

= In Utero (album) =

In Utero is the third and final studio album by the American rock band Nirvana , released on September 21 , 1993 , by DGC Records . Nirvana intended the record to diverge significantly from the polished production of its previous album , Nevermind (1991) . To capture a more abrasive and natural sound , the group hired engineer Steve Albini to record In Utero during a two @-@ week period in February 1993 at Pachyderm Studio in Cannon Falls , Minnesota . The music was recorded quickly with few studio embellishments , and the song lyrics and album packaging incorporated medical imagery that conveyed frontman Kurt Cobain 's outlook on his publicized personal life and his band 's newfound fame .

Soon after recording was completed , rumors circulated in the press that DGC might not release the album in its original state , as the record label felt that the result was not commercially viable . Although Nirvana publicly denied the statements , the group was not fully satisfied with the sound Albini had captured . Albini declined to alter the album further , and ultimately the band hired R.E.M. producer Scott Litt to make minor changes to the album 's sound and remix the singles " Heart @-@ Shaped Box " and " All Apologies " .

Upon release , In Utero entered the Billboard 200 chart at number one and received critical acclaim as a drastic departure from Nevermind . The record has been certified five times platinum by the Recording Industry Association of America , and has sold 15 million copies worldwide .

= = Background = =

Nirvana broke into the musical mainstream with its major label debut album Nevermind in 1991 . Despite modest sales estimates ? the band 's record company , DGC Records , forecast sales of 50 @,@ 000 copies ? Nevermind became a huge commercial success popularized the Seattle grunge movement and alternative rock in general . Nevertheless , all three members of Nirvana ? singer and guitarist Kurt Cobain , bassist Krist Novoselic , and drummer Dave Grohl ? later expressed dissatisfaction with the sound of the album , citing its production as too polished . Early in 1992 , Cobain told Rolling Stone that he was sure that the band 's next album would showcase " both of the extremes " of its sound , saying " it 'll be more raw with some songs and more candy pop on some of the others . It won 't be as one @-@ dimensional [as Nevermind] " . Cobain wanted to start work on the album in the summer of 1992 , but the band was unable as Cobain and his bandmates lived in different cities , and the singer and his wife Courtney Love were expecting the birth of their daughter Frances Bean . DGC had hoped to have a new album by the band ready for a late @-@ 1992 holiday season release ; since work on it proceeded slowly , the label released the compilation album Incesticide in December 1992 .

In a Melody Maker interview published in July 1992 , Cobain told the English journalist Everett True he was interested in recording with Jack Endino (who had produced the group 's 1989 debut album Bleach) and Steve Albini (former frontman of the noise rock band Big Black and producer for various independent releases) . Cobain said he would then choose the best material from the sessions for inclusion on the group 's next album . In October 1992 , Nirvana recorded several songs (mainly as instrumentals) during a demo session with Endino in Seattle ; they later re @-@ recorded many of these songs for In Utero . Endino recalled that the band did not ask him to produce its next record , but noted that the band members constantly debated working with Albini . The group recorded another set of demos while on tour in Brazil in January 1993 . One of the recordings from this session , the long improvisational track " Gallons of Rubbing Alcohol Flow Through the Strip " , was included as a hidden track on non @-@ US copies of In Utero .

Nirvana ultimately chose Albini to record its third album . Albini had a reputation as a principled and opinionated individual in the American independent music scene . While there was speculation that the band chose Albini to record the album due to his underground credentials , Cobain told Request magazine in 1993 , " For the most part I wanted to work with him because he happened to produce two of my favorite records , which were Surfer Rosa [by Pixies] and Pod [by The Breeders] . " Inspired by those albums , Cobain wanted to utilize Albini 's technique of capturing the natural

ambiance of a room via the usage and placement of several microphones , something previous Nirvana producers had been averse to trying . Months before the trio had even approached Albini about the recording , rumors circulated that he was slated to record the album . Albini sent a disclaimer to the British music press denying involvement , only to get a call from Nirvana 's management a few days later about the project . Although he considered the group to be " R.E.M. with a fuzzbox " and " an unremarkable version of the Seattle sound " , Albini told Nirvana biographer Michael Azerrad he accepted because he felt sorry for the band members , whom he perceived to be " the same sort of people as all the small @-@ fry bands I deal with " , at the mercy of their record company . Before the start of recording sessions , the band sent Albini a tape of the demos it had made in Brazil . In return , Albini sent Cobain a copy of the PJ Harvey album *Rid of Me* to give him an idea of the acoustics at the studio where they would record .

