

The Men behind Nirvana



By Ferris Kennedy (aka P.A. Pettofrezza)

When it comes to Nirvana, we always talk about the trio of Kurt, Krist, and Dave. Yet we fail to realize that there were a few other members who helped get the Nirvana legacy rolling. Just like the Beatles, people forget that it wasn't just the Fab Four of John, Paul, George, & Ringo. There was also Pete Best, Stu Sutcliffe, and John Hutchinson.

Also, some notables to help record some of their songs behind the scenes were Eric Clapton, Charlie Watts, Jeff Lynne, & Billy Preston, who helped extend their careers.

Now, before we let your mind go into overdrive, Nirvana has a nice list just as extensive as the Beatles. There was Kurt Cobain, Krist Novoselic, Jason Everman, Dale Crover, Chad Channing, Dave Grohl, & Pat Smear who ended up being their touring guitarist. The notables on their end were Curt Kirkwood & Cris Kirkwood from the Meat Puppets

If we are to do the same comparisons on both bands, we are looking at the Fab 7, with some extra help, just like the Beatles who had hits, and covered Twist & Shout by the Isley Brothers, Nirvana had hits and covered The Man Who Sold the World by David Bowie.

Most people think I am crazy that I compare Nirvana to the Beatles, how they have both accomplished so much in a limited time frame. I agree the times were different in both eras, the Beatles were freaks of nature in recording 12 studio albums in 8 years, and Nirvana recording 5 in 7 years.

Now the Beatles ended because egos overcame their success and friendship -with a little help from Yoko Ono, contributing to the break-up of the band. Nirvana ended as one of their members passed away: even with Courtney Love in the picture, she would have never broken up the band. Love actually had talent, which Yoko did not. Can we say 'déjà vu'? There are classic rock articles that said that the Classic Rock Era started with the Beatles and ended with Nirvana: In my opinion, this is just the beginning of many discussions.

Now let's talk about the members of Nirvana, the first one is:

Jason Everman, throughout the history of rock music, there have been several 'tough luck' members of renowned bands -- who exited groups just before their big breakthrough (the best-known example being the Beatles' Pete Best). In the modern era, such a figure would have to be bassist/guitarist Jason Everman, who was briefly a member of what would become two of the '90s biggest bands - Nirvana and Soundgarden. Now before we classify this man in the Pete Best Category, he was also a soldier for the US army, a Sergeant First Class, 2nd Ranger Battalion Special forces, 3rd special forces group airborne, fought in the war of Afghanistan and Iraq, served his country from 1994-2006 and received the Combat Infantryman Badge. Everman was a guitarist and bassist, he contributed to the album Bleach as a second guitarist, appeared on the cover, was later mentioned in the liner notes on the re-release of Bleach and was also the one who covered the \$600 recording cost for the album Bleach. Everman is an Alaska native also did the bass line for Soundgarden on their rendition of the Beatles Come Together which appeared on their EP Loudest Love released in 1990.

Everman has been associated with acts like Nirvana, Soundgarden, Old (Old Lady Drivers), Mind Funk, Stonecrow, and Silence & Light was active in music from 1989-1994.

Dale Crover: He had the distinction of playing drums for two alternative rock bands, Nirvana, and the Melvins. In 2016 Rolling Stone Magazine had him listed as #69 on the Top 100 Drummers of All Time, his technical skill and muscular attack made him a major influence on many drummers on the heavy side of the alternative and indie rock communities.

Crover started playing in a tribute band to Iron Maiden called the Osbornes, capable of playing the guitar and the bass, along with being a drummer, his talents got him with the Melvins. In 1984 courtesy of Buzz Osborne the guitarist of the Osbornes got him an opening. Still an active musician, he released a solo album in 2016 titled "The Fickle Finger of Fate" where he covers the drums, bass, & guitar. Not a bad role model to open the door for his successor Dave Grohl. Crover drummed on Nirvana's ten-song demo recorded January 23, 1988 at Reciprocal Recording Studios in Seattle. Nine of these songs have been officially released:

- Floyd the Barber, Paper Cuts and Downer – Bleach
- Beeswax, Downer, Hairspray Queen, Mexican Seafood and Aero Zeppelin – Incesticide
- If You Must and Pen Cap Chew – With the Lights Out

Throughout his career, Crover was associated with acts like, Acid King, Honky, Altamont, Fantômas, Fecal Matter, Hank Williams III, Melvins, Men of Porn, Nirvana, Shrinebuilder, Crystal Fairy and Off!

