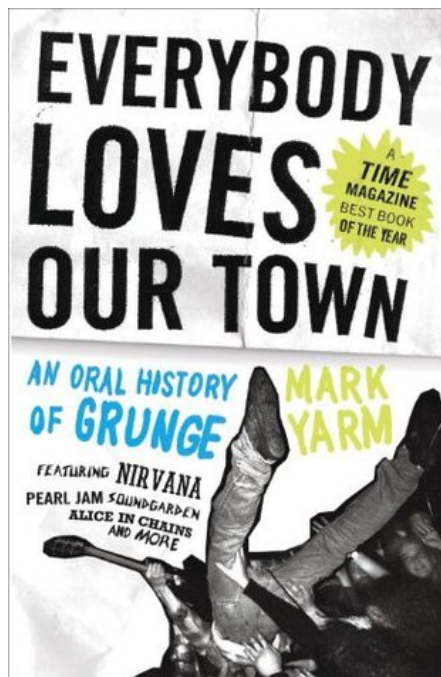




Everybody Loves Our Town: An Oral History of Grunge

Mark Yarm

[Download now](#)

[Read Online](#) ➔

Everybody Loves Our Town: An Oral History of Grunge

Mark Yarm

Everybody Loves Our Town: An Oral History of Grunge Mark Yarm

Twenty years after the release of Nirvana's landmark album *Nevermind* comes *Everybody Loves Our Town: An Oral History of Grunge*, the definitive word on the grunge era, straight from the mouths of those at the center of it all.

In 1986, fledgling Seattle label C/Z Records released *Deep Six*, a compilation featuring a half-dozen local bands: Soundgarden, Green River, Melvins, Malfunkshun, the U-Men and Skin Yard. Though it sold miserably, the record made music history by documenting a burgeoning regional sound, the raw fusion of heavy metal and punk rock that we now know as grunge. But it wasn't until five years later, with the seemingly overnight success of Nirvana's "Smells Like Teen Spirit," that *grunge* became a household word and Seattle ground zero for the nineties alternative-rock explosion.

Everybody Loves Our Town captures the grunge era in the words of the musicians, producers, managers, record executives, video directors, photographers, journalists, publicists, club owners, roadies, scenesters and hangers-on who lived through it. The book tells the whole story: from the founding of the *Deep Six* bands to the worldwide success of grunge's big four (Nirvana, Pearl Jam, Soundgarden and Alice in Chains); from the rise of Seattle's cash-poor, hype-rich indie label Sub Pop to the major-label feeding frenzy that overtook the Pacific Northwest; from the simple joys of making noise at basement parties and tiny rock clubs to the tragic, lonely deaths of superstars Kurt Cobain and Layne Staley.

Drawn from more than 250 new interviews—with members of Nirvana, Pearl Jam, Soundgarden, Alice in Chains, Screaming Trees, Hole, Melvins, Mudhoney, Green River, Mother Love Bone, Temple of the Dog, Mad Season, L7, Babes in Toyland, 7 Year Bitch, TAD, the U-Men, Candlebox and many more—and featuring previously untold stories and never-before-published photographs, *Everybody Loves Our Town* is at once a moving, funny, lurid, and hugely insightful portrait of an extraordinary musical era.

Everybody Loves Our Town: An Oral History of Grunge Details

Date : Published September 6th 2011 by Crown Archetype

ISBN :

Author : Mark Yarm

Format : Kindle Edition 594 pages

Genre : Music, Nonfiction, History, Biography

 [Download Everybody Loves Our Town: An Oral History of Grunge ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online Everybody Loves Our Town: An Oral History of Grunge ...pdf](#)

**Download and Read Free Online Everybody Loves Our Town: An Oral History of Grunge Mark
Yarm**

From Reader Review Everybody Loves Our Town: An Oral History of Grunge for online ebook

Ana says

Everybody loves us

Everybody loves our town

That's why I'm thinking lately

The time for leaving is now

Grunge is not dead. Layne Staley, Kurt Cobain, Mike Starr, Kristen Pfaff, Andrew Wood and Mia Zapata are no longer with us. But the genre lives on.

What exactly is grunge?

Douglas Rushkoff explained it this way: "Grunge was so self-consciously lowbrow and nonaspirational that it seemed, at first, impervious to the hype and glamour normally applied swiftly to any emerging trend. But sure enough, grunge anthems found their way onto the soundtracks of television commercials, and Dodge Neons were hawked by kids in flannel shirts saying, "Whatever.""

First off, it takes more than clothes to make a grunger. I'm sure you've all heard of grunge fashion. Admit it. At some point you've totally sported the I'mFeelingAngsty look (guilty as charged). People ~~hipsters~~-like to pretend that they listen to grunge by wearing stylish Kurt Cobain t-shirts.

Ask them about their favorite Nirvana song. The answer is always the same. Smells Like Teen Spirit. Every single time!

'Like OMG! Check out my Nirvana shirt, I'm so grunge!'

(if you paid for this shirt, gurl you got played).

Seattle. The birthplace of Jimi Hendrix, Duff McKagan, Bill Gates and the rock music style known as grunge. There is a song called It Never Rains in Southern California. But in Seattle, it's the exact opposite. It rains about 9 months out of the year. What else could people do besides write depressing songs.

The easiest way to express your teen angst is by listening to grunge music. I grew up mostly listening to Britney, Christina & The Backstreet Boys. It wasn't until high school that I discovered rock music. My parents were thrilled when I brought my first rock cd home.*sarcasm*

Seattle has had its fair share of talented and influential bands. Mother Love Bone, Mudhoney, The Melvins, Temple of the Dog, Green River, Stone Temple Pilots... And, of course, my personal favorites : Nirvana, Pearl Jam, Alice in Chains and Soundgarden.

