

= Heart @-@ Shaped Box =

" Heart @-@ Shaped Box " is a song by American rock band Nirvana , written by vocalist and guitarist Kurt Cobain . The song was released as the first single from the group 's third and final studio album , In Utero , in 1993 . It was one of two songs from the album mixed by Scott Litt in order to augment the original production by producer Steve Albini . While Nirvana 's label DGC Records did not release a physical single for sale in the United States , " Heart @-@ Shaped Box " received much American radio airplay , reaching number one on the Billboard Modern Rock Tracks chart . The international release of the single reached number five on the UK Singles Chart . The song 's music video , directed by Anton Corbijn , garnered critical plaudits , and won two awards , including Best Alternative Video at the MTV Video Music Awards in 1994 .

= = Origin and recording = =

Kurt Cobain wrote " Heart @-@ Shaped Box " in early 1992 . Cobain forgot about the song for a while , but began working on it again when he and his wife , Courtney Love , moved to a house in the Hollywood Hills . In a 1994 Rolling Stone interview , Love said she overheard him working on the song 's riff in a closet . She said she asked him if she could use the riff for one of her songs , to which he replied , " Fuck off ! " and closed the closet door . " He was trying to be so sneaky " , said Love . " I could hear that one from downstairs . " The couple shared a journal in which they would write lyrics ; Cobain biographer Charles R. Cross noted that Love 's songwriting sensibility informed Cobain 's on the song . The song 's name came from a heart @-@ shaped box Love had given Cobain . However , Cobain had originally titled the song " Heart @-@ Shaped Coffin " .

Nirvana had difficulty completing the song . Cobain attempted to have the rest of the band complete the song during jam sessions . He said , " During those practices , I was trying to wait for Krist and Dave to come up with something but it just turned into noise all the time . " One day Cobain made one last attempt at completing the song . Cobain was able to come up with a vocal melody and the band finally finished writing the song . Cobain said that when they completed " Heart @-@ Shaped Box " , " We finally realized that it was a good song . "

In January 1993 , the band recorded a demo of " Heart @-@ Shaped Box " during sessions with Craig Montgomery in Rio de Janeiro , Brazil ; it was the first song recorded . The In Utero version was recorded in February 1993 by Steve Albini in Cannon Falls , Minnesota . Prior to the album 's release , the track was remixed by Scott Litt . Cobain was unapologetic about the band 's decision to remix it , and maintained that the vocals and bass were not prominent enough in the original mixes . Nirvana bassist Krist Novoselic was also unhappy with the original mix of " Heart @-@ Shaped Box " . In a 1993 Chicago Sun @-@ Times interview , he said the original effect used on the song 's guitar solo sounded " like a fucking abortion hitting the floor . " When the song was remixed by Litt , Cobain took the opportunity to add acoustic guitar and vocal harmonies .

= = Composition and lyrics = =

Journalist Gillian Gaar described " Heart @-@ Shaped Box " as " the Nirvana formula personified , with a restrained , descending riff played through the verse , building in intensity to the cascading passion of the chorus " .

Cobain said the song was inspired by documentaries about children with cancer . He told biographer Michael Azerrad , " Anytime I think about it , it makes me sadder than anything I can think of . " Azerrad asserted in his biography Come as You Are : The Story of Nirvana that despite Cobain 's explanation , the song actually appeared to be about Courtney Love . Charles Cross wrote in his Kurt Cobain biography Heavier Than Heaven that with the lyric " I wish I could eat your cancer when you turn black " , the frontman " sang in what has to be the most convoluted route any songwriter undertook in pop history to say ' I love you ' " . After a performance of the song by singer Lana Del Rey in 2012 , Courtney Love asserted on Twitter that the song is about her vagina . The tweets were deleted shortly after . Cobain said that the song 's chorus of " Hey / Wait / I 've got a

new complaint " was him giving an example of how he was perceived by the media .

