

ARCADE FIRE NEON BIBLE



Release Date: 3/06

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The **Arcade Fire** spent most of 2006 holed up in a small church in a small town outside of Montreal. They were recording their second album *NEON BIBLE*. It was a slow year, mostly.

The couple years before that had been rather hectic. *Funeral*, their first album, was released in September of 2004. The moment it came out, the **Arcade Fire** were caught up in a flurry of activity that left none dead but several wounded. A lot of people liked *Funeral* a lot. Reviews were insanely positive, from local Montreal press to New York Times feature articles.

Shows, too, were selling out. In 2004, the **Arcade Fire** were playing small venues packed to the gills with 100, maybe 200 people. After *Funeral* came out, the size of the shows slowly crept up. A lot of people liked the shows a lot. You could probably argue that the live show was better than the record. Don't get me wrong, the record was really good. But so too was the live show. By the end of 2005, the **Arcade Fire** were playing largish venues packed to the gills with thousands of people, in shows that had sold out in ridiculously short amounts of time. This all was a little overwhelming. Nice, but weird.

Nice but weird things happened to the **Arcade Fire** all of 2005. They played a Talking Heads song with David Byrne at one of their shows, and then got to open for him at the Hollywood Bowl. They got to perform with David Bowie, both in concert and on national TV. They got to go to Japan and Sweden and Brazil. They got to perform a very poorly rehearsed version of "Love Will Tear Us Apart (Again)" with U2. So all in all, by the time the year ended, the **Arcade Fire** were pretty damn tired. Happy and satisfied, yes, but really tired.

Coming off a year of intense touring, they wanted to just sit down and write some songs. And then record them. So they found a church out in a small town and turned it into a studio. They moved in all their amps and instruments, bought some nice curtains, stocked the fridge, and hunkered down. They were in no rush.

They knew they were working on an album, but didn't know how long it would be, or what it would be called, or what songs would be on it, or what instruments would be on the songs. They knew they would produce it themselves, though—they had too many musical plans pent up in their brains to hand control over to someone else. So they found some grand engineers to make those musical plans reality—Markus Dravs (Bjork, James, Brian Eno) and Scott Colburn (Sun City Girls, Animal Collective).

Slowly the songs came together. They found a huge pipe organ in a huge church in Montreal and recorded it. They bought some bass steel drums and some bass synths. They got a hurdy-gurdy. They called in friends for help: Martin Wenk and Jacob Valenzuela, the horn players from Calexico, came in for a song. Hadji Bakara from Wolf Parade added some bleep and bleeps and sonic weirdness. Owen Pallett, Final Fantasy, helped to orchestrate (as he did on *Funeral*). Pietro Amato and his horn playing associates added some brass. The band traveled to Budapest to record an orchestra and a military choir. And besides all this, the band just played music together. They played the songs that were going on the album. They played songs that wouldn't go on the album. They played cover songs. It was all quite nice, really.

All this took about a year. The band worked and played and worked, and as Christmas 2006 approached the recording was finished. *NEON BIBLE* was full of both half-assed punk rock mistakes and meticulously orchestrated woodwinds. Processed strings and mandolin. Quiet rumbles and loud rumbles. But mostly just eleven songs that the band thinks are really good. And that might be of some public interest. So, on with 2007.

For more information, call
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