

= New Slang =

" New Slang " is a song by American rock band The Shins , released on February 19 , 2001 as the lead single from the group 's debut studio album , Oh , Inverted World (2001) . Written by guitarist and vocalist James Mercer , it concerns his hometown of Albuquerque , New Mexico and his experiences there in his late twenties . The lyrics are fueled with " angst and confusion , " as Mercer was finding himself constantly depressed and disconnected from his friends and scene . The song attracted attention from Sub Pop Records , who issued the song as a single in February 2001 . The buzz created by the song led to positive press for the group 's debut album , Oh , Inverted World .

The song began to be licensed in a variety of media beginning in 2002 , including various television programs and a McDonald 's advert that aired during the 2002 Winter Olympics . Although the song never charted on any international charts , it became a sensation following its appearance in the film Garden State (2004) , where a character referred to it as a song that " will change your life . " The band saw increased record sales and notoriety as a result . Critics were very positive in their assessments of " New Slang " , with many calling it one of the best songs from Oh , Inverted World .

The song 's music video was directed by Lance Bangs , and features shots filmed in Albuquerque and Portland , Oregon .

= = Background = =

The Shins were not truly a band when James Mercer composed the song , and the idea of making music his career seemed uncertain . The song 's creation was partially a reaction to the music scene in Albuquerque , New Mexico , the band 's hometown , which Mercer described as " macho , really heavy , and aggressive . " He characterized it as a punk rock @-@ esque move akin to giving the finger to the entire town . The song was born out of frustration regarding his personal life and future . " It 's definitely a moment in my life , that sort of angst and confusion about what my future was going to be , " he remarked . He described it as a " Saturn return " period of his life , in which he felt he could not relate to anyone in his hometown and his life there had become depressing . He had become a " hermit " working on the band 's debut album , Oh , Inverted World , and had lost interest in partying with friends . The line " Gold teeth and a curse for this town " refers to his songwriting talent and his feelings on Albuquerque .

Friends of the band , including Zeke Howard from Love As Laughter and Isaac Brock from Modest Mouse sent record labels cassette demos of the band 's songs , including " New Slang " . Mercer sent a demo to Sub Pop Records in Seattle , Washington , and label co @-@ founder Jonathan Poneman caught a concert in San Francisco while the band was on tour with Modest Mouse . He offered the band a one @-@ off single deal , and the label included it in their Single @-@ of @-@ the @-@ Month series , issuing a 7 " single to fan club members in February 2001 . Positive press for " New Slang " made the group 's debut , Oh , Inverted World , one of the most anticipated indie rock albums of 2001 , and Sub Pop signed the band in full .

= = Reception = =

= = = Critical reception = = =

" New Slang " received positive critical reception . Stewart Mason of the Weekly Alibi in the band 's hometown of Albuquerque called it " the most immediately appealing song on the album , " praising it as " simply brilliant , [...] mostly acoustic ballad with the absolute finest melody the band has yet concocted and Mercer 's typically oblique but evocative lyrics . "

AllMusic called the song a " mid @-@ tempo , strummy folk tune with a real catch @-@ on falsetto melody , " giving its 7 " single a four @-@ star review , summarizing that the release " could be a lost single from a brilliant , obscure ' 60s psych @-@ folk band while still sounding far ahead of its

time . " Rolling Stone ranked it the " most affecting " song from Oh , Inverted World , describing it as " a shuffling folk ballad with a spaghetti @-@ western feel and a somber melody that could have come off an Elliott Smith album . " Pitchfork Media panned the song , deeming it an imitation of Simon & Garfunkel . The New York Times also covered the song , noting that " It has an odd , slightly serpentine vocal melody (it sounds a bit like an adapted madrigal) , and the lyrics are absurd and somehow touching . "

The A.V. Club called " New Slang " one of the year 's " loveliest ballads . " Will Hermes , in a piece on NPR 's All Things Considered , called the song a " masterpiece , " as well as " ridiculously melodic and structurally flawless . " Pitchfork Media later included the song at number 62 on its list of " The Top 500 Tracks of the 2000s , " calling it " An agoraphobic bedroom @-@ pop gem that shuffled its way onto a stage larger than anyone imagined possible . " New Slang " paved the way for Norah , Nick , Juno , and the many lovely , odd , and grating mainstream / indie pairings to come . "