Chad Channing: He is the son of Radio DJ Wayne Channing. As his father had to often move his family as part of the job, Chad appreciated music, and when settled on his own, it was Bainbridge Island, Washington where he formed the band Tick Dolly Row.

Before that he was in a band Child's Play which was formed in Baltimore Maryland. How did Chad hold a spot for Nirvana? It came after the Tick Dolly Row radio broadcast – that's when the duo of Cobain and Novoselic heard his drum talents.

One of Channing's first performances with the band occurred at a small party at Novoselic's mother's house, It was the Cobain-Novoselic-Channing lineup that appeared on Nirvana's first-ever release, in 1988 "Love Buzz" b/w "Big Cheese," and embarked on the group's first ever national tour around this time. They added Jason Everman as a second guitarist, and this is when they recorded the album Bleach. Not long after an invitation to allow Channing more song writing opportunities failed to pan out, the drummer lost interest in the band, and around the time the four-track Blew EP surfaced in 1989, Channing had exited.

Before Channing left, he demoed several tracks that would later appear on Nevermind ("In Bloom," "Breed," "Lithium," and "Stay Away").

Additionally, Channing would appear on future Nirvana rarities compilations, including 1993's Incesticide (on which Channing earned a co-song writing credit for the popular track "Sliver"), his associated acts included, Child's Play, Nirvana, Stonecrow, Red band, East of the Equator, Tic Dolly Row, Mind Circus, The Methodists, Fire Ants, Before Cars.

Pat Smear: Known as the guitarist for the punk rock band The Germs, one of the most influential punk groups to emerge from L.A.'s underground scene. Things were going well until the lead singer Darby Crash died of a heroin overdose in 1980: the bands existence was over.

Keeping busy with some TV roles, Smear released his first solo album, Ruthensmear, on SST Records in 1987. He recorded the follow-up, So You Fell in Love in 1992. A year later he was asked by the Red Hot Chili Peppers to join them, replacing John Frusciante who had just left. He turned down the role and ended up as a touring guitarist as a member of Nirvana, establishing a close friendship with Cobain and his wife Courtney Love. Smear briefly joined Grohl's band the Foo Fighters, playing on the group's 1997 album The Colour and the Shape, and then came back as a permanent member of the Foo Fighters.

Krist Novoselic: One of the politically minded musicians, he sees himself as an activist. When it came to music, he was influenced by Led Zeppelin, Aerosmith, Black Sabbath, Devo, The Sex Pistols, & The Ramones. The punk scene was discovered while he was on a year long trip to Croatia,

When he returned to the U.S. a year later, Novoselic saved up enough money to buy a guitar, and learned by playing along to blues records. Novoselic met Cobain through his younger brother Robert. They had mutual friends who played for The Melvins. It took Cobain numerous attempts to convince Krist to form a band. There were a number of names being tossed out until they settled on Nirvana.

Novoselic has been a long-tenured bass player. He ranks in my books as one of the along the likes of Flea (Red Hot Chili Peppers), Duff McKagan (GNR), Steve Harris (Iron Maiden), Melissa Auf der Maur (Hole), John Deacon (Queen), & Mike Watt (Firehose, Minutemen), just to name a few. In his career he has been associated with, Nirvana, Eyes Adrift, Melvins, Sweet 75, Flipper, No WTO combo, The Stinky puffs, Sky Cries Mary, Aya, Giants in the Trees, and the Foo Fighters. His bass skills are always wanted and welcomed; humble in his own way, he can pick and choose where he wants to go. Obviously, he helps the Foo Fighters when called upon, but there is a little friendship in that band.

As being an activist and being politically minded: while with Nirvana, Novoselic helped arrange a 1993 benefit show at the Cow Palace in San Francisco that benefited Bosnian rape victims.

After Nirvana, Novoselic organized J.A.M.P.A.C. (Joint Artists and Music Promotions Political Actions Committee), which fought against Washington State bills that threatened to limit the distribution and sale of music that certain government groups deemed obscene. Novoselic also teamed up with ex-Dead Kennedys frontman Jello Biafra and ex-Soundgarden guitarist Kim Thayil for a 1999 protest show in Seattle against the World Trade Organization.

In addition, Novoselic was a member of the duo Sweet 75, releasing a lone self-titled album in 1997 before breaking up, and by the dawn of the 21st century, was focusing on compiling rare Nirvana tracks for a proposed box set.