= = Recording = =

The members of Nirvana and Albini decided on a self @-@ imposed two @-@ week deadline for recording the album . Wary of interference by DGC , Albini suggested the band members pay for the sessions with their own money , which they agreed to . Studio fees totaled US \$ 24 @,@ 000 , while Albini took a flat fee of \$ 100 @,@ 000 for his services . Despite the suggestions of Nirvana 's management company Gold Mountain , Albini refused to take percentage points on record sales , even though he stood to earn about \$ 500 @,@ 000 in royalties . While a common practice among producers in the music industry , Albini refused to take royalties because he considered it to be immoral and " an insult to the artist " .

In February 1993 , Nirvana traveled to Pachyderm Studio in Cannon Falls , Minnesota , to record the album . Albini did not meet the band members until the first day of recording , though he had spoken to them beforehand about the type of album they wanted to make . Albini observed that " they wanted to make precisely the sort of record that I 'm comfortable doing " . The group stayed in a house located on the studio grounds during the recording sessions . Novoselic compared the isolated conditions to a gulag ; he added , " There was snow outside , we couldn 't go anywhere . We just worked . " For most of the sessions , the only people present were the band members , Albini , and technician Bob Weston . The band made it clear to DGC and Gold Mountain that it did not want any intrusion during the album production , going as far as not playing any of the work in progress for its record label A & R representative . To prevent the group 's managers and label from interfering , Albini instituted a strict policy of ignoring everyone except for the band members ; the producer explained that everyone associated with the group aside from the musicians themselves were " the biggest pieces of shit I ever met " .

The album sessions began slowly but would ultimately gain momentum ; the band arrived at Pachyderm Studio without their equipment , and spent much of the first three days there waiting for it to arrive by mail . However , once recording began on February 13 , work moved quickly . On most days the group began work around midday , took breaks for lunch and dinner , and continued work through midnight . Cobain , Novoselic , and Grohl recorded their basic instrumental tracks together as a band . The group utilized this set @-@ up on all songs except for faster compositions like " *Very Ape* " and " *Tourette 's* " , where the drums were recorded separately in a nearby kitchen due to its natural reverb . Albini surrounded Grohl 's drum kit with about 30 microphones . Cobain added additional guitar tracks to about half the songs , then added guitar solos , and finally vocals . The band did not discard takes , and kept virtually everything it captured on tape . Albini felt he was more an engineer than a producer ; despite his personal opinions , he ultimately let the band judge which were decent takes . He said , " Generally speaking , [Cobain] knows what he thinks is acceptable and what isn 't acceptable [...] He can make concrete steps to improve things that he doesn 't think are acceptable . " Cobain reportedly recorded all his vocal tracks in six hours . The band completed recording in six days ; Cobain had originally anticipated disagreements with Albini , whom the singer heard " was supposedly this sexist jerk " , but called the process " the easiest recording we 've ever done , hands down " . The only disruption occurred a week into the sessions , when Courtney Love arrived because she missed Cobain . The band , Love , and Albini refused to go into specifics , but

Weston 's girlfriend (who served as the studio 's chef) stated that Love created tension by criticizing Cobain 's work and being confrontational with everyone present .

The album was mixed over five days . This rate was quick by Nirvana 's standards , but not for Albini , who was used to mixing entire albums in a day or two . On occasions when work on a song mix was not producing desired results , the band and Albini took the rest of the day off to watch nature videos , set things on fire , and make prank phone calls for amusement . The sessions were completed on February 26 .