There are some people that you meet in life that you just kinda know they're not gonna live to be a hundred years old. In some ways, I think you kind of prepare yourself emotionally for that to be a reality. I remember the day after that I woke up and I was heartbroken that he was gone. And I just felt like, Okay, so I get to wake up today and have another day, and he doesn't.

Kurt Cobain is my love. Not sure what to say that I haven't already said in my Heavier than Heaven review. He has had a great influence on my life. He inspired and continues to inspire millions of young people around the world.

Two weeks later, three weeks later, I was laying in bed with a broken jaw and arm. Bicycle accident. Val, my girlfriend at the time, called me from work and said, "Turn on the radio! Turn on the radio! They found Kurt dead."

"Kurt Cobain?"

"Turn on the radio!"

And that's that.

Eddie Vedder is, to put it simply, awesome. One of the best voices I've ever heard. The man can really sing. Amazingly, Pearl Jam is still around today. They may be a little older, but they're still as strong as ever.

Layne Staley.

"Died of a heroin overdose. Junkie." That's the only thing anybody ever fuckin' wrote, and to see that start to fade and people realize what the guy contributed and the amazing talent that he was—and nobody's ever gonna know personally what kinda fuckin' guy he was. We do, and he was so fuckin' cool and badass. It's cool he's taken on an Obi-Wan kinda of thing: He's more powerful in death, and he's gained a lot more reverence.

One of the greatest, yet most underrated, musicians of all time. He deserves far more credit than he has received. Alice in Chains had a huge impact on the state of rock music in the '90s. Their songs are full of depth and meaning. Layne was a man of many personal demons. Near the end of his life, he purposely distanced himself from everyone. His health deteriorated and his drug use increased. He was barely recognizable to his friends. The most heartbreaking thing about all this, the most haunting thing, is that he'd been dead for two weeks before he was discovered.

He died the day after my birthday. I got mad at him, and I said, "Fine, I'll just leave." And his last words to me were, "Not like this, don't leave like this." I just left him sitting there. His last words were, "Not like this." I can't believe that. I'm so ashamed of that.

I still listen to those bands, but not as much as I used to. I discover new music all the time. My tastes are constantly expanding. But every once in awhile I'll hear Chloe Dancer / Crown of Thorns, Something in the Way, Black Hole Sun, Down in a Hole, Hunger Strike, Black & Jeremy (a great song with a strong anti-bullying message) on the radio and my soul is soothed.

