

*KURT DONALD  
COBAIN* (FEBRUARY  
20, 1967 – APRIL 5,  
1994)



- was an American singer, songwriter, and musician. Cobain was the frontman of American [rock](#) band [Nirvana](#). Cobain is remembered as one of the most iconic and influential rock musicians in the history of alternative rock. Ten years after his death, Eric Olsen of [MSNBC](#) wrote "In the intervening decade, Cobain, a small, frail but handsome man in life, has become an abstract Generation X icon, viewed by many as the "last real rock star" [...] a messiah and martyr whose every utterance has been plundered and parsed."<sup>[1]</sup>



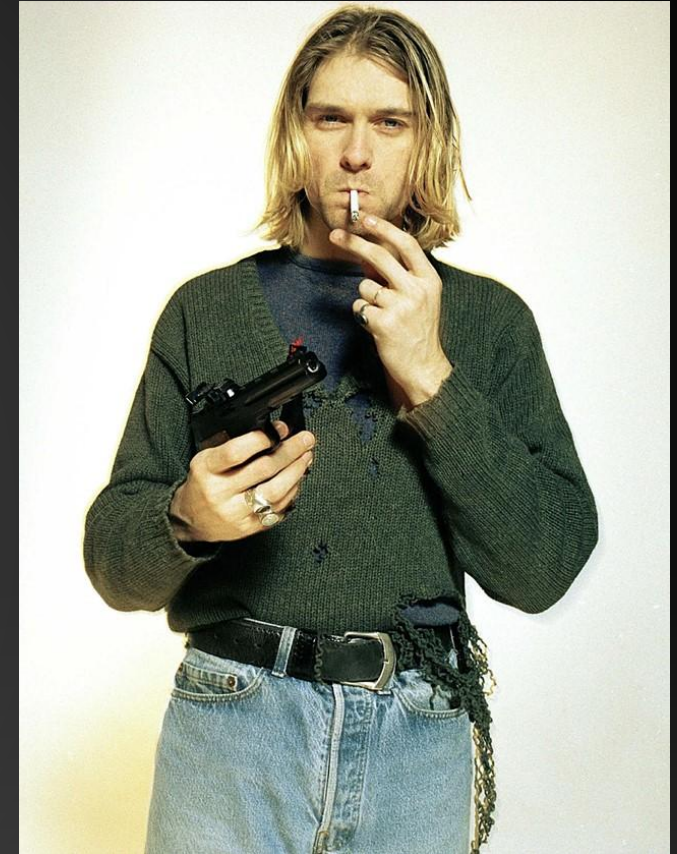


- Cobain was born at Grays Harbor Hospital in [Aberdeen, Washington](#),<sup>[10]</sup> the son of waitress Wendy Elizabeth (née Fradenburg; born 1948)<sup>[11]</sup> and automotive mechanic Donald Leland Cobain (born 1946). His parents were married on July 31, 1965, in [Coeur d'Alene, Idaho](#). His ancestry included [Dutch](#), English, French, German, Irish, and [Scottish](#).<sup>[12]:13[13][14]:7</sup> His Irish ancestors emigrated from [Carrickmore, County Tyrone](#) in 1875.<sup>[14]:7</sup> Researchers found that they were shoemakers, originally named "Cobane", who came from Inishatieve, a [townland](#) within Carrickmore. They first settled in [Cornwall, Ontario](#), Canada, and then in [Washington](#).<sup>[15]</sup> Cobain himself believed his family came from [County Cork](#).<sup>[16]</sup> His younger sister, Kimberly, was born on April 24, 1970