= = Music and lyrics = =

Albini sought to produce a record that sounded nothing like Nevermind . He felt the sound of Nevermind was " sort of a standard hack recording that has been turned into a very , very controlled , compressed radio @-@ friendly mix [...] That is not , in my opinion , very flattering to a rock band . " Instead , the intention was to capture a more natural and visceral sound . Albini refused to double @-@ track Cobain 's vocals and instead recorded him singing alone in a resonant room . The producer noted the intensity of the singer 's vocals on some tracks ; he said , " There 's a really dry , really loud voice at the end of ' Milk It ' ... that was also done at the end of ' Rape Me ' , where [Cobain] wanted the sound of him screaming to just overtake the whole band . " Albini achieved the album 's sparse drum sound by simply placing several microphones around the room while Dave Grohl performed , picking up the natural reverberation of the room . Albini explained , " If you take a good drummer and put him in front of a drum kit that sounds good acoustically and just record it , you 've done your job . "

Azerrad asserted in his 1993 biography *Come as You Are : The Story of Nirvana* that the music of *In Utero* showcased divergent sensibilities of abrasiveness and accessibility that reflected the upheavals Cobain experienced prior to the album 's completion . He wrote , " The Beatlesque ' Dumb ' happily coexists beside the all @-@ out frenzied punk graffiti of ' Milk It , ' while ' All Apologies ' is worlds away from the apoplectic ' Scentless Apprentice . ' It 's as if [Cobain] has given up trying to meld his punk and pop instincts into one harmonious whole . Forget it . This is war . " Cobain believed , however , that *In Utero* was not " any harsher or any more emotional " than any of Nirvana 's previous records . Novoselic concurred with Azerrad 's comments that the album 's music leaned more towards the band 's " arty , aggressive side " ; the bassist said , " There 's always been [Nirvana] songs like ' About a Girl ' and there 's always been songs like ' Paper Cuts ' ... Nevermind came out kind of ' About a Girl ' -y and this [album] came out more ' Paper Cuts ' " . Cobain cited the track " Milk It " as an example of the more experimental and aggressive direction the band 's music had been moving in the months prior to the sessions at Pachyderm Studio . Novoselic viewed the album 's singles " Heart @-@ Shaped Box " and " All Apologies " as " gateways " to the more abrasive sound of the rest of the album , telling journalist Jim DeRogatis that once listeners played the record they would discover " this aggressive wild sound , a true alternative record " .

Several of the songs on *In Utero* had been written years prior to recording ; some of them dated back to 1990 . With tracks like " Frances Farmer Will Have Her Revenge on Seattle " , Cobain favored long song titles in reaction to contemporary alternative rock bands that utilized single @-@ word titles . Cobain continued to work on the lyrics while recording at Pachyderm Studio . Nonetheless , Cobain told Darcey Steinke in *Spin* in 1993 that in contrast to *Bleach* and *Nevermind* , the lyrics were " more focused , they 're almost built on themes . " Michael Azerrad asserted that the lyrics were less impressionistic and more straightforward than in previous Nirvana songs . Azerrad also noted that " [v] irtually every song contains some image of sickness and disease " . In a number of songs Cobain made reference to books he had read . " Frances Farmer Will Have Her Revenge on Seattle " was inspired by *Shadowland* , a 1978 biography of actress Frances Farmer , whom Cobain had been fascinated with ever since he read the book in high school . The song " Scentless Apprentice " was written about *Perfume : The Story of a Murderer* , a historical horror novel about a perfumer 's apprentice born with no body odor of his own but with a highly developed sense of smell , and who attempts to create the " ultimate perfume " by killing virgin women and

taking their scent .

Cobain stated in a 1993 interview with The Observer that " for the most part [In Utero] ' s very impersonal " . The songwriter also told Q that year that the abundance of infant and childbirth imagery on the album and his newfound fatherhood were coincidental . However , Azerrad argued that much of the album contains personal themes , noting that Grohl held a similar view . Grohl said , " A lot of what he has to say is related to a lot of the shit he 's gone through . And it 's not so much teen angst anymore . It 's a whole different ball game : rock star angst . " Cobain downplayed recent events (" I really haven 't had that exciting a life ") and told Azerrad that he did not want to write a track that explicitly expressed his anger at the media , but the author countered that " Rape Me " seemed to deal with that very issue . While Cobain said the song was written long before his troubles with drug addiction became public , he agreed that the song could be viewed in that light . " Serve the Servants " contains comments about Cobain 's life , both as a child and as an adult . The opening lines " Teenage angst has paid off well / Now I 'm bored and old " were a reference to Cobain 's state of mind in the wake of Nirvana 's success . Cobain dismissed the media attention given to the effect his parents ' divorce had on his life with the line " That legendary divorce is such a bore " from the chorus , and directly addressed his father with the lines " I tried hard to have a father / But instead I had a dad / I just want you to know that I don 't hate you anymore / There is nothing I could say that I haven 't thought before " . Cobain said he wanted his father to know he did not hate him , but had no desire to talk to him .