Dave Grohl: His early influences were Led Zeppelin, Kiss, Motörhead, Black Sabbath, Black Flag, the Germs, Bad Brains, and the Stooges. He joined his first real band, independent D.C. punkers Scream, and toured the world as their drummer. After Scream broke up in the late '80s, Grohl relocated to Seattle and tried out for a little-known band that had a drum vacancy, Nirvana.

Immediately after Grohl joined the group in late 1990, Cobain presented the band with the songs that would appear on the group's major-label debut, the 1991 classic Nevermind. 1993's In Utero, Grohl was allowed to contribute some of his own

song writing when he earned a co-writing credit for the heavy riff-rocker "Scentless Apprentice" and also recorded an original song, the quietly melodic "Marigold," which would appear as a B-side on the British "All Apologies" single.

Multi-instrumentalist and founder, front man and lead vocals for The Foo Fighters, Grohl was the longest serving drummer for Nirvana from 1990-1994, before that he drummed for Scream.

He has written and produced all the music on the debut album of Foo Fighters, has also been part of a super group "Them Crooked Vultures" as the drummer and singer/songwriter. Has made Taylor Hawkins, who is the current drummer of Foo Fighters the drummer he is today. In 2018 Grohl released a 23-minute instrumental music piece of him playing the drums, bass, guitar, and keys. He is by far the most talented musician whose roots are drums, and also a Grammy award winner 4 times with Foo Fighters and was inducted in the Rock N Roll Hall of Fame in 2014 for his work with Nirvana. For those of you who know me well, Grohl is my favourite drummer: he is up there on my top list with the likes of Kenny Aronoff, Tommy Lee, Chad Smith, Roger Taylor, and his own mentee, Taylor Hawkins.

Now we come to the left-handed Genius who helped create the Seattle sound....

Kurt Cobain. Having parents that were divorced, he ended up living with relatives - which inspired the smash hit Sliver. Being left-handed, he used a right-handed guitar flipped the other way and playing the strings from bottom up. His musical influences were the Beatles, the Monkees, Kiss, Black Sabbath, the Sex Pistols, and the Clash in 1979. He also was a roadie for a Seattle group called the Melvins.

In 1986 the group Nirvana was formed with Cobain on vocals and guitar, Krist Novoselic on bass guitar, and various drummers. Their first album, Bleach, was released in 1989. In 1991. They added a permanent drummer Dave Grohl and produced their second album, Nevermind, which is number 25 out of 100 bestselling albums of the 90's with the hits "Smells Like Teen Spirit," "Come as You Are," and "Lithium."

Their popularity grew after the group made appearances on MTV's Head banger's Ball and NBC's Saturday Night Live, smashing instruments on stage will definitely draw some much-needed attention.

The success of the band was intimidating to Cobain, who liked the intimate setting of nightclubs; but there is more money to do concerts and shows in the rock arena. In the early '90s, Cobain began doing heavy drugs such as morphine and heroin, but in 1992 his personal life brightened as he married Courtney Love in Hawaii, and their union brought a daughter, Frances Bean. With a wife and daughter, Cobain calmed a bit, and the group released Incesticide. In 1993 the band released In Utero, their last studio-recorded album. Nirvana played an MTV Unplugged concert and a concert in Munich in 1994.

On April 5, 1994 Cobain took his own life. He was found dead in his home - a sad day for many fans of music. You did not have to be a Nirvana fan to be devastated. I

remember that day: I was at my friends place Brent - it was a Friday when we heard it on the news. We were preparing to go see a movie, and while Brent's dad was preparing us dinner, he was listening to the news and called us over to the TV.

Over the next two decades, Cobain's legend only grew. The live albums MTV Unplugged in New York and From the Muddy Banks of the Wishkah appeared in 1994 and 1996, respectively, and in 2002, a greatest hits album appeared. Two years later, With the Lights Out was released. In 2015 - and when Brett Morgen directed the documentary Montage of Heck. The film was accompanied by the release of a soundtrack album, containing home recordings and demos by Cobain; it was the first-ever album to be credited to Cobain alone, and I am happy to say, that I was able to find it on vinyl.

The day that I wrote this article on the Men behind Nirvana, was April 5, 2020. What is the irony of me, a huge Nirvana fan, writing an article on one of the greatest bands in grunge history, on the day the same day and month the music died - when the lights went out in Aberdeen?

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