

= Surfer Rosa =

Surfer Rosa is the first full @-@ length album by the American alternative rock band Pixies , released in March 1988 on the British independent record label 4AD . The album 's unusual and offbeat subject matter includes references to mutilation and voyeurism ; this is augmented by experimental recording techniques and a distinctive drum sound . Surfer Rosa contains many of the elements present in Pixies ' earlier output , including Spanish lyrics and references to Puerto Rico .

Because of 4AD 's independent status , distribution in the United States was handled by British label Rough Trade Records ; however , it failed to chart in either the UK or the U.S. " Gigantic " was the only single taken from the release (in a re @-@ recorded version) , and only reached number 93 on the UK Singles Chart . Despite this , Surfer Rosa was re @-@ released in the U.S. by Elektra Records in 1992 , and in 2005 was certified gold by the Recording Industry Association of America .

Surfer Rosa is often cited as a favorite of music critics and is frequently included on professional lists of the all @-@ time best rock albums . Many alternative rock artists , including Billy Corgan and PJ Harvey , have cited the album as inspirational ; Nirvana 's Kurt Cobain frequently acknowledged that Surfer Rosa was a strong influence on Nevermind , and , in 1993 , Cobain hired the album 's recording engineer Steve Albini to record his band 's album In Utero .

= = Background = =

Before the release of Pixies ' debut mini @-@ album Come On Pilgrim in October 1987 , Ivo Watts @-@ Russell , head of 4AD , suggested they return to the studio to record a full @-@ length album . The original plan was to record new material at Fort Apache Studios , where the band had produced The Purple Tape and Come On Pilgrim . However , due to differences between the band 's manager Ken Goes and The Purple Tape producer Gary Smith , Pixies ended up looking for a new producer and recording studio . On the advice of a 4AD colleague , Watts @-@ Russell looked to hire Steve Albini , ex @-@ frontman of Big Black , as the record 's engineer and producer . Having sent a pre @-@ release tape of Come On Pilgrim to Albini , Pixies ' manager , Ken Goes , invited him to a Boston dinner party at drummer David Lovering 's house a few weeks after Come On Pilgrim 's release .

Albini met the band that evening , and they discussed how the next record should sound and be recorded . According to Albini , " [the band and I] were in the studio the next day . " Paul Kolderie , who had worked at Fort Apache Studios with Smith , recommended the Boston recording studio Q Division to Albini . This created tension between Smith and Kolderie , and Kolderie later remarked that " Gary almost killed me for the suggestion , he thought I was scheming to get the project . "

= = Recording and production = =

Pixies entered Q Division in December 1987 , booking ten working days of studio time in which to record the album . 4AD allocated the band a budget of US \$ 10 @, @ 000 . Albini 's producer 's fee was US \$ 1 @, @ 500 , and he received no royalties ; Albini has a practice of refusing royalties from records he produces , viewing it as " an insult to the band . " Along with Albini in the studio , Q Division 's Jon Lupfer acted as studio assistant . The recording process took the entire booked period of ten working days to complete , with extra vocal mixes subsequently added in the studio . Albini planned to mix the record " somewhere else " , but according to Lupfer , " He was unhappy there with it . "

Albini used unusual recording techniques . For Kim Deal 's backing vocals in " Where Is My Mind ? " and her lead vocals on " Gigantic " , Albini moved the studio equipment and recorded in a studio bathroom to achieve real , rather than studio , echo ; according to John Murphy , Deal 's husband at the time , " Albini didn 't like the studio sound . " Albini later said that the record could have been completed in a week , but " we ended up trying more experimental stuff basically to kill time and see if anything good materialized . " An example was " Something Against You " , where Albini filtered Black Francis ' voice through a guitar amp for " a totally ragged , vicious texture . "

= = Studio banter = =

The recording of a conversation held between Francis and Albini can be heard at the end of " Oh My Golly ! ". According to Lupfer , " it was a concept he [Albini] was going for to get some studio banter . " As Deal was leaving the studio to smoke a cigarette , she exclaimed " If anybody touches my stuff , I 'll kill ya . " Francis replied with " I 'll kill you , you fucking die , if anybody touches my stuff " . The track begins at this point , with Francis explaining the conversation to Albini , whose voice is not heard on the track . Lupfer later admitted that Albini knew " perfectly well what was going on . "

" I 'm Amazed " begins with Deal recounting a story in which one of her former teachers who was " into field hockey players " was discreetly fired . Francis finishes Deal 's sentences , joking that her response to hearing of the teacher 's activities was to try to join the team . Albini later observed the use of studio banter on Surfer Rosa : " It 's on their record forever so I think now they are obliged to say that they 're ok with it , but I honestly don 't know that that idea would 've ever come up if I hadn 't done it . There are times when things like that are revealing and entertaining and I kind of felt it was a bit gimmicky on this record . "

= = Music = =

Like Come On Pilgrim , Surfer Rosa displays a mix of musical styles ; pop guitar songs such as " Broken Face " , " Break My Body " , and " Brick Is Red " are featured alongside slower , more melodic tracks exemplified by " Where Is My Mind ? " . The album includes heavier material , and prominently features the band 's trademark quiet @-@ loud dynamic . Frontman and principal songwriter Black Francis wrote the material , the only exception being " Gigantic , " which was co @-@ written with Kim Deal . " Gigantic " is one of only two Pixies album tracks on which Deal sang lead vocals .

