

= No Depression (album) =

No Depression is the first studio album by alternative country band Uncle Tupelo , released in June 1990 . After its formation in the late 1980s , Uncle Tupelo recorded the Not Forever , Just for Now demo tape , which received a positive review by the College Media Journal in 1989 . The review led to the band 's signing with what would become Rockville Records later that year . The album was recorded with producers Sean Slade and Paul Q. Kolderie at Fort Apache Studios , on a budget of US \$ 3 @ , @ 500 .

No Depression was critically acclaimed and sold well for an independent release . Selling over 15 @ , @ 000 copies within a year of its release , the album 's success inspired the roots music magazine No Depression . The record is considered one of the most important alternative country albums , and its title is often used as a synonym for the alternative country genre after being popularized by No Depression magazine . After regaining the rights to the album through a lawsuit , Uncle Tupelo released a remastered version in 2003 through Legacy Records , expanded to include six bonus tracks .

= = Background = =

Jay Farrar , Jeff Tweedy and Mike Heidorn began their musical careers in the 1980s playing in a garage band , The Plebes . After a few gigs , creative differences between the members led to the development of a punk rock sound for the band . As punk rock was unpopular in the St. Louis region , the band changed their style to blues @ - @ rock and renamed themselves Uncle Tupelo . At this point , they stopped performing covers and began to write their own songs .

The band discovered a musical niche around Washington University in St. Louis , where bands such as Brian Henneman 's Chicken Truck performed in a similar style . The trio recorded its first professional tracks in Champaign , Illinois with future Chicago punk producer Matt Allison . The demo tape , Not Forever , Just for Now , contained early versions of several songs that would later appear on their debut album , including " Train " , " Whiskey Bottle " , " Flatness " , " Screen Door " , and " Before I Break " .

That demo , as well as the band 's rigorous touring schedule , attracted the attention of several music scouts . Record labels initially were wary of signing the band whom they perceived as straddling " the divide between the countrified punk of early 1980s such as Green on Red , Jason & the Scorchers , and X ? none of whom had bum @ - @ rushed the charts ? and the Pacific Northwest grunge of Mudhoney and Nirvana , which was still years from breaking out commercially " . However , the influential CMJ New Music Report gave the demo tape a favorable review in 1989 , praising its " mature , developed , seriously thought @ - @ out songwriting " . This review prompted New York City @ - @ based distributor Dutch East India Trading to provide funding for the band to record an album on their Giant Records label , shortly before the label was renamed to Rockville Records .

= = Recording = =

Six months before signing a full contract with Giant / Rockville , Uncle Tupelo recorded the tracks for No Depression over ten days in January 1990 at Fort Apache South , a musician @ - @ run studio in the Roxbury neighborhood of Boston , Massachusetts . As the trio could not afford the cost of recording at a twenty @ - @ four track studio in nearby Cambridge , they settled on the cheaper Fort Apache studio . The album cost US \$ 3 @ , @ 500 to produce , \$ 1 @ , @ 000 of which went to in @ - @ house producers Sean Slade and Paul Q. Kolderie . The band was interested in working with Slade and Kolderie after hearing their production of Dinosaur Jr . ' s album Bug . The producers allowed Farrar to use the same 1961 Gibson Les Paul guitar that J. Mascis used on Bug , which gave the power chords on No Depression a richer tone .

Slade and Kolderie suggested that the band deemphasize the roots rock influences heard on Not Forever , Just for Now and convinced them to replace the harmonica parts with pedal steel guitar . For this , Slade and Kolderie recruited guitarist Rich Gilbert of Human Sexual Response for the

recording . The tracks were recorded using little overdubbing ; only a few banjo and acoustic guitar parts were later added to the songs . At the suggestion of Slade and Kolderie , No Depression was recorded on eight @-@ track , so " the music would compress and " jump " off the tape during playback " . The recording sessions occurred before Uncle Tupelo officially became affiliated with Giant Records , so there was little input from the label .

Lyrically the songs reflected the band members ' experiences growing up in Belleville . Farrar and Tweedy romanticized tales about unemployment , alcoholism , and the feeling of living in a small town in an effort to emulate the profundity of songwriters such as Woody Guthrie . Musically , No Depression was influenced by the start @-@ stop musical pattern of the Minutemen . The cover of the album features a blurry photo of the band , taken by J. Hamilton , reminiscent of the albums released on Folkways Records .

= = Promotion and reception = =

No Depression was released by Rockville Records on June 21 , 1990 . The promotional tour for the album began at Cicero 's Basement , a St. Louis bar associated with Washington University . The tour took Uncle Tupelo to both the East Coast and the Southwestern United States . Missouri radio stations KDHX and KCOU frequently played tracks off the album . By March 1991 , No Depression had sold over 15 @,@ 000 units , a hit by independent record standards . The proceeds from the album recuperated the \$ 3 @,@ 500 cost of the album , but Rockville refused to pay the band any royalties . Farrar and Tweedy later successfully sued Rockville CEO Barry Tenenbaum to attain the royalties . The surprise success of the album prompted Columbia Records to pay the band to record additional tracks with Slade and Kolderie at Fort Apache Studio in the summer of 1990 , but the results were not released . Rolling Stone did not publish a review of the album upon its initial release , although the magazine later featured Uncle Tupelo in an article about rising stars alongside the Black Crowes . Rolling Stone later called the album " one of the loudest , loneliest wails in recent memory to arise from the Midwest 's recession @-@ plagued plains " . Robert Christgau dismissed the album as a " dud " .