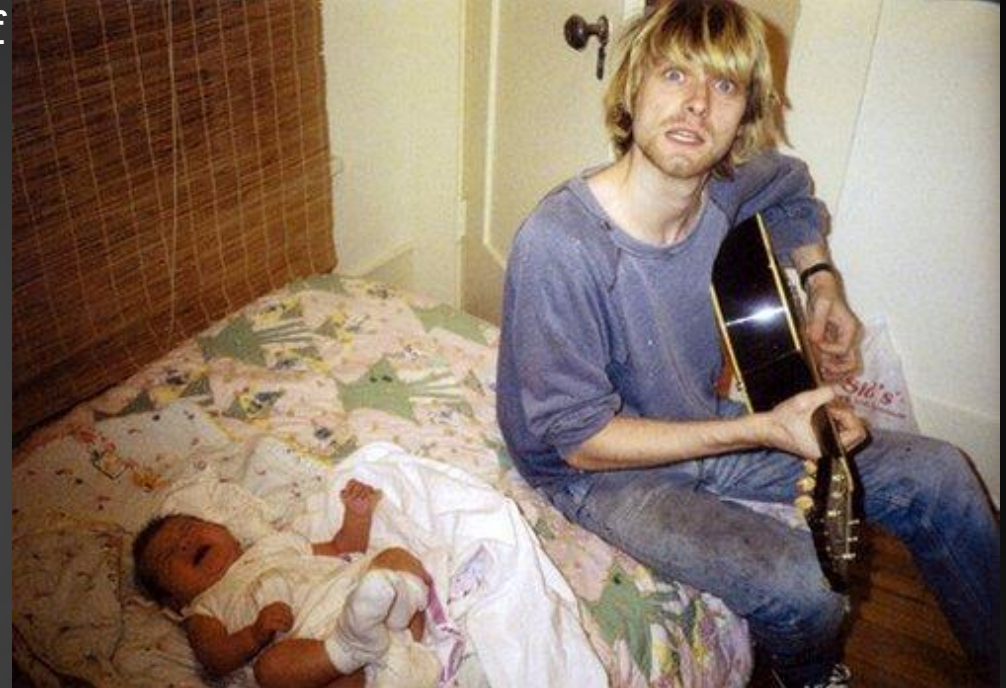
- Cobain's family had a musical background. His maternal uncle, Chuck Fradenburg, played in a band called The Beachcombers; his aunt, Mari Earle, played guitar and performed in bands throughout [Grays Harbor County](#); and his great-uncle, Delbert, had a career as an Irish tenor, making an appearance in the 1930 film [King of Jazz](#). Kurt was described as being a happy and excitable child, who also exhibited sensitivity and care. His talent as an artist was evident from an early age, as he would draw his favorite characters from films and cartoons, such as the [Creature from the Black Lagoon](#) and [Donald Duck](#), in his bedroom. <sup>[10][14]:11</sup> This enthusiasm was encouraged by his grandmother, Iris Cobain, who was a professional artist. <sup>[17]</sup>



- On his 14th birthday on February 20, 1981, Cobain's uncle offered him either a bike or a used guitar—he chose the guitar. Soon, he was trying to copy [Led Zeppelin's power ballad, "Stairway to Heaven."](#) "[Louie Louie,](#)" [Queen's "Another One Bites the Dust,"](#) and [The Cars' "My Best Friend's Girl"](#) were cover versions learnt by Cobain before he began working on his own songs. Despite Kurt being right handed, he played the guitar left handed. [\[12\]:22](#)
- During high school, Cobain rarely found anyone with whom he could play music. While hanging out at the Melvins' practice space, he met Novoselic, a fellow devotee of punk rock. Novoselic's mother owned a hair salon, and the pair occasionally practiced in the upstairs room of the salon. A few years later, Cobain tried to convince Novoselic to form a band with him by lending him a copy of a home demo recorded by Cobain's earlier band, [Fecal Matter.](#) After months of asking, Novoselic finally agreed to join Cobain, forming the beginnings of Nirvana. [\[12\]:45](#)
- Religion appeared to remain significant to Cobain during this time, as he often used Christian imagery in his work, and maintained a constant interest in [Jainism](#) and [Buddhist](#) philosophy. The band name "Nirvana" was taken from the [Buddhist concept](#), which Cobain described as "freedom from pain, suffering and the external world," a concept that he aligned with the [punk rock](#) ethos and [ideology.](#)



- Cobain was disenchanted after early touring, due to the band's inability to draw substantial crowds and the difficulty of sustaining themselves. During their first few years playing together, Novoselic and Cobain were hosts to a rotating list of drummers. Eventually, the band settled on [Chad Channing](#), with whom Nirvana recorded the album [Bleach](#), released on [Sub Pop Records](#) in 1989. Cobain, however, became dissatisfied with Channing's style, leading the band to find a new drummer, and they eventually settled on Grohl. With Grohl, the band found their greatest success through their 1991 major-label debut, *Nevermind*.<sup>[[citation needed](#)]</sup>
- With *Nevermind*'s lead single, "Smells Like Teen Spirit," Nirvana entered the mainstream, popularizing a subgenre of [alternative rock](#) called "grunge." Since their debut, Nirvana has sold over 25 million albums in the United States (U.S.) alone, and over 75 million worldwide.