= = = Accolades = = =

* denotes an unordered list

= = Music video = =

The song 's music video was filmed in various locations in Albuquerque and Portland . Among the areas filmed included the Rio Grande , junkyards , and near Mercer 's home . The clip was directed by Lance Bangs , an associate of Spike Jonze . It features the band re @-@ enacting the cover art of other bands ' albums , including Zen Arcade and New Day Rising by Hüsker Dü , Let It Be by The Replacements , Moon Pix by Cat Power , Double Nickels on the Dime by The Minutemen , Squirrel Bait 's first EP , Sonic Youth 's Sister and Slint 's Spiderland . Shooting in just two cities created logistical problems for album covers originally photographed in cities such as Los Angeles , Minneapolis , and Louisville . For the homage to Double Nickels on the Dime , the band had to track down the exact model of the car featured on the album cover (a Volkswagen Beetle) , and Albuquerque happened to have a San Pedro Street , which is featured on a freeway sign on the original cover .

The video was in rotation on M2 , Much Music , and on the program 120 Minutes . The clip was also available for download from Sub Pop 's website in 2002 .

= = Commercial performance and usage = =

The song proved to be a " stealth hit , " helping Oh , Inverted World move over 100 @,@ 000 copies within two years , considered remarkable for an independent label ; Sub Pop had hoped the record would sell 10 @,@ 000 copies . The song was also used on an episode of Scrubs , The O.C. , The Sopranos , Buffy the Vampire Slayer , and the MTV reality series Newlyweds : Nick and Jessica . Mercer was positive in licensing the song to a variety of media , confirming to The New York Times that he received more money from touring and licensing than record sales .

The song was featured in a McDonald 's advert that aired during the 2002 Winter Olympics . Mercer elaborated on the song 's in an interview : " That whole thing was just an ad agency that McDonald ? s hired to do a ? hip commercial , ? or whatever . So the kid who offered the whole thing up to us was a Shins fan . " Online message boards (many on Pitchfork.com) and fans of the Shins criticized the move as excessively commercialist . The band 's hometown alt weekly ran an editorial titled " McShins , New Corporate Suck @-@ ass " in reaction . The ad 's aesthetics were criticized for straying from the company 's typical upbeat themes , and fans of the band found its inclusion subversive , considering a set of the song 's lyrics , which at times refer to " the dirt in your fries . " The royalties Mercer earned from the commercial allowed him to purchase a home . In addition , the band used the money to finance a tour and relocate to Portland , Oregon , where they built a basement studio and recorded their second album , Chutes Too Narrow (2003) . Mercer

nevertheless " recognized the detrimental capacity of linking music with advertising , " remarking , " Imagine us playing " New Slang , " and everyone in the audience going , ' That 's the song from the McDonald 's commercial ? I 'm loving it . ' "

" New Slang " achieved a new level of cultural significance when it was prominently featured in the film Garden State (2004) . In a scene from the film , Sam (portrayed by Natalie Portman) tells Andrew Largeman (played by director Zach Braff) that the song " will change your life . " The song " changed everything " for the group , leading their first two albums to sell more than twice what they had prior to the film 's debut . " Almost overnight , the Shins became indie @-@ rock icons , " wrote Robert Levine of Spin . The band extended their tour in support of the song and its popularity . " We saw a change in our audience . By the time we were done touring for Chutes Too Narrow , there was this new interest , " said Mercer . " We toured again almost as the soundtrack to that movie , and colleges were all of a sudden interested in us playing on their campuses . We wanted to consummate the new relationship by touring and having a relationship with them . I mean , it just kept growing ! " This additional exposure helped Oh , Inverted World move 500 @,@ 000 units in the United States .

The band performed the song on their debut appearance at Saturday Night Live in 2007 . Mercer was disappointed the show 's producers requested he perform a song at that point six years old , but obliged after hearing stories of artists that argued their setlist and were not invited back .

= = Formats and track listing = =

7 " (2001)

" New Slang " ? 3 : 51

" Sphagnum Esplanade " - 4 : 01

CD Promo (2004)

" New Slang " ? 3 : 51