= = Packaging and title = =

Cobain originally wanted to name the album I Hate Myself and I Want to Die , a phrase that had originated in his journals in mid @-@ 1992 . At the time , the singer used the phrase as a response whenever someone asked him how he was doing . Cobain intended the album title as a joke ; he stated he was " tired of taking this band so seriously and everyone else taking it so seriously " . Novoselic convinced Cobain to change the title due to fear that it could potentially result in a lawsuit . The band then considered using Verse Chorus Verse ? a title taken from its song " Verse Chorus Verse " , and an earlier working title of " Sappy " ? before eventually settling on In Utero . The final title was taken from a poem written by Courtney Love .

The art director for In Utero was Robert Fisher , who had designed all of Nirvana 's releases on DGC . Most of the ideas for the artwork for the album and related singles came from Cobain . Fisher recalled that " [Cobain] would just give me some loose odds and ends and say ' Do something with it . ' " The cover of the album is an image of a Transparent Anatomical Manikin , with angel wings superimposed . Cobain created the collage on the back cover , which he described as " Sex and woman and In Utero and vaginas and birth and death " , that consists of model fetuses , a turtle shell and models of turtles , and body parts lying in a bed of orchids and lilies . The collage had been set up on the floor of Cobain 's living room and was photographed by Charles Peterson after an unexpected call from Cobain . The album 's track listing and re @-@ illustrated symbols from Barbara G. Walker 's The Woman 's Dictionary of Symbols and Sacred Objects were then positioned around the edge of the collage .

= = Production controversy and remixing = =

After the recording sessions were completed , Nirvana sent unmastered tapes of the album to several individuals , including the president of DGC 's parent company Geffen Records Ed Rosenblatt and the group 's management company Gold Mountain . When asked about the feedback he received , Cobain told Michael Azerrad , " The grown @-@ ups don 't like it . " He said he was told his songwriting was " not up to par " , the sound was " unlistenable " , and that there was uncertainty that mainstream radio would welcome the sound of Albini 's production . There were few people at Geffen or Gold Mountain who wanted the band to record with Albini to begin with , and Cobain felt he was receiving an unstated message to scrap the sessions and start all over again . Cobain was upset and said to Azerrad , " I should just rerecord this record and do the same thing we

did last year because we sold out last year ? there 's no reason to try and redeem ourselves as artists at this point . I can 't help myself ? I 'm just putting out a record I would like to listen to at home . " However , a number of the group 's friends liked the album , and by April 1993 Nirvana was intent on releasing *In Utero* as it was . According to Cobain , " Of course , they want another *Nevermind* , but I 'd rather die than do that . This is exactly the kind of record I would buy as a fan , that I would enjoy owning . "

The band members began to have doubts about the record 's sound . During this time Cobain admitted , " The first time I played it at home , I knew there was something wrong . The whole first week I wasn 't really interested in listening to it at all , and that usually doesn 't happen . I got no emotion from it , I was just numb . " The group concluded that the bass and lyrics were inaudible and approached Albini to remix the album . The producer declined ; as he recalled , " [Cobain] wanted to make a record that he could slam down on the table and say , ' Listen , I know this is good , and I know your concerns about it are meaningless , so go with it . ' And I don 't think he felt he had that yet ... My problem was that I feared a slippery slope . " The band attempted to fix its concerns with the record during the mastering process with Bob Ludwig at his studio in Portland , Maine . Novoselic was pleased with the results , but Cobain still did not feel the sound was perfect .

Soon afterward , in April 1993 Albini remarked to the *Chicago Tribune* that he doubted Geffen would release the completed album . Albini commented years later that in a sense he felt he spoke about the situation " from a position of ignorance , because I wasn 't there when the band was having their discussions with the record label . All I know is ... we made a record , everybody was happy with it . A few weeks later I hear that it 's unreleasable and it 's all got to be redone " . While Albini 's remarks in the article drew no immediate reply from the group or its label , *Newsweek* ran a similar article soon afterwards that did . Nirvana denied there was any pressure from its label to change the album 's sound , sending a letter to *Newsweek* that said that the article 's author " ridiculed our relationship with our label based on totally erroneous [sic] information " ; the band also reprinted the letter in a full @-@ page ad in *Billboard* . Rosenblatt insisted in a press release that Geffen would release anything the band submitted , and label founder David Geffen made the unusual move of personally calling *Newsweek* to complain about the article .

