



Kurt A Cobain



What is the can you
for today?



To perform a song
by Nirvana

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How are you going
to achieve this?



Recalling music theory to
support performance

Identifying the musical
elements of their music

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Washington State,
United States

Pin

1967 – 1994



Notable Pieces

Smells Like Teen Spirit
Something in the Way
The Man Who Sold the World



Kurt

Cobain

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Kurt Cobain (1967–1994) was an American musician, singer, and songwriter, best known as the lead vocalist and guitarist of the influential grunge band Nirvana. His raw, introspective lyrics and powerful performances, particularly on hits like "Smells Like Teen Spirit" and "Come as You Are," defined the 1990s alternative rock movement. Cobain's struggles with fame, mental health, and addiction led to his tragic death at 27, cementing his status as a cultural icon and voice of a generation.



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Smells Like Teen Spirit

Nirvana



Nirvana

Follow

Melodic movement

conjunct

Melodic techniques

repetition

Articulation

staccato

Performance techniques

plucked

Dynamics

forte

Tempo

allegro

Structure/form

Verse-chorus

Harmonic techniques

power chords

Cadences

perfect

Tonality

minor

Instrumentation

Vocals
Guitar
Bass
drums

Ensemble/
voice types

rock band

Timbre/sonority

distorted

Rhythmic techniques

back beat

Time signature

4
4

Texture

homophonic

1991



1

2

3





Something in the Way

Nirvana



1



2

3



Nirvana

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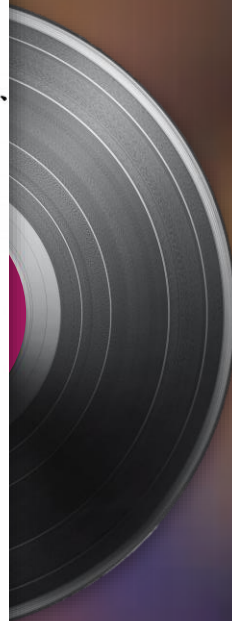
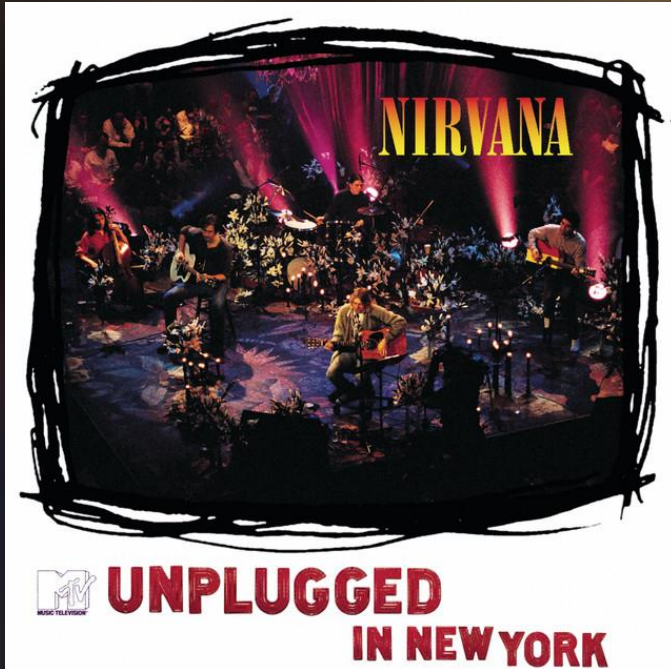
1991





The Man Who Sold the World

Nirvana



1



2

3



Nirvana [Follow](#)



1994





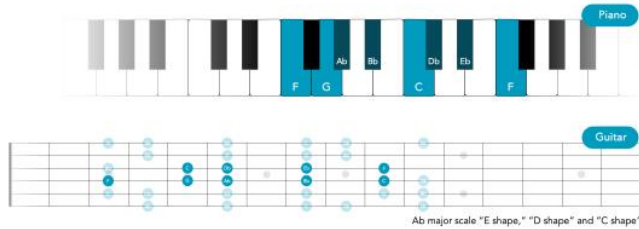
Smells Like Teen Spirit Nirvana

Musical Elements

'Smells Like Teen Spirit' is in 4/4 time. The tempo is allegro (117bpm), and the dynamics is largely forte throughout. The texture is homophonic. The form/structure is verse-chorus form.

Melody

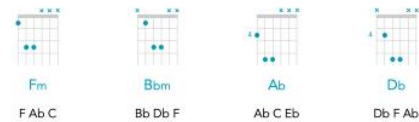
The melody in 'Smells Like Teen Spirit' contains the notes of the F natural minor scale only (F G Ab Bb C Db Eb F):



The melodic movement is mainly conjunct – notes move up or down by step – with a few disjunct notes in the first six beats of the verse. There is also evidence of sequences – repetition of a musical phrase at a different pitch – and imitation, as the electric guitar plays the vocal melody after the second chorus.

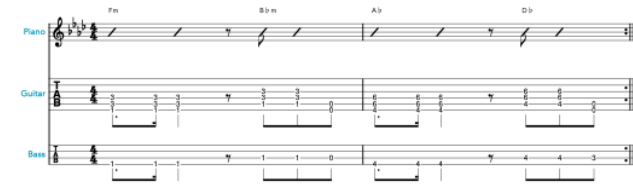
Chords

'Smells Like Teen Spirit' uses just four chords:

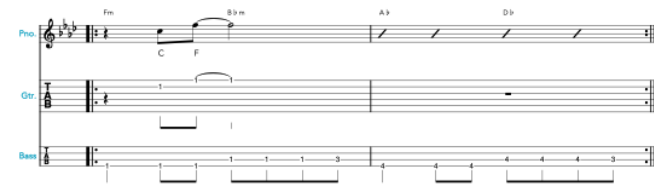


The song's signature riff is chordal, and uses these chords throughout: Fm – Bbm – Ab – Db. In the key of F minor, this is i – iv – bIII – bVI. All chords in this progression are diatonic, have a minim harmonic rhythm (two chords each bar), and are played as power chords (typical in Rock music).

Intro/chorus riff



Verse riff



Verse/guitar solo