After the lawsuit with Tenenbaum , Farrar and Tweedy received the rights to their first three albums (including No Depression) , which were previously held by Rockville . In 2003 , Uncle Tupelo remastered and re @-@ released No Depression with six bonus tracks through Legacy Records , a Sony Music label . Among the bonus tracks were cover versions of the Flying Burrito Brothers ' " Sin City " , the Carter Family 's " Blues Die Hard " , and The Vertebrats ' " Left in the Dark " . The liner notes for the re @-@ release featured an article written by Mike Heidorn about Uncle Tupelo 's early days and the creation of No Depression . Upon re @-@ release , Allmusic referred to the album as " Uncle Tupelo 's landmark opening salvo " , praising its " undeniable electricity " and remarking that it brought " new life " to the fusion of country and punk rock . Rolling Stone critic Tom Moon lauded " the band 's impressive songwriting range " , but noted that the bonus material was " pleasant but un consequential " . Pitchfork Media gave the re @-@ issue an 8 @.@ 4 rating out of 10 , proclaiming " No Depression is a significant record " .

No Depression is cited by RealNetworks as one of the most important albums in the alternative country genre . This was partly due to the success of the alternative country periodical No Depression , which took its name partly from the album . Due the impact of the album on alternative country , " No Depression " is sometimes used as a synonym for the genre . Allmusic critic Jason Ankeny noted that the album helped the band " kick @-@ start a revolution which reverberated throughout the American underground " . In 1999 , Spin listed the album as one of the " Top 90 Albums of the 90s " .

= = Track listing = =

All songs written by Jay Farrar , Jeff Tweedy , and Mike Heidorn except as indicated .

" Graveyard Shift " ? 4 : 43

" That Year " (Farrar , Tweedy) ? 2 : 59

" Before I Break " ? 2 : 48
" No Depression " (A.P. Carter) ? 2 : 20
" Factory Belt " ? 3 : 13
" Whiskey Bottle " ? 4 : 46
" Outdone " (Farrar , Tweedy) ? 2 : 48
" Train " (Tweedy) ? 3 : 19
" Life Worth Livin ' " ? 3 : 32
" Flatness " (Tweedy) ? 2 : 58
" So Called Friend " (Farrar) ? 3 : 12
" Screen Door " ? 2 : 42
" John Hardy " (traditional , arr . Lead Belly) ? 2 : 21
Track 13 is a CD only bonus track .
2003 CD reissue bonus track
" Left in the Dark " (Draznik) ? 3 : 09
" Won 't Forget " ? 2 : 51
" Sin City " (Parsons , Hillman) ? 3 : 53
" Whiskey Bottle " (Live Acoustic) ? 4 : 40
" No Depression " (1988 Demo) ? 2 : 19
" Blues Die Hard " (1987 Demo) (A. P. Carter) ? 4 : 08

Tracks 17 ? 19 previously unreleased .

2014 Legacy Edition Track Listing

Disc 1

Original Album + 2003 Bonus Tracks

" Graveyard Shift " ? 4 : 43
" That Year " ? 2 : 59
" Before I Break " ? 2 : 48
" No Depression " (A.P. Carter) ? 2 : 20
" Factory Belt " ? 3 : 13
" Whiskey Bottle " ? 4 : 46
" Outdone " ? 2 : 48
" Train " ? 3 : 19
" Life Worth Livin ' " ? 3 : 32
" Flatness " ? 2 : 58
" So Called Friend " ? 3 : 12
" Screen Door " ? 2 : 42
" John Hardy " (traditional , arr . Lead Belly) ? 2 : 21

Disc 1 bonus tracks

" Left in the Dark " (Ken Draznik) ? 3 : 09
" Won 't Forget " ? 2 : 51
" I Got Drunk (A @-@ Side) " ? 2 : 26
" Sin City (B @-@ Side) " (Parsons , Hillman) ? 3 : 53
" Whiskey Bottle " (Live Acoustic) ? 4 : 40

Disc 2 - Demos

" Outdone " ? 2 : 57
" That Year " ? 3 : 14
" Whiskey Bottle " ? 4 : 55
" Flatness " ? 3 : 24
" I Got Drunk " ? 3 : 07
" Before I Break " ? 2 : 44
" Life Worth Living " ? 3 : 25
" Train " ? 3 : 31
" Graveyard Shift " ? 4 : 58
" Screen Door " ? 2 : 46

" No Depression " ? 2 : 18
" Blues Die Hard " ? 4 : 08
" Before I Break " ? 3 : 11
" I Got Drunk " ? 2 : 55
" Screen Door " ? 2 : 23
" Blues Die Hard " ? 4 : 00
" Pickle River " ? 2 : 18

Tracks 1 @-@ 10 from 1989 demo tape " Not Forever , Just for Now " , tracks 11 @-@ 12 from 1988 demo tape " Live & Otherwise " , and tracks 13 @-@ 17 from 1987 demo tape " Colorblind and Rhymeless " .

= = Personnel = =

Uncle Tupelo

Jay Farrar ? vocals , guitar , banjo , mandolin , fiddle , harmonica

Mike Heidorn ? drums , cymbals

Jeff Tweedy ? vocals , acoustic guitar , bass guitar

Additional personnel

Rich Gilbert ? pedal steel guitar

J. Hamilton ? photography

Paul Q. Kolderie ? production , audio engineering , sound effects

Sean Slade ? production , piano , engineering , background vocals