There was a public gathering at the Seattle Center around the fountain. Whenever anybody dies, that's where everybody goes. The local radio station came down and blasted music out. I ran into Chris Cornell and Eddie Vedder, and they were walking around on the outside of the crowd. And I was glad that people were stayin' the fuck away from them, givin' them some room. Eddie was tremendously distraught. I gave Chris a hug and said, "You doin' okay?" He said, "I'm never okay with this."

~~~~~

I cannot talk about grunge without mentioning Singles, the brilliant movie directed by Cameron Crowe. It starred Bridget Fonda, Kyra Sedgwick, Matt Dillon and Bill Pullman in all their '90s glory. The film includes cameos from Pearl Jam, Alice in Chains, Soundgarden and others. It's one of my favorite movies of all time.

Chris Cornell. \*swoon\*

Go see it!

Here are some more recs for you-

Kurt & Courtney (1998)  
Kurt Cobain: About a Son (2006)  
Cobain: Montage of Heck (2015)  
Pearl Jam Twenty (2011)

Hype (1996)

Foo Fighters: Back and Forth (2011)

---

## Michael Jandrok says

I am lucky enough to have been born in 1964, the year the Beatles first made their way to America to appear on the Ed Sullivan Show and make history in the process. I grew up listening to music. My brother was a huge fan of British Invasion bands like Herman's Hermits, and my mother was listening to groups like The Jefferson Airplane and Big Brother and the Holding Company. I count myself as being fortunate that I had a ringside seat as rock music grew from restless teenager to world-weary adulthood. So many great bands, so many great scenes....punk...metal...New Wave.....the MTV revolution....I've been here for all of it, and even today I enjoy searching out new sounds.

I'm also a collector of rock music histories and biographies, and there seems to be an endless supply of said journalism hitting the racks every year. Everybody has a story to tell or a decade to document. A lot of it is fluff, some of it is interesting, and every now and again the lucky reader will stumble upon something that has significant social and historical value. "Everybody Loves Our Town" is not one of those books, though it is an interesting and occasionally relevant piece of nostalgia for a regional musical movement that hit the zeitgeist at JUST THE RIGHT MOMENT in history to become the defining sound of it's era.

Grunge. Just hearing the word evokes memories. First and foremost I have mental images of flailing guitars and flannel, hipster noise-rock, and a sludgy sound that would make Black Sabbath proud. I remember Nirvana and Pearl Jam blasting out of the Pacific Northwest with enough sound and fury to reinvent and reinvigorate rock music for a new generation of kids who just really didn't get Van Halen and Motley Crue. Grunge seemed like a totally indefinable term. Was it referring to the scraggly look of most of the bands, or was it describing the music itself, an uneasy fusion of punk rock and old-school, 70s-era hard rock?

Author Mark Yarm has trouble defining the term as well, and he admits as much in his introduction to "Everybody Loves Our Town." In reality, of course, there is no way to pin it down. Trying to define grunge would be a waste of time, better instead to talk to the folks who were there as it began and attempt to make

sense of it from that angle.

In essence and form, "Everybody Loves Our Town" is basically the grunge version of "Please Kill Me," Legs McNeil's seminal oral history of 1970s punk rock. The words of the people who were there tell the tale, from the early progenitors of the scene (the U-Men, the Melvins) to the bands that eventually broke out nationally (Nirvana, Pearl Jam, Alice in Chains). Yarm includes material culled from hundreds of hours of interviews with the musicians, producers, agents, record label owners, and other various and assorted scenesters who witnessed it all first hand.

INTERLUDE: Fun fact: Candlebox was a legit Seattle band, even if they roundly got panned as the Nickelback of their day. Another fun fact: TAD was an awesome group, so awesome that they deserve a book all their own. Those guys got way overlooked. Last fun fact: Alice in Chains was much more of a metal act than a grunge act. They get included here because of the geographical and chronological associations, but they transcended the limitations of what defined grunge much like Led Zeppelin transcended what constituted heavy rock back in the day. You're welcome.

A big part of the narrative focuses on a band named "Mother Love Bone," a group whose sole intention at the time of their formation was to be Seattle's answer to "Guns 'N' Roses." Fronted by a charismatic singer by the name of Andrew Wood, Mother Love Bone COULD have and SHOULD have been the big breakout from the Seattle scene. The problem was that Andrew Wood was a heroin junkie, and his death from overdose would set the tone for the darkness and self-flagellation of the entire Seattle grunge ethos. Mother Love Bone would regroup with a new singer and a new name, and as Pearl Jam they would go on to become one of the biggest bands in the world.

Maybe it was just me, but "Everybody Loves Our Town" seems to have a very melancholy feel to it. The pervasive drug use (especially heroin) and dysfunction that seem to engulf just about everyone leaves little room for any type of celebration or real reflection of the historical significance of the grunge phenomenon. Author Yarm is himself an outsider to the Seattle scene, he being from Brooklyn. Part of the strength of Legs McNeil's book was that he was at the center of the New York punk movement as it was developing. In point of fact, he was one of the people who DEFINED the New York punk scene in the 70s. Yarm has no such advantage with his subject matter, and the book loses a little bit of authenticity for me because of this fact. I still don't feel like the definitive history of the grunge phenomenon has been written. That's not to say that this book doesn't have value, it does. But I also don't think that it needs to be the last word on what was truly an era-defining musical revolution.

CODA: I got to see Pearl Jam a couple of years ago when they headlined the Austin City Limits festival. They were good, great even. Yeah, they were older. Yeah, Eddie Vedder still got drunk on wine halfway through the set. But DAMN, man.....if you just closed your eyes and grooved on the music then you knew that they still had it....the magic was still there....the memories still alive. It was a good show, and it was nice to know that this band that had been touched by so much darkness in the early days had managed to come through it. You can read this book if you want....in fact I'd probably encourage you to, if only for the nuggets about the more obscure bands. But in some ways you'd really be better off dusting off those old Nirvana and Alice in Chains records and giving them a fresh spin. Let the music tell you the story. It's best that way.



## Mischenko says

Please visit [www.readrantrockandroll.com](http://www.readrantrockandroll.com) for this review and others...