Nirvana wanted to do further work on the recorded tracks , and considered working with producer Scott Litt and remixing some tracks with Andy Wallace (who had mixed *Nevermind*) . Albini vehemently disagreed , and claimed he had an agreement with the band that it would not modify the tracks without his involvement . Albini initially refused to give the album master tapes to Gold Mountain , but relented after a phone call from Novoselic . The band decided against working with Wallace and chose to remix and augment the songs " Heart @-@ Shaped Box " and " All Apologies " with Litt at Seattle 's Bad Animals Studio in May 1993 . Furthermore , a remix of " Pennyroyal Tea " by Scott Litt (at Bad Animals on November 22 , 1993) appears on the censored Wal @-@ Mart and Kmart versions of *In Utero* ; this remix is also available on the band 's 2002 best @-@ of compilation , *Nirvana* , and is the same mix that appeared on the single . One song , " I Hate Myself and Want to Die " , was omitted from the final track listing as Cobain felt there were too many " noise " songs on the album . The rest of the album was left unaltered aside from a remastering which sharpened the bass guitar sound and increased the volume of the vocals by approximately three decibels . Albini was critical of the album 's final mix ; he said , " The end result , the record in the stores doesn 't sound all that much like the record that was made . Though it 's still them singing and playing their songs , and the musical quality of it still comes across . "

= = Release and reception = =

To avoid over @-@ hyping the album , DGC Records took a low @-@ key approach to promoting *In Utero* ; the company 's head of marketing told *Billboard* before the album 's release that the label was taking a promotional strategy similar to that of *Nevermind* , and explained that the label would " set things up , duck , and get out of the way " . The label aimed its promotion at alternative markets and press , and released the album on vinyl record as part of this strategy . In contrast to the previous album , the label did not release any of *In Utero* 's singles commercially in the United

States . DGC sent promo copies of the album 's first single " Heart @-@ Shaped Box " to American college , modern rock , and album @-@ oriented rock radio stations in early September , but the label did not target Top 40 radio . Despite the label 's promotion , the band was convinced that In Utero would not be as successful as Nevermind . Cobain told Jim DeRogatis , " We 're certain that we won 't sell a quarter as much , and we 're totally comfortable with that because we like this record so much . "

In Utero was released on September 13 , 1993 on vinyl record and cassette tape in the United Kingdom , and on September 14 on vinyl in the United States , with the American vinyl pressing limited to 25 @,@ 000 copies . Although the album was issued on compact disc in the UK on September 14 , a full domestic release did not occur until September 21 . In Utero debuted at number one on the Billboard 200 album chart , selling 180 @,@ 000 copies in its first week of release . Meanwhile , retail chain stores Wal @-@ Mart and Kmart refused to sell the album . According to The New York Times , Wal @-@ Mart claimed it did not carry the album due to lack of consumer demand , while Kmart representatives explained that the album " didn 't fit within our merchandise mix " . In truth , both chains feared that customers would be offended by the artwork on the album 's back cover . DGC issued a new version of the album with reworked packaging to the stores in March 1994 . This version featured edited album artwork , listed the name of " Rape Me " as " Waif Me " , and included a Scott Litt remix of " Pennyroyal Tea " . A spokesperson for Nirvana explained that the band decided to edit the packaging because as kids Cobain and Novoselic were only able to buy music from the two chain stores ; as a result they " really want to make their music available to kids who don 't have the opportunity to go to mom @-@ and @-@ pop stores " .

