

= Today (The Smashing Pumpkins song) =

" Today " is a song by American alternative rock band The Smashing Pumpkins , written by lead vocalist and guitarist Billy Corgan . The song , though seemingly upbeat , contains dark lyrics . Corgan wrote the song about a day in which he was having suicidal thoughts , exemplified by the reference to self @-@ mutilation in the chorus . The contrast between the grim subject matter of the song and the soft instrumental part during the verses , coupled with use of irony in the lyrics , left many listeners unaware of the song 's tale of depression and desperation . The song alternates between quiet , dreamy verses and loud choruses with layered , distorted guitar similar to the noisy guitar rock of My Bloody Valentine .

" Today " was released in September 1993 as the second single from the band 's second album and major label debut , Siamese Dream . Although Corgan opted for " Cherub Rock " , the lead single from the album , to be the opening track , " Today " and its follow @-@ up " Disarm " are credited in AllMusic for popularizing the band and " sen [ding] [Siamese Dream] into the stratosphere " . " Today " has been generally well received by critics ; a Blender article described it as having " achieved a remarkable status as one of the defining songs of its generation , perfectly mirroring the fractured alienation of American youth in the 1990s . "

= = Background and recording = =

After the release and minor success of the band 's debut album , Gish , The Smashing Pumpkins were being hyped as " the next Nirvana " . However , the band was experiencing several difficulties at the time . Drummer Jimmy Chamberlin was undergoing an increasingly severe addiction to heroin ; James Iha and D 'arcy Wretzky had recently broken up their romantic relationship ; and Billy Corgan had become overweight , depressed to the point of contemplating suicide , and plagued by writer 's block . Corgan recalled that " after