Surfer Rosa 's lyrical content includes examinations of mutilation and incest in " Break My Body " and " Broken Face " , while references to superheroes appear on " Tony 's Theme " . Voyeurism appears in " Gigantic " , and surrealistic lyrics are featured on " Bone Machine " and " Where Is My Mind ? " . Puerto Rico references and Spanish lyrics are found on the tracks " Oh My Golly ! " and " Vamos . " The latter track was previously featured on Come On Pilgrim , and appears on Surfer Rosa as a rerecorded version of the original song . Many of the themes explored on previous recordings are revisited on Surfer Rosa ; however , unlike on the band 's later albums , the songs in Surfer Rosa are not preoccupied with one overarching topic .

Other unusual and offbeat subject matter is raised on the album . " Cactus " is narrated by a prison inmate who requests his girlfriend smear her dress with blood and mail it to him . " Gigantic " is an " unabashed praisesong to a well @-@ endowed black man , " and borrows from the 1986 film Crimes of the Heart , in which a married woman falls in love with a teenager . Francis was inspired to write " Where Is My Mind ? " after scuba diving in the Caribbean . He later said he had " this very small fish trying to chase me . I don 't know why ? I don 't know too much about fish behavior . "

= = Release = =

Surfer Rosa was released in the UK by 4AD on March 21 , 1988 , entering the UK Indie Chart the following week . It spent 60 weeks in the chart , peaking at number 2 . Until August of that year it was only available in the U.S. as an import . Although the label held worldwide distribution rights to Pixies , they did not have access to a distributor outside the UK . When 4AD signed a distribution deal with Rough Trade 's U.S. branch , the album was released on vinyl and cassette as part of the Surfer Rosa / Come On Pilgrim release . While Surfer Rosa / Come On Pilgrim has remained in print on CD in the UK , subsequent U.S. releases have seen the two released on separate CDs . These separate releases first appeared in January 1992 , when Elektra Records first reissued the band 's first two albums . After 4AD reacquired rights to the band 's U.S. distribution , they released both as separate CDs . Surfer Rosa was certified gold by the Recording Industry Association of America in

2005 , 17 years after its original release .

" Gigantic " was the only single taken from Surfer Rosa . The track and its B @-@ side , " River Euphrates " , were rerecorded by Gil Norton at Blackwing Studios in London , early in May 1988 . The remixed single was well met by critics . The single failed to sell , and spent just one week at number 93 on the UK Singles Chart . Despite the poor commercial performance of both Surfer Rosa and " Gigantic " , Ivo Watts @-@ Russell has said that the response to the album was " times five " compared with Come On Pilgrim .

= = Packaging = =

Surfer Rosa 's cover artwork features a photograph of a topless " friend of a friend " of the band , posing as a flamenco dancer , pitched against a wall which displays a crucifix and a torn poster . Simon Larbalestier , who contributed pictures to all Pixies album sleeves , decided to build the set because " we couldn 't find the atmosphere we wanted naturally . " According to Larbalestier , Black Francis came up with the idea for the cover as he wrote songs in his father 's " topless Spanish bar " ; Larbalestier added the crucifix and torn poster , and they " sort of loaded that with all the Catholicism . " Commenting on the cover in 2005 , Francis said , " I just hope people find it tasteful . " The cover booklet expands on the theme , and features photographs of the flamenco dancer in several other poses ; there are no song lyrics or written content , apart from album credits , in the booklet .

Albini 's name does not appear on the original record sleeve . The booklet 's photographs were taken in one day at a pub opposite the 4AD offices , because , according to Larbalestier , " it was one of the few places that had a raised stage " . In an 1988 interview with Joy Press , Black Francis described the concept as referring to " a surfer girl , " who " walks along the Beach of Binones , has a surfboard , very beautiful . " When questioned about the topless element , he replied , " For the first record , I told them I liked nudity . I like body lines ? not necessarily something in bad taste , didn 't even have to be female , just body lines ... like that Obsession ad , you know ? " According to Melody Maker , the album was originally entitled " Gigantic " after Deal 's song , but the band feared misinterpretation of the cover and changed it to " Surfer Rosa . " The " name " of the cover woman , and the album title , comes from the " Oh My Golly ! " lyric , " Besando chichando con surfer rosa . "