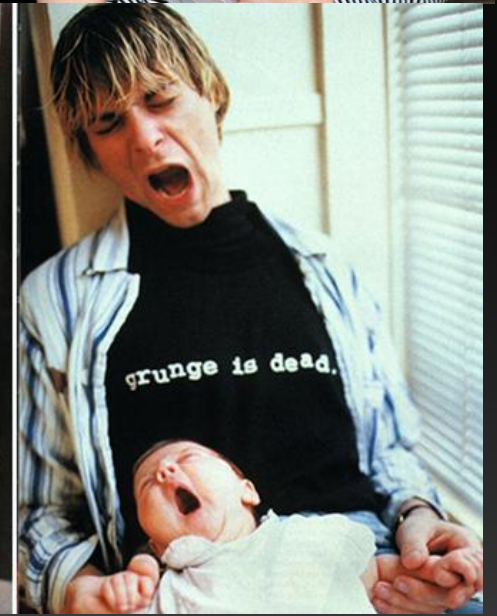


# PERSONAL LIFE

- Love and Cobain met on January 12, 1990, in Portland's Satyricon nightclub,<sup>[14]:201</sup> when they both still led ardent underground rock bands.<sup>[44]</sup> Love made advances, but Cobain was evasive. Early in their interactions, Cobain broke off dates and ignored Love's advances because he was unsure if he wanted a relationship. Cobain noted, "I was determined to be a bachelor for a few months [...] But I knew that I liked Courtney so much right away that it was a really hard struggle to stay away from her for so many months."<sup>[12]:172-173</sup> Love first saw Cobain perform in 1989 at a show in Portland, Oregon. They talked briefly after the show and Love developed a crush on him.<sup>[12]:169</sup>
- Cobain was already aware of Love through her role in the 1987 film Straight to Hell. According to True, the pair were formally introduced at an L7 and Butthole Surfers concert in Los Angeles, U.S., in May 1991.<sup>[45]</sup> In the weeks that followed, after learning from Grohl that Cobain shared mutual interests with her, Love began pursuing Cobain. In late 1991, the two were often together and bonded through drug use.<sup>[12]:172</sup>



- Love was already pregnant,<sup>[48]</sup> and the couple's daughter Frances Bean Cobain was born August 18, 1992. A sonogram of the couple's as-yet-unborn baby was included in the artwork for Nirvana's single, "Lithium".<sup>[49]</sup>
- In a 1992 article in Vanity Fair, Love admitted to using heroin, not knowing that she was pregnant; however, Love claimed that *Vanity Fair* had misquoted her,<sup>[12]</sup>:266 but the event created a media controversy for the couple. While Cobain and Love's romance had always been a media attraction, they found themselves hounded by tabloid reporters after the article was published, many wanting to know if Frances was addicted to drugs at birth. The Los Angeles County Department of Children's Services took the Cobains to court, stating that the couple's drug usage made them unfit parents.<sup>[12]:270</sup>
- Love later claimed to have ceased heroin use upon learning of her pregnancy





# DEATH

- On April 8, <sup>[56]</sup> Cobain's body was discovered at his Lake Washington Boulevard home by electrician Gary Smith, <sup>[57]</sup> who had arrived to install a security system. Apart from a minor amount of blood coming out of Cobain's ear, the electrician reported seeing no visible signs of trauma and initially believed that Cobain was asleep until he saw the shotgun pointing at his chin. A note was found, addressed to Cobain's childhood imaginary friend Boddah, that stated that Cobain had not "felt the excitement of listening to as well as creating music, along with really writing [...] for too many years now". A high concentration of heroin and traces of diazepam were also found in his body. Cobain's body had been lying there for days; the coroner's report estimated Cobain to have died on April 5, 1994. <sup>[58]</sup>

