

= Free ( OSI album ) =

Free is the second album by American progressive rock band OSI , released by InsideOut Music on April 21 , 2006 .

Guitarist Jim Matheos and keyboardist and vocalist Kevin Moore decided to work on a follow @-@ up to Office of Strategic Influence after the two found they both had holes in their schedules . Drummer Mike Portnoy returned as a session musician rather than a full band member . Joey Vera replaced Sean Malone on bass guitar .

Free was met with generally positive critical reception . Critics noted that the album was different from its predecessor , focusing more on Moore 's keyboards than Matheos ' guitars . Portnoy 's drumming received praise ; Moore 's vocals received mixed reactions . A remix EP entitled re : free was released on October 24 , 2006 , featuring remixes of three tracks from Free .

= = Background = =

After the first OSI album , Office of Strategic Influence , was released in 2003 , Jim Matheos and Kevin Moore returned to their respective projects . Matheos released the album FWX and toured with Fates Warning . Moore moved from Costa Rica to Istanbul , Turkey . In 2004 , he released the third Chroma Key album , Graveyard Mountain Home , and wrote the soundtrack ( released as Ghost Book ) to the Turkish horror film Okul . Matheos and Moore both had holes in their schedules , so decided to work on a second OSI album .

The writing and recording process were largely the same as that for the first OSI album . Matheos would send Moore guitar , keyboard and programming parts ; Moore would then " chop them up and stuff " . Matheos considers the writing process for OSI as more collaborative than writing for his other band , Fates Warning : " With Fates I write songs and we don ' t really change a whole lot from my final version to the version that goes on the record , " he said . " With Kevin it 's much more collaborative in that I come up with a song idea and it can change completely from my original idea to the final product on the record . "

Matheos originally intended the first OSI album as a " project " which would never produce a second album . For Free , Matheos and Moore wanted to use a different musician lineup to focus OSI on primarily being Matheos and Moore . They did not want to give the impression that the guests on the first album were part of the band . Matheos stated that the music on Free was " focused less on the progressive elements or the metal elements that were on the first record . We thought we could do something just a little more groove oriented . " Matheos and Moore had both worked with bassist Joey Vera in the past and considered him " perfect " for the album . Moore was pleased with Vera 's bass parts : Vera sent them to Moore in a state such that they required very little editing or enhancement for the final mix of the album .

Dream Theater drummer Mike Portnoy was listed as a full member of OSI on the first album , but found working on the first album to be a difficult experience . Moore noted that Portnoy " wasn ' t used to having other people have strong ideas about what the drum parts should be " . For Free , Portnoy contributed drum tracks as a session musician , agreeing to " take [ Matheos and Moore 's ] ideas and do the best he could with playing " , according to Moore . Portnoy 's drum parts were recorded at Carriage House Studios in Stamford , Connecticut from November 18 to November 20 , 2005 .

= = Composition = =

Moore stated that he and Matheos had an idea of what style of music to write for Free as they " both have similar feelings about what worked on the first album " . He considered the album as " more focused " than its predecessor . He noted that Free continued " the mood of some of the songs of the first album and the melodies and mixing up some of the heavy stuff with the programming . As opposed to the instrumental , straight ahead , progressive stuff we did " . He attributed the band 's sound to the " very different " ideas he and Matheos ' had .

Moore described the lyrics on the album as " just whatever is going on in my head ... I try to development from a stream of consciousness to something that makes sense " . He said the lyrics primarily spoke of relationships , " our way of trying to keep them , the resulting problems and that kind of thing " . Moore cited Roger Waters and Peter Gabriel as influences on his vocal style , " Those guys don ' t have the best voices either , but they pull it off then I figured I could do it too , " he said . He noted that musically his progressive influences " will always be there " because they influenced all his music , but could not name any other influences as " [ he listens ] to so much stuff it just gets lost " .

Moore doubletracked his vocals , but apart from occasional use of delay did not use any effects on his vocals . He used an Elektron Monomachine and a Minimoog Voyager with computer software to produce the keyboard sounds on the album . Matheos detuned his guitars to C # and sometimes B instead of using a seven @-@ string guitar because he prefers the sound of a detuned guitar : " To me , they sound totally different if you have those nice loose , floppy strings , " he said . " It 's a real bitch to keep them in tune , stopping every couple measures , retuning and punching back in . Especially for [ a ] song that 's in B , or even C # is a problem sometimes , especially if you 're doing a lot of fast moving around or high up on the neck . It 's a pain in the ass , but I really like that sound . I don 't think I would ever go to a 7 @-@ string . "

The bonus track OSIdea 9 features audio clips of former chess world champion Robert ' Bobby ' Fischer 's rambling interview with a radio station after his arrest in Japan , in which he asserts that the U.S. government will torture and murder him once extradited back to the country .

= = Release and promotion = =

Free was released by InsideOut Music on April 24 , 2006 . Matheos and Moore were keen to tour the US and Europe in the fall of 2006 . In a 2009 interview , Moore reflected that " we tried to get together [ to tour ] , but it just didn ' t happen " .