= = Critical reception = =

The UK music press reviews of Surfer Rosa were generally positive . Q 's Ian Cranna wrote that " what sets the Pixies apart are their sudden bursts of memorable pop melody , " and noted that " they could have a bright future ahead of them . " NME 's Mark Sinker , reviewing the album in March 1988 , said " they force the past to sound like them " , while Dave Henderson from Underground magazine found the songs " well crafted , well delivered sketches which embrace commercial ideals as well as bizarre left @-@ field out of control moments " . American music magazine Spin described it as " beautifully brutal " , and named Pixies their musicians of the year . In a less enthusiastic review for The Village Voice , Robert Christgau found the band 's guitar riffs recognizable and their strong rhythms unique but felt they had been overrated by critics who hailed them as " the Amerindie find of the year " . In retrospect , he wrote that while Francis ' fey and philosophically limited lyrics were somewhat annoying , Surfer Rosa now seems " audaciously funny and musically prophetic " .

At the end of 1988 , Surfer Rosa was named one of the year 's best albums on English critics ' year @-@ end lists . Independent music magazines Melody Maker and Sounds named Surfer Rosa as their album of the year ; NME and Record Mirror placed the album 10th and 14th , respectively . However , Surfer Rosa failed to appear on The Village Voice 's Pazz & Jop , an annual poll of American critics . It also did not appear on any end @-@ of @-@ year list in the United States . A number of music magazines have since positioned Surfer Rosa as one of the quintessential alternative rock records of the 1980s . The album has appeared on several all @-@ time best album lists , and is consistently placed as one of the best albums of the 1980s in any genre .

= = Legacy = =

Both Surfer Rosa and Steve Albini 's production of the album have been influential on alternative rock , and on grunge in particular . Nirvana 's Kurt Cobain cited Surfer Rosa as the basis for Nevermind 's songwriting . When he first heard the album , Cobain discovered a template for the mix of heavy noise and pop he was aiming to achieve . He remarked in 1993 that he " heard songs off of Surfer Rosa that I 'd written but threw out because I was too afraid to play them for anybody . " Cobain hired Albini to produce Nirvana 's 1993 album In Utero , primarily due to his contribution to Surfer Rosa . The Smashing Pumpkins ' Billy Corgan described Surfer Rosa as " the one that made me go , ' holy shit ' . It was so fresh . It rocked without being lame . " Corgan was impressed by the album 's drum sound , and acknowledged that The Smashing Pumpkins used to study the record for its technical elements . Musician PJ Harvey said that Surfer Rosa " blew my mind , " and that she " immediately went to track down Steve Albini . " Cobain listed Surfer Rosa as number 2 of the top 50 albums he thought were most influential to Nirvana 's sound in his journal in 1993 .

People connected with the band were impressed by the record . Ivo Watts @-@ Russell recalled : " I remember when I first heard Surfer Rosa thinking , ' I didn 't know the Pixies could sound like The Fall . ' That was my immediate reaction , in other words , incredibly raw . " Gary Smith , who at the time was in a disagreement with the band , admitted he " was really happy that they had made such a forceful , aggressive , record . " Dinosaur Jr . ' s J Mascis , comparing the record to the later Pixies albums Bossanova and Trompe le Monde , said he thought that Steve Albini 's production " sounded way better than the other ones . "

In 1991 , as Pixies were recording Trompe le Monde , Albini described his impressions of Pixies during the recording of Surfer Rosa to the fan magazine Forced Exposure : " A patchwork pinch loaf from a band who at their top dollar best are blandly entertaining college rock . Their willingness to be ' guided ' by their manager , their record company and their producers is unparalleled . Never have I seen four cows more anxious to be led around by their nose rings . " Albini later apologized for his remarks , saying , " to this day I regret having done it . I don 't think that I regarded the band as significantly as I should have . "

= = Track listing = =

All tracks written by Black Francis , except where noted .

" Bone Machine " ? 3 : 02

" Break My Body " ? 2 : 05

" Something Against You " ? 1 : 47

" Broken Face " ? 1 : 30

" Gigantic " (Francis / Kim Deal) ? 3 : 55

" River Euphrates " ? 2 : 33

" Where Is My Mind ? " ? 3 : 53

" Cactus " ? 2 : 16

" Tony 's Theme " ? 1 : 52

" Oh My Golly ! " ? 1 : 48

" Vamos " ? 4 : 18

" I 'm Amazed " ? 1 : 42

" Brick Is Red " ? 2 : 00

= = Personnel = =

All information taken from the CD release of Surfer Rosa .

Black Francis ? vocals , rhythm guitar , acoustic guitar

Kim Deal ? bass , backing vocals , vocals on " Gigantic " (credited as Mrs. John Murphy)

Joey Santiago ? lead guitar

David Lovering ? drums

Steve Albini ? production , audio engineering

Simon LARBALÉSTIER , Vaughan Oliver ? Cover image , album booklet imagery

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= = Accolades = =

The information regarding accolades attributed to Surfer Rosa is adapted from Acclaimedmusic.net.

(*) designates unordered lists .