peter Atkinson was also positive , saying the album has a " grandiosity and imposing presence " which makes the record " so magnificent . " Grave 's Ola Lindgren and Bolt Thrower 's Karl Willetts both rate South of Heaven as amongst the top five albums of all time , while Max Kolesne of Brazilian death metal group Krisiun remembers hearing the song " Silent Scream " for the first time : " It just blew me away . It was like fast double @-@ bass , fast kicks during the whole song . That was very inspiring for me . " When discussing Slayer in an October 2007 interview , Evile frontman Matt Drake stated that while Reign in Blood " was just speed " , South of Heaven proved that the group could write " slow material as well . " Metal Forces reviewer gives " the band credit for at least making an effort to try something new and not being afraid to experiment at such a crucial stage of their career " , creating " one of the more original sounding thrash / speed metal albums he heard in a long while " . He remarks , however , that " if you ? re expecting to hear Reign in Blood Part Two , you ? ll be in for a major disappointment " .

Kim Neely of Rolling Stone dismissed the album as " genuinely offensive satanic drivel . " Slayer 's official biography states : " The new sounds disappointed some of the band 's fans who were more accustomed to the style of earlier releases . " Michael Roberts of Westworld Online said this was due to some of the numbers moving " at the sludgier speed of Black Sabbath . " Araya commented that the " album was a late bloomer ? it wasn 't really received well , but it kind of grew on everybody later . "

= = Cover versions = =

The title track and the song " Mandatory Suicide " have received various cover interpretations , particularly on Slayer tribute albums . Toni Ferguson recorded string quartet adaptations of both tracks on the album The String Quartet Tribute to Slayer : The Evil You Dread , with the former cover being described as having " menacing chord shifts " by AllMusic 's Johnny Loftus .

1995 Slayer tribute album Slatanic Slaughter featured three tracks which originally appeared on South of Heaven , with the title track , " Mandatory Suicide " and " Spill the Blood " interpreted by Cemetery , Crown of Thorns and Grope respectively . Its 1998 follow up Slatanic Slaughter , Vol . 2 only featured two tracks originally from the album ; namely " Silent Scream " arranged by Vader and " Read Between the Lies " interpreted by Anathema . 1999 's Straight to Hell : A Tribute to Slayer

collected four Slayer renditions which originated on the album , with versions of South of Heaven performed by Abaddon (Venom) and Electric Hellfire Club , " Mandatory Suicide " cut by Chapter 7 and " Behind the Crooked Cross " adapted by Gigantor . 2006 Argentine tribute album Al Sur Del Abismo (Tributo Argentino A Slayer) saw Nafak and Climatic Terra also respectively cover " South of Heaven " and " Mandatory Suicide " . Hatebreed covered the song " Ghosts of War " for their 2009 cover album For the Lions . They released a music video for it also . Korn has covered the title track at least twice live , once with Kid Rock on vocals and another using the intro to follow into one of their songs live .

The title track itself has also been covered by Integrity 2000 , Modest Mouse and Califone , Pro @-@ Pain , and Universe Eye . Polish death metal band Decapitated covered the song " Mandatory Suicide " on their first full @-@ length album Winds of Creation . In 2003 , " Silent Scream " was covered by Children of Bodom for their album Hate Crew Deathroll in his UK version . Hardcore Punk band , The Mongoloids opened their set with the beginning of " South of Heaven " at Heartfest 7 on May 4 , 2013

= = Live performances = =

Two songs taken from the album (" Mandatory Suicide " and " South of Heaven ") have become near constant fixtures in the band 's live setlist , notching up appearances on the following : the live DVDs Live Intrusion , War at the Warfield , Still Reigning , Soundtrack to the Apocalypse 's deluxe edition 's bonus live disc , and the live double album Decade of Aggression . Lombardo guested with Finnish cellist group Apocalyptica on a live medley of the two tracks at 1998 's Headbanger 's Heaven festival in the Netherlands . Adrien Begrand of PopMatters described " South of Heaven " as " an unorthodox set opener in theory " , noting " the song went over like a megaton bomb detonating the place : dozens of inverted crosses projected behind the high drum riser , the sinewy opening notes kicked in , followed by an overture of bass , cymbal crashes , and tom fills , leading up to the slowly building crescendo " in a concert review . Lombardo remembers listening to a live rendition of " South of Heaven " and thinking " ? Man ! There 's just so much groove in that song . ? To my kids I was saying , ? Listen to that ! Listen to how groovy that is ! ? And it 's heavy . " A rare live version of the track featured on the JÄGERMUSIC Rarities 2004 promotional CD , given away to attendees at the Spring 2004 Jägermeister Music Tour . A live rendition of " South of Heaven " was also included on a bonus DVD which came with the group 's 2007 re @-@ release of ninth studio album Christ Illusion , shot in Vancouver , British Columbia during 2006 's Unholy Alliance tour .

" Behind the Crooked Cross " is rarely played live as Hanneman hates the track , though King has always wanted to play it " because it 's got a cool intro " despite it not being his favorite song . King said " that 's fine " when speaking of the situation , noting " there are songs that he wants to play that I always shoot down . " " Ghosts of War " isn 't King 's favorite song either , which he attests " everybody always wants to hear " performed live . He confessed ; " I like the ending , you know , I like the big heavy part and I always say , ? Let 's put the heavy ending at the end of " Chemical Warfare " and just do the last half . ? But I could never make that fly . "

Slayer has toyed with the idea of creating a live set mixed with selections from the album and 1990 's Seasons in the Abyss , though Hanneman said it 's something which hasn 't been " seriously considered . " Metal Maniacs asked Slayer in a 2006 interview whether they would consider playing South of Heaven in the footsteps of the Still Reigning tour , to which Araya replied , " It 's becoming a trendy thing now . I don 't know . We have some really cool albums , but I don 't think we 'll ever do that again . " King was equally unsure , commenting , " Probably not . And I just don 't like enough songs off South of Heaven . "

= = Track listing = =

= = Personnel = =

= = = Slayer = = =

Tom Araya ? bass , lead vocals

Jeff Hanneman ? lead and rhythm guitar

Kerry King ? lead and rhythm guitar , backing vocals

Dave Lombardo ? drums

= = Charts and certifications = =