The special edition of the album contained six extra songs : two were songs that didn 't make it to the final album , but Matheos noted " were interesting nonetheless " ; two tracks were songs Moore had written for Radio For Peace International . Another track was a demo of " When You 're Ready " , a track from Office of Strategic Influence . An EP entitled re : free was released on October 24 , 2006 . InsideOut Music released a CD version of the EP and Burning Shed released a vinyl version . The EP features the tracks " Go " ( remixed by Console ) , " Kicking " and " Home Was Good " ( both remixed by Moore ) and a multimedia track of " Free " .

= = Reception = =

Critical reception for Free was generally positive . Blogcritics praised the album as " a masterful evolution of the sound of two fabulous musicians " , describing it as " a magnificent symbiosis of metal and experimental electronica . " Jake Rosenberg of Transcending the Mundane stated that on Office of Strategic Influence , " it sounded like they were experimenting with different approaches , but never really established the OSI sound " . He lauded Free for " [ sounding ] like the work of a mature and confident band " . Adrien Bégard of PopMatters regarded Free as " a challenge to fans of both Fates Warning and Dream Theater , and one that will surprise those who think this is just another slice of flashy prog metal bombast . "

Reviewers commented on the differences between Free and Office of Strategic Influence . Rosenberg described Free as " heavier , darker , more experimental and a lot more consistent " than the first album . Stewart Mason of Allmusic described the album as " downright commercial in a way that none of the duo 's previous projects have been " . He regarded the album as less like the " standard @-@ issue epic metal " of the first album and more like " Evanescence 's gothy metal @-@ pop crossed with late @-@ era Radiohead 's fondness for electronic interference " . He considered the songwriting as " catchy enough that it 's not unthinkable that unadventurous rock radio programmers could take a shine to the title track or ' Go ' " , although noted that " Fates Warning and Dream Theater fans might be less impressed " . Rosenberg considers Free as

musically " a more progressive version of Nine Inch Nails . Instead of creating their darkness with angst and depression , OSI creates their darkness with sheer indifference . " Begrand compared the album to Head Control System , " in that it tends to stray from the typical metal template in an attempt at something a little more electronic influenced " . Although not considering Free to be as " enthralling " as Head Control System , he noted that the album " still has its moments " .

Critics noted that there was a greater focus on Moore 's keyboards than Matheos ' guitar riffs . Blogcritics said that " Free focuses a lot on the keyboards and programming of Kevin Moore " , although Matheos ' " heavy guitar riffs , while not as frequent on this disc , have an even harder edge . They have an energy , and urgency , and serious metal crunch to them that will make any rocker sit up and pay attention . " Chad Bower of About.com noted that Free " isn 't one of those metal albums that hypes you up and makes you want to break stuff . It 's one where you have to sit back , throw on the headphones , and appreciate the complexity and musicianship . " Olav Bjørnsen of Prog4you.com stated that " layers upon layers of electronic sounds , that fill out the soundscapes of the songs , create nuances and subtle moods as well as walls of sound and tension . " He said that Matheos used acoustic and electric guitars " to fill out the soundscapes even more , and is at the most effective when playing the acoustic guitar , giving life and warmth to songs that would have been a bit cold sounding without that input . "

Bower described Moore 's " laid back and relaxed " vocals as " [ fitting ] in perfectly with the atmospheric style music " . Blogcritics praised Moore 's vocals as being " in such stark contrast to the music that it serves to heighten the tension of the songs " . Bjørnsen considered Moore 's vocals as " an important asset " to the album : " He isn 't a good vocalist when it comes to singing voice or range , but utilizes his talk @-@ like singing effectively , binding together eleven quite different sounding songs . " Rosenberg considered Moore 's vocals and lyrics as " the thing that stands out the most " , comparing him to Roger Waters . Mason dismissed Moore 's vocals , describing them as " unfortunately reminiscent of any number of faceless alternative rock singers " . Begrand criticized Moore 's " monotonous droning " as " tiresome " .

Mike Portnoy 's drumming received praise . " Mike Portnoy continues to amaze with his adaptability , playing perfectly with just about whatever style of music , " Blogcritics noted . Bjørnsen commended Portnoy 's performance , noting that " He delivers driving rhythms when appropriate , and has a more laid back approach when necessary " . Batmaz praised Portnoy for " displaying admirable restraint " : " Free is perhaps his most minimalistic side , because of the thick atmosphere on the album , but at any rate , his performance his spectacular " . Blogcritics praised Vera 's bass parts as " [ adding ] extra strength and depth to the rhythm section . "

Batmaz regarded " All Gone Now " as " arguably the best song " , describing it as being " built upon a strong foundation of atmosphere and dynamics . Constantly shifting between mad riffage and daunting synth passages , this song features some of the finest melodies Kevin Moore has written since Awake . His synth melodies simply soar to high levels while Matheos ' playing contrasts the eerie mood of the piece . " Bjørnsen dismissed " Our Town " as " filler " .

= = Track listing = =

All lyrics written by Kevin Moore , all music composed by Jim Matheos and Kevin Moore , except where noted .

Special edition bonus disc

Re : free track listing

= = Personnel = =

Jim Matheos - guitars , keyboards and programming

Kevin Moore - vocals , keyboards and programming

Mike Portnoy - acoustic drums

Joey Vera - bass on tracks 1 , 2 , 4 , 6 , and 7

Bige Akdeniz - guitar and vocals on " Old War "