= = Release = =

In the United States , DGC issued " Heart @-@ Shaped Box " to college , modern rock , and album @-@ oriented rock radio stations in early September 1993 . There were no plans to release a single for the song domestically . At the time , Geffen Records ' head of marketing told Billboard that the label was not actively courting Top 40 radio , explaining " Nirvana didn 't sell nearly 5 million [records] because of a hit single . They sold that many albums because of who they are . " The song entered the Billboard Modern Rock Tracks chart at number seven , and eventually peaked at number one on the chart . The song also reached number four on the Mainstream Rock Tracks chart . A single of the song was released in the United Kingdom , where it peaked at number five on the UK Singles Chart . Issued in August 1993 , the 7 @-@ inch vinyl and cassette formats featured " Marigold " as a B @-@ side , while the 12 @-@ inch vinyl and CD editions added the In Utero track " Milk It " . In 1999 the song was voted in at number 10 in Kerrang ! magazine 's " 100 Greatest Rock Tracks Ever ! " .

= = Music video = =

Nirvana originally wanted Kevin Kerslake , who had directed the videos for the band 's singles " Come as You Are " , " Lithium " , " In Bloom " , and " Sliver " , to direct the " Heart @-@ Shaped Box " music video . Kerslake prepared five treatments during July and August 1993 , but no shoot arrangements were made and by the end of the month , the group decided to work with Dutch photographer and video director Anton Corbijn . Corbijn , who typically created his own ideas for videos , was initially unsure of directing the video since Cobain 's treatment was so detailed . Corbijn said , " But then I looked at it and I thought that actually it was pretty good . I was very amazed by somebody writing a song and having those ideas as precise as he did . "

The video begins and ends with the band in a hospital setting watching an old man being administered medication through an IV drip . The majority of the video takes place in a surreal outdoor setting that incorporates imagery from the film The Wizard of Oz . During the song 's first verse , the old man from the hospital climbs onto a crow @-@ ridden Christian cross . The second verse introduces a young girl in a white robe and peaked cap reaching for human fetuses in a tree , and an overweight woman in a suit with human organs painted onto it and with angel wings affixed to her back . In the video 's final cut , the band is only shown performing in the outdoor setting during the choruses , where Cobain 's face moves in and out of focus in the camera . While most of the video was devised by Cobain , Corbijn added elements such as the intentionally artificial crows , a ladder for the old man to climb onto the cross with , and a box with a heart at the top that the band performs inside of during the song 's final chorus . Corbijn created another cut of the video featuring alternate footage during the final verse , including more shots of the young girl and the woman , and scenes of Cobain lying on his back in the poppy field , with mist surrounding him . This version of the video is featured on the DVD The Work of Director Anton Corbijn .

After the video 's release , Kevin Kerslake sued Nirvana , alleging copyright infringement . The case was settled out of court . The " Heart @-@ Shaped Box " music video was the number one most played music video on MTV in the US as recorded by Billboard magazine on November 20 , 1993 . The video won two MTV Video Music Awards in 1994 , for Best Alternative Video and for Best Art Direction . As the ceremony was held after Kurt Cobain 's April 1994 death , the awards were accepted by Cobain 's former bandmates Novoselic , Grohl , and touring guitarist Pat Smear . " Heart @-@ Shaped Box " also topped the music video category in the 1993 Village Voice Pazz & Jop critics ' poll . In 2011 , NME ranked the song 's music video at number 22 on its of the " 100 Greatest Music Videos " . That same year , Time magazine ranked " Heart @-@ Shaped Box " at number 10 on its list of " The 30 All @-@ TIME Best Music Videos " , where it was described as " beautiful and [...] terrible " .

In February 2016 , Nirvana drummer Dave Grohl reunited with the actress , Kesley Rohr , who

played the girl in the " Heart @-@ Shaped Box " music video twenty @-@ three years earlier and who was then just six years old . Rohr stated that " Today reminded me that I peaked at 6 years old BUT I was the most badass kid on the playground . Today was the absolute coolest . Or in Dave ? s words seeing each other today was a ? historic moment ? ! What a legend ! " .

= = Track listing = =

All songs written by Kurt Cobain except where noted .

= = Chart positions = =

= = Personnel = =

Kurt Cobain : vocals , guitar

Krist Novoselic : bass

Dave Grohl : drums , backing vocals