In Utero received acclaim from critics , although some reviews were mixed . Time 's Christopher John Farley stated in his review of the album , " Despite the fears of some alternative @-@ music fans , Nirvana hasn 't gone mainstream , though this potent new album may once again force the mainstream to go Nirvana . " Rolling Stone reviewer David Fricke said that the album is " a lot of things ? brilliant , corrosive , enraged and thoughtful , most of them all at once . But more than anything , it 's a triumph of the will . " Entertainment Weekly reviewer David Browne commented " Kurt Cobain hates it all " , and noted that the sentiment pervades the record . Browne argued , " The music is often mesmerizing , cathartic rock & roll , but it is rock & roll without release , because the band is suspicious of the old @-@ school rock cliches such a release would evoke . " NME magazine 's John Mulvey had doubts about the record ; he concluded , " As a document of a mind in flux ? dithering , dissatisfied , unable to come to terms with sanity ? Kurt [Cobain] should be proud of [the album] . As a follow @-@ up to one of the best records of the past ten years it just isn 't quite there . " Ben Thompson of The Independent commented that in spite of the album 's more abrasive songs , " In Utero is beautiful far more often than it is ugly " , and added , " Nirvana have wisely neglected to make the unlistenable punk @-@ rock nightmare they threatened us with . " Q magazine felt that the album showcases Cobain 's songwriting abilities and wrote , " If this is how Cobain is going to develop , the future is lighthouse @-@ bright " . Several critics ranked In Utero as one of the best releases of the year . It placed first and second in the album categories of the Rolling Stone and Village Voice Pazz & Jop year @-@ end critics ' polls , respectively . Additionally , The New York Times included it on its list of the top ten albums of the year . The album was nominated for Best Alternative Music Album at the 1994 Grammy Awards .

That October , Nirvana embarked on its first American tour in two years to promote the album . A second single , a split release that featured " All Apologies " and " Rape Me " , was issued in December in the United Kingdom . The band began a six @-@ week European leg of the tour in February 1994 , but it was cancelled after Cobain suffered a drug overdose in Rome on March 6 . Cobain agreed to enter drug rehabilitation , but the singer went missing soon afterwards , and on April 8 he was found dead in his Seattle home as the result of suicide by a shotgun blast . The intended third single from In Utero , " Pennyroyal Tea " , was cancelled in the wake of Cobain 's death and the subsequent dissolution of Nirvana ; limited promotional copies were released in Britain . Three days after Cobain 's body was discovered , In Utero moved back up the Billboard charts , from number 72 to number 27 .

In the ensuing years , In Utero has continued to perform commercially and gather critical praise . In

a 2003 Guitar World article that commemorated the tenth anniversary of the album 's release , Cobain biographer Charles R. Cross argued that In Utero was " a far better record [than Nevermind] and one that only 10 years later seems to be an influential seed spreader , judging by current bands . If it is possible for an album that sold four million copies to be overlooked , or underappreciated , then In Utero is that lost pearl . " That same year , Pitchfork Media placed In Utero at number 13 on its list of the 100 best albums of the 1990s . In 2004 Blender ranked it at number 94 in its " 100 Greatest American Albums of All Time " list , while in 2005 , Spin placed it at number 51 on its " 100 Greatest Albums 1985 ? 2005 " retrospective . Rolling Stone has ranked it at number 435 on its list " The 500 Greatest Albums of All Time " , and number 7 on its list the " 100 Best Albums of the Nineties " . In 2005 , In Utero was ranked number 358 in Rock Hard magazine 's book of The 500 Greatest Rock & Metal Albums of All Time . In Utero has been certified five times platinum by the Recording Industry Association of America for shipments of over five million units , and has sold 4 @ , @ 258 @ , @ 000 copies in the United States , according to Nielsen SoundScan . To commemorate the album 's 20th anniversary , DGC reissued In Utero in several different formats in September 2013 . The album was also included in the book 1001 Albums You Must Hear Before You Die .

= = Track listing = =

Bonus track on non @-@ American pressings

" Gallons of Rubbing Alcohol Flow Through the Strip " (Cobain , Grohl , Novoselic) ? 7 : 28

= = Personnel = =

Nirvana

Kurt Cobain - guitar , lead vocals , art direction , design , photography

Krist Novoselic - bass guitar

Dave Grohl - drums , backing vocals

Additional personnel

Steve Albini ? producer , engineer

Robert Fisher ? art direction , design , photography

Alex Grey ? illustrations

Adam Kasper ? second engineer

Michael Lavine ? photography

Scott Litt ? mixing

Bob Ludwig ? audio mastering

Karen Mason ? photography

Charles Peterson ? photography

Kera Schaley ? cello on " All Apologies " and " Dumb "

Neil Wallace ? photography

Bob Weston ? technician

= = Charts = =

= = = Singles = = =

= = Certifications = =