I'm going to admit right off the rip that I've been told I'm still living in the 90's. I am-really. My teen years literally consisted of listening to music and playing in band. Grunge was and very much still is a large part of my life. So, when I recently discovered this book, I had to get it.

I think when many people hear the word "grunge" they instantly think of the four more popular 90's grunge bands including Pearl Jam, Alice in Chains, Nirvana and Soundgarden. Many don't realize that the movement emerged before these "big four."

*Deep Six* was released in 1986 and this is where it all started, of course I didn't discover these bands until years later when they became huge and I was a little older. There's a lot to learn in this book that was going on prior to Nirvana and Pearl Jam. It starts in the 80's and progresses up into 2011.

I loved the oral history format the author used for this book. The way it's written, you're basically reading quotes from scads of different people including band members, producers, managers, photographers, roadies and more. You'll learn about some of the stuff they did, places they went, relationships they had with each other, pain they endured from deaths, and more. There are pictures included, but I wish there were more.

How sad is it when listening to a favorite online "grunge hits of the 90's" music station, I'm reminded of the fact that the singers from the last four songs I've just heard are dead, and all from drugs. It's very depressing, but at the same time, I remind myself that grunge is not dead-at least not to me. I'll be ninety and still listening to this stuff. Many of these bands went forward and continued to be successful including, Pearl Jam, Soundgarden, Foo Fighters (Dave Grohl from Nirvana), Candlebox, and Alice in Chains, even with Layne and Mike gone, they're still going.

There are things you'll never know about the grunge movement if you don't read this book. Some of the artists that I believed had it all together, really never did. Some never finished school, many performed drunk and high, barely hung on, died, and some fought like crazy. You had band members switching around to different groups. It's wild and adventurous. If you listen to grunge or have been a fan in the past, read this...

5\*\*\*\*\*

---

## Katie Powell says

I wrote about this book on my blog - <http://804-notassigned.blogspot.com/2...>

When I was in high school, a chunk of my friends were skater boys. In the mid- 1980's, skater boys in our town were typically middle-class and generally pretty sunny in disposition and future. They were going to college and going to wind up lawyers and doctors just like their fathers. One of my friends, with red hair and the sweetest boy smile I had ever seen, went to Seattle and he died.

We've never quite known what happened to John. I've always had a hundred, thousand questions about his last two years, but there's no one to ask. His family shut that door firmly, not even posting an obituary that any of us can find, so all that we have is speculation and rumors. I've always wanted to know if he was in college or working, was he a junkie? We've always heard that heroin was involved, but that can mean too many things to be any answer.

I'm reading Everybody Loves Our Town: An Oral History of Grunge this week and I'm not sure why. I mean, I really will read an oral history on almost any topic, but grunge is not my music. Grunge really isn't a music at all, just a label slapped on bands from a specific place and time. And, while I am from that time, I'm not from that place.

Seattle in the 1990's is a dark, violent place. The musicians profiled in the book talk a lot of about how fun it was in the early days, in the 1980's, but by the time the Screaming Trees, Alice in Chains, and Soundgarden are getting big, the scene doesn't sound so fun anymore. (Guns 'N' Roses toured with Soundgarden and nicknamed them Frowngarden.) I guess when a handful of your friends get famous, it's normal to think that it should be you getting the money and the record deals. And by the time Nirvana has come and gone, everyone is a cannibal. A surprising number of people in the book blame all the problems of Seattle on Courtney Love, which is kind of fascinating to read. It's like she's the Yoko Ono of an entire region, creating factions and isolations and death. She could have gone so many ways with her widowhood, becoming the beatific saint of musicians gone too soon, but I guess she really could only be what she is – too damaged and self-promoting and angry to do anything but lash out.

Oh, the deaths. The first few are shocking to Seattle musicians and they still remember that rawness these 20 years later. As the '90's wear on, the scattered names of the dead become a roll call, with no surprise left. There are only a small handful of musicians profiled who didn't die at some point. Apparently there are lots of ways to revive a dead man and the people in Seattle learned them all the hard way. They didn't all come back to life, though, and I'm reading this account thinking that there must be dozens of dead audience members for every dead musician. There are people just like my friend in every concert photo. Kids who though moving to Seattle would fill some empty space in them and didn't get to grow up. I guess that's why I'm reading intensely - I'm looking for John on every page.

---

## Erin says

This book was so amazing to me...I was and remain a huge fan of all of the bands discussed in the book. I was 15 when Nevermind broke and count myself as being truly lucky to have grown up with this music as having defined my generation. This book shared numerous interviews from all of the band members, record people, band managers, etc with tales from their teen years until after the death of Layne Staley. I really felt like I was able to learn so much more about all of them as people and get a feel for just how much fun the whole scene was before all the tragedies. I stayed up until 3AM reading furiously until the end. In an odd coincidence, about a minute after I had closed the cover, the radio station I was listening to played Mad Season's "River of Deceit" and I admit that I just started bawling. The world lost a lot of brilliantly talented musicians with the deaths of so many of the major players of this scene and Layne Staley was by far one of the best. Thank you, Mark Yarm, for putting together not just a book but a real experience for those of us who were heavily influenced by these bands.

## Tom Gase says

This book was seriously awesome. Anyone who loves "grunge" music and grew up with it in the 90s will love this book. This book is by author Mark Yarm, but it is told by the people who lived it, whether it be members of bands, roadies, management, filmmakers, etc. Probably over 500 sources easily. Well-researched. All the bands are here--Nirvana, Pearl Jam, Alice in Chains, Soundgarden, Mudhoney, Screaming Trees, TAD, Green River, Mother Love Bone, L7, U-Men, Melvins, Mad Season, Candlebox and many, many more. Basically the book starts with the origins of Sub Pop and ends with Layne Staley's death. Not only are the stories about how Nirvana formed and ended here, but there are other great stories I didn't know as much about like the feud between Pearl Jam and Nirvana for a while, why Soundgarden broke up, why nine people died at a Pearl Jam show, how the second side of Alice in Chains' Dirt album actually tells one story (yeah it involves drugs), how everyone seemed to hate Candlebox even though they probably had the most local roots, why Hiro left Soundgarden, what saved Dave Grohl and made him decide to make music again after Nirvana died, why the Melvins didn't exactly get along with Nirvana's management, why Pearl Jam got rid of their first drummer, why and how Andrew Wood of Mother Love Bone died, which actors had fun making the movie Singles and which ones didn't, why Screaming Trees broke up, why Eddie Vedder changed as a person after the Ten album, how the song ended up being called "Smells Like Teen Spirit" and how EVERYONE seems to hate Courtney Love. All those stories and hundreds more are in this book. I suggest you buy it, put on some of these bands on your cd/vinyl player and just relax and go back to a time where the music was a thousands time better than it is today. Five stars all the way.

---

## Marc Horton says

Much in the manner of previous oral histories (see Legs McNeil's Please Kill Me: The Uncensored Oral History of Punk) on broadly defined musical movements centered on specific geographic locations, this is a book about a cultural time and place [Note: while most of the chapters in McNeil's book end "...and then I caught the clap from Nico," in this one, the analogue seems to be: "...and then Courtney Love threw her shoes at me."]. The chapters detailing the life and evolution of Sub Pop Records are particularly fascinating, and the various perspectives and recollections on the most important events in the Seattle "alternative rock" zeitgeist confirm the subjectivity with which we are forced to recall history in the pre-internet age, but you should read this for the bawdy anecdotes and revealing musical insights by the actors themselves, not for any kind of historical accuracy. Though it's a tale suffused with more than its share of tragedy [apparently, everyone in Seattle from 1988 until 1998 was, in fact, a junkie, so it wasn't just a Rolling Stone-propagated myth. Who knew?], fans of the music of that time and place will find this a worthwhile read.

---

## Kurt says

I nearly gave up on this book shortly after I started it. I was born in late 1980, so I was only ten years old when Nevermind hit the stores and brought grunge into mainstream America, so during the years that grunge was vital and relevant, I was a little too young to connect with it. My friends' cool older siblings liked Soundgarden and Nirvana and Pearl Jam (although the fourth big grunge band is consistently listed as Alice in Chains, I have never had a personal relationship with anyone interested in that band), and I had a couple of Pearl Jam CDs on my shelf collecting dust (because my mom had heard somewhere that all the cool kids liked Pearl Jam, and she wasn't going to tolerate a kid who wouldn't even try to be cool), but I was never

really an active grunge fan. I mean, I liked flannel because it was a style that was kind to fat kids, but I didn't personally connect to the music. Even today, I generally reference Kurt Cobain when I'm helping people who want clarification on how I spell my name, but I'm certainly not a devoted Nirvana fan. And the first 100-150 pages of this book are largely concerned with the regional roots of grunge. Many vapid observations about bands you've probably never heard of: "Man, I went to that U-Men show at that venue, and I was soooooo drunk..." "Yeah, there was a dead cat at that one show, and it was crazy..." "Yeah, I met this member of my new band in my high school, and we smoked pot at his mom's house, then I met this other member of my new band in my high school and we smoked pot at my mom's house..." It was a bunch of people telling inane stories about when they used to be cool in their hometown. And with no connection, I was prepared to give up on the book and write a polite review about how it's only geared toward those who are already intense grunge fans.

And then Courtney Love showed up.

Into a world of rational observations and shallow analysis, Yarm starts sharing quotes from Courtney Love, who thunders in like a hostile unicorn stomping around in an uncovered septic tank. She spills her trash-mouthed crazy sauce all over the pages of this book and turns it into something amazing.

I recognize that Love is generally portrayed negatively, with different figures complaining about her toxic influence, and her own quotes being almost unfailingly agitated and disrespectful. And in the context of the whole book, she has a small role, only a few quotes and a few more references to her by other participants in the project. Still, the book changes at a fundamental level when she appears. It gets wild and unpredictable, especially since that's about the point where the narrative picks up speed. Bands start taking off on a national level, and the sources interviewed start sharing not only their thoughts but also their responses to the ways they were portrayed at the time. The book develops a sense of purpose, an epic scale like a collection of Shakespearean tragedies, and a grand historical perspective, and Yarm's gifts as an historian really begin to shine.

Yarm is, by all the evidence in this book, a phenomenal historian. The range of perspectives is simply astounding - nearly every member of every significant band, plus the music executives, the venue owners, the roadies, the random fans... In a few haunting moments, Kurt Cobain even speaks, as Yarm shares contextually appropriate excerpts from Cobain's suicide note and his journals. Yarm also shows a great deal of precision and care as he takes disconnected interviews and weaves them together to make clear moments and clear timelines. Yarm's sense of humor is wicked and brilliant, as he often juxtaposes contradictory memories or allows his stars to laugh about what their friends have said about them.

After the first rough couple of hundred pages, I loved this book at a level I can't really explain. I was excited for band members who would enjoy things that they did well, and when tragedy would occasionally strike, usually in the form of an overdose and a gripping memorial service (beautifully captured with reverent memories of the participants, sharing pain that hasn't really gone away in twenty years), I almost always had to put the book down and walk around the house for a while before I could get centered enough to return to the story. Band members still mourn the emotional wounds inflicted by their record companies, and producers still regret the hard choices that they had to make. Some people still nurse grudges, but most have grown enough to try to forgive those who hurt them twenty years ago. This book was honest and it was wise and it was powerful, and I recommend it to anyone. The long introduction is really only for fans of grunge and its origins, but the rest of the book is for fans of humanity, and this book is a treasure.

---

**Nettie Grey says**

Oh grunge, how I miss thee. And now that we are facing down the (yikes!) 20 year anniversary of Kurt Cobain's death, the media's nostalgia machine is going into overdrive- reunion tours, remastered albums, SBS specials. Reissue, repackage, repackage as Morrissey once said. I have to confess I'm sort of all for it. Grunge was a great time in my life- lots of popular bands were also actually good, scruffiness was in fashion, and being smart was cool for a while. Why would I not want to return to those dark and rumbly days? No Autotune! No X factor! Just lashings of credibility, and a whole bunch of addiction and death. Okay, so it wasn't all marvellous. Dark art is kind of inclined to lead to dark ends, I suppose; still, it's a shock to realise just how fast things got ugly within this scene, as drugs, egos and music industry machinations took their inevitable tolls.

But for anyone who remembers this era as fondly as I do, the sadness is part of the story, certainly not something to be brushed aside in the blind adulation of doomed rock gods or killer riffs. And a book that tells the whole tale, from every participant still around to be asked, is naturally something I will buy as soon as it comes out of the carton.

That said, the first 80 or so pages are a bit of a slog. Generally I love oral biographies, but you'd probably have to be an original member of one of the incredibly obscure bands featured to get much enjoyment out of the opening chapters. But persevere and soon enough you get to the good stuff- scandal, suffering, heroin and jail- and that's just Courtney Love! Joking aside, the quotes from Courtney are worth the price of purchase alone- her decidedly unique take on things is consistently jaw dropping and frequently hilarious.

Comprehensive, (mostly) evenhanded, often contradictory and endlessly fascinating, this has got to be the last word on Seattle's place in music history. Reading it has made me dig out all my old Soundgarden and Mudhoney albums, to my bliss and my housemates' irritation. So it's a book for a niche market, sure, but dwellers in that niche are going to be very pleased indeed. Because sometimes feeling stupid and contagious can be a good thing

---

## Jay Hinman says

A few things to get out of the way before we start this review. I didn't purchase this book, nor solicit it in any way. It was sent to me for review by its publisher, Crown Archetype. I assigned about a 25% chance to ever reading it once it arrived, and only dove into it as a respite from some much more intense books I'd just finished about the Holocaust and whatnot. Second - the journalist who wrote the book, the book about grunge, is named Mark Yarm. One of those strange coincidences of history, I suppose, that his name is nearly identical to one of the book's "prime movers", Mudhoney's Mark Arm. Finally, there's that word that everyone deservedly hates, "grunge". Yarm apologetically justifies it as the all-purpose descriptor that, for worse or for better, came to describe heavy punk/metal/glam hybrid music that came from Seattle in the late 80s and early 90s, then allows the oral history participants to dispatch and denigrate it in a number of ways throughout the book.

Knowing that this book showcases a style of music I truly ceased to listen to almost two decades ago, a style that has not worn particularly well, I hoped at least it would tell some good Mudhoney, Courtney Love & Nirvana drugs & drinking stories. I got that and then some - in fact, once I got rolling with "EVERYBODY LOVES OUR TOWN", I was totally on for the ride and really enjoyed it. Something about the oral history, especially a musical oral history about an era I either experienced firsthand or just missed, can be totally addicting. I've read the NY punk history ("Please Kill Me"); two LA punk histories; the San Francisco punk history; "American Hardcore", and I'm sure a few other oral histories of other scenes that I'm forgetting. This particular book, even with my previous caveats about the Seattle scene's overall musical worth, felt pretty close to home, as I know several of the people in the book personally and had brushed closely against many

others during my time as a radio DJ, fanzine dork and frequent show-goer. Kurt Cobain even hung out at my house by happenstance one evening in 1991, which never ceases to impress people at my work or in any all-purpose occasions for scenester braggadocio.

Most of my involvement in this stuff came from having been a big GREEN RIVER fan during my college years. Then the colored-vinyl Sub Pop 45s started coming out – Soundgarden, Blood Circus, Swallow, and the granddaddy of them all, Mudhoney’s “Sweet Young Thing/Touch Me I’m Sick” single. These were all accompanied by over-the-top PR theatrics – everything from the amazing Charles Peterson photos showing Seattle fans of this stuff going bonkers and diving off stages (semi-manipulated by the photographer, as it turns out), to the limited-edition vinyl, to the PR one-sheets themselves. I was squarely an elitist indie-rock dork at the time, with my taste going for the loudest and rawest stuff I could hear. Sub Pop was more than all right for me, and as a 20-year-old with an underdeveloped bullshit detector, I fell right into their trap.

While a college radio DJ at KCSB-FM in Santa Barbara, I remember excitedly talking to Sub Pop head Jonathan Poneman about their upcoming “Singles Club”, a yearly 45s club where you paid up front for a record to be mailed to you each month. He was trying to sell me on the first one from a band called Nirvana, which bummed me out because I hadn’t heard of them yet. “They’re like Cheap Trick meets Kiss, it’s totally awesome, they’re going to be huge”, he said as I gagged on the other end of the line. I was totally a Mudhoney guy, instantly my favorite band from the time that first record came out. Some friends and I travelled to catch their 1988 Northern and Southern California shows with Sonic Youth across 5 different nights, one of which was live on my radio show because I politely asked them to since I knew they had a day off between San Francisco and LA, and they politely concurred. This began a friendship with the band and especially their manager Bob Whittaker that continues to this day, and helped open the door to me meeting some of the other folks quoted liberally throughout this book.

I graduated college in 1989, and some music-obsessed friends and I could think of nothing better than to reward ourselves with a driving trip up to Seattle for a week in June. Once there, we saw a couple live shows with Swallow, Cat Butt and the debut of “Dickless” at the long-gone Vogue club on 1st Avenue. Seattle friends were already then complaining of their town’s oversaturation in media, about “grunge” etc. And this was years before Nirvana-mania, the invention of Pearl Jam, Alice in Chains and all that. But the excitement in the Vogue club that night was real – and Jesus, it was just Cat Butt, Swallow and Dickless. Seems like the entire “scene” turned up – there goes Chris Cornell, there’s Mark Arm, there’s Bruce Pavitt etc. – and bodies really were being passed around, hair was flying and all that. Later, I’d see a 4-piece Nirvana open for Vomit Launch and Mudhoney at a tiny club in San Jose, CA; encounter Kurt & Courtney backstage in Los Angeles at a Mudhoney show there, and then almost plow into them in my car as they ran across the street arm-in-arm after the show; and get turned on to “microbrewed beer” by Chris Pugh of Swallow, who schooled me on the concept at the Virginia Inn over my first bottle of Red Hook.

Wait a minute, weren’t we reviewing a book here? Back to “EVERYBODY LOVES OUR TOWN” by Mark Yarm. Yarm sets up Seattle noise/voodoo band The U-Men as the prototypical fount of grunge, which is ridiculous on its face, but which has been repeated so often that it’s more or less true at this point. At any rate they were beloved by many who later went on to start the most celebrated of the Seattle bands, as were The Melvins, so both figure strongly in the early oral history chapters. Then things really start rolling, and to my surprise, it was all quite interesting and extremely entertaining until the very end. You get Mark Arm admitting to some pretty intense heroin usage (with heretofore widely-unknown OD’s); Cobain’s slow, sad dissolution; some disgusting Cat Butt/L7 tour stories; a bizarre character named John Michael Amerika whom I need to learn more about; the Sub Pop financial implosion; jealousy; drug use; alcoholism; band feuds and best of all – COURTNEY LOVE – in spades. She is absolutely as batty as ever, is quoted multiple times in the present, and always the best chip-on-her-shoulder read in show business.

Rock and roll excess comes as no surprise to any of you, I’m sure, but the further away I am from this lifestyle, the more surprisingly graphic & pathetic the drugs and the drinking-to-stupor appear. I’m still

naively surprised that bands I really liked were routinely shooting up before their shows. Of course, Seattle was famous for this even then, both in and out of the rocknroll milieu. Part of the reason I bonded so well with Bob Whittaker and the Mudhoney fellas is because they were such a blast to drink with. I'll admit that I skipped all parts of this book that dealt with Alice In Chains, but I know there's a sad junkie story in there somewhere. If you do read this book, do not skip the section on "Candlebox", a post-Nirvana grunge band whom I have never heard but whom I knew to be popular at the time. Resentful, angry, and still hating each other, the band recounts how badly they were verbally beaten up on in the post-Cobain era by Seattleites and others who saw them as interlopers. It's as good as any reality TV you'll watch this week.

In fact that's a pretty good way to sum up this book – the printed equivalent of some really decent reality TV. I absolutely expected to quit it after a quick brush through a couple of chapters, and there I was, three days later & having read every single word except the Alice in Chains, Mother Love Bone and most of the Pearl Jam stuff. (All right, I admit that's not a small bit to skip, but I simply could not bring myself to care). What sounded somewhat preposterous when I first got the book – "the grunge book" – ended up being a pretty right-on read.

---

## RandomAnthony says

I dig these oral history books. You know, the kind where the author assembles quotes from different sources, along with his/her own interviews, to tell an era's/construct's story. Let me think...I've read oral histories on the New York punk scene, the Los Angeles punk scene, The Replacements (Maybe? I can't remember if that book was pure oral history), ESPN, and NBC's Must-See TV era. These books tend to flow, rivet, and illuminate in ways traditional cultural analysis can't. *Everybody Loves Our Town: An Oral History of Grunge* is the best of the bunch.

Mark Yarm (no relation, before you ask, to Mark Arm), loves the shit out of the grunge era, refuses to publish a half-assed chronicle, or both. This book is 500+ pages long and you get the sense Yarm could crank out a couple hundred more coherent, interesting pages. He wisely includes much more than musician commentary; the best passages, in my eyes, come from managers, engineers, and various hanger-ons. Honestly, I was never a huge grunge guy. I consider Nirvana overrated. I can only name one Alice in Chains song (don't argue with me about including Alice in Chains in this conversation, they're featured prominently in the book). I saw Soundgarden once, mostly because they shared a bill with Danzig, and I might have seen Screaming Trees but I can't be sure. So I'm not worshipping the ground Kurt walked on or whatever. Yarm transcends mythology, or worse, drooling fandom. It's fascinating how often different figures' memories clash on key events, and Yarm doesn't shy from letting the reader navigate numerous perspectives. I wasn't there, of course, but I like the Seattle scene's feel, at least as portrayed in *Everybody Loves Our Town*, for a couple reasons. First, the scene seems small. These people all seem to know each other (except maybe Candlebox, who showed up late to the party and gets shit on by longtime scenesters). Second, especially compared to the New York and Los Angeles oral histories, this scene seems more fun and less pretentious. Until, uh, the heroin. Heroin's decimation of key players was tragic. Success also seemed to breed resentment. The people who bugged me the most were the "oh, Kurt and I were so close...we were bonded souls" types. Fuck you. Your life is sad. Stop it. Get some dignity.

I looked forward to reading *Everybody Loves Our Town* and bummed myself out when I left it at work over last weekend. Respect to Mark Yarm. Nice work.

---

## Heather says

Engrossing does not begin to describe how good this book is. I am old enough to remember when grunge got big and listening to never mind obsessively but I never understood what a big scene it was and how it happened. This book was hard to put down and at points hard to read(as people started to die). Total five star reading!

---

## Jenn Estepp says

There are few things I love more than a good oral history. They are absolutely the best bathroom reading (t.m.i.? oops, don't care.) And this is a very good one. Although, needs more pictures, but I guess that's what the tumblr is for.

p.s.  
I feel old.

---

## Ben says

This is a thorough, insightful, charming, funny, and ultimately melancholy look at the Seattle scene. If you are a fan of Nirvana or Soundgarden or Pearl Jam, you'll get the whole arc of those bands' successes, but the real heroes of the book for me were the guys from Mudhoney and the Melvins. The main villain, as anyone could probably expect, is Courtney Love, who shrugs off the thousands of easily verifiable awful things said about her with charming jibes like "gay" and "retarded." The easiest example of this duplicity is that she admits (now) to shooting heroin during her pregnancy (only the first trimester, so chill) while simultaneously threatening to assault the journalist who reported that she shot heroin during her pregnancy. She is a completely untethered person and only her bandmates seem to want to say anything remotely kind about her.

One big thing that stuck out to me was the brevity of Nirvana. Dave Grohl joins the band in late 1990, "Nevermind" comes out in 1991, Cobain basically alienates the band forever by demanding to reorganize the songwriting royalties in 1992, In Utero comes out in 1993, and Cobain was dead in April 1994. Pat Smear was in the band for six months! I wonder how much he even talked to Cobain, since Cobain was sadly circling the drain at that point with his heroin dependency and overdoses. Courtney Love was only with him for a little more than two years. It's very difficult to see her as anything less than an opportunistic hanger-on that drags Cobain into his death spiral. It is a miracle that their daughter is alive. At one point, infant Francis is sleeping on a hotel bed when a rock star junkie OD's and gets CPR from another rock star junkie as a third and forth rock star junkie is trying to destroy the evidence of drugs. Yeeesh.

But man, Mudhoney and the Melvins... their deadpan humor combined with the timing of their careers make them outstanding tour guides. Buzz from the Melvins is so delightfully caustic and musically pure. Mark Arm from Mudhoney has a great eye for the ridiculous while also enthusiastically participating in it. They each have a bunch of great lines and provide the meat of the narrative.

An unexpected treat was the story of Candlebox. The book makes a convincing case that the timing of their career was both perfect and disastrous - they were able to go from barely playing shows to signing on Madonnna's label and selling three million records (I was one of those three million, natch). But, at the same time, despite every member of the band hailing from the Seattle area, get brutalized by the suddenly very



serious-about-legitimacy press and local bands. Wayne Coyne from the Flaming Lips rambles into the story from Oklahoma City to declare them the "coffin" of grunge. Well, ok? Except Soundgarden and Pearl Jam and Alice in Chains went on to sell a bajillion "grunge" records and the genre was replaced by nu-metal, so what are we so excited about? It's funny how old beefs against Candlebox, who seem like nothing more than professional musicians, still cannot be buried in this book.

It's especially weird to me because Mother Love Bone - a band so revered in Seattle that Chris Cornell created Temple of the Dog as tribute to their deceased lead singer - is basically Use Your Illusion era Guns N Roses. Look at their band pictures! Listen to their songs! They wanted to be wearing tights and writing double albums with pianos and orchestras. Then two of them make Pearl Jam and all of a sudden anything theatrical is illegitimate. So for anyone to be self-righteous about Candlebox... I don't really get it. Pearl Jam in general seem to be exhaustingly self-righteous, while at the same time I appreciated that they care so much. Even if they care about dumb stuff a lot of the time.

I didn't find the parts about Sub Pop to be that interesting, but if you're into the dynamics of independent labels, there's a lot of discussion about it. Since I've never really cared to understand what it means for a record to be put out by one label and distributed by another that's a subsidiary of Warner Brothers, it never really grabbed me. The interoffice politics were interesting, as well as Buzz's explanation about how labels pressure bands to spend too much money on the road, as well as learning that the success of "Nevermind" brought new attention to Bleach, which Sub Pop put out, and saved the label. There were plenty of nuggets in that section to keep the pages turning for me.

The stories about TAD and the Screaming Trees and other bands that came up with the juggernauts and toured with them are great. The story ends with TAD kinda wrapping things up as a band, having seen most of their friends either die or achieve great success or both. And since it's an oral history of a scene, it ends with Seattle as a wasteland, which is a bummer.

Great book! Don't do heroin!

---

## Barney says

At first I thought this was by Mark Arm, lead signer of Green River and Mudhoney. Either way, this was an excellent piece of oral history; it is up there with Legs McNeil's book on punk. The book focuses on more of the little known yet important bands to the grunge movement: The U-Men, Green River, The Melvins, Skynyrd, Malfunkshun, 7 Year Bitch, The Fastbacks. In a word, excellent. I am planning on using this in the future in my rock history class.

The main source of tension in this book is, of course, Courtney Love. I actually am kind of afraid that she will Google "Courtney Love", see my blog complaining about her, and then attack me. I mean, she is batshit insane. Her comments for this book sound about as coherent as a 5 year old who broke into the parents liquor cabinet and drank that Peach Schnapps that has been sitting in the back since that party in 1994. Most people in the book have nice comments for her, with the most common being "gold digger". There is a lot of hate here for her. Frankly, it is absolutely deserved. Second to her is Candlebox, which is described "not as the nail in the coffin of grunge, but the actual fucking coffin". (344)

If anything, one of the few voices of reason in this text is fucking Bret Michaels. He says this "My career didn't end with grunge. My career with the media ended with grunge." (303). That is the real thing to take away from this text, that after Nirvana, Pearl Jam, Alice in Chains and Candlebox, most folks in the corporate rock world did not care about anyone else. Eddie Vedder and Mark Arm both describe a sort of

"scorched earth" Seattle, where ex-members of pioneering bands wander around in confusion after the trend muffins have left town. A land in which the punk roots of grunge were overlooked in the race to sign "the next Nirvana" and where shitty derivative bands got fat record deals. Exhibit A: Stone Temple Pilots, who weren't even from Seattle. Far be it from me to wish for a return to the spandex and Aqua Net days of the 1980s, but this book, as the Michaels quote points out, is about the bloodsucking creeps that are most record executives.

Cobain is quoted as labeling Mark Arm and Jeff Ament as "careerists", honing in on the one thing that I could never stand about Kurt Cobain. As Arm put it, "For me, playing music is the difference between me having a career and working in a restaurant for my entire life. If that makes me a careerist, fine." I agree with that assessment; Cobain never wanted to be popular and was never happy when he was. He is the archetype of the tortured artist. Without "Teen Spirit", Cobain is the 90s version of Alex Chilton. With Teen Spirit, he becomes a self-righteous prick. That's not to say I don't like his music. Perhaps in this way he was the Bob Dylan of his generation, someone you could absolutely dislike and mock as a person who continued to record music that ranged from awful to transcendent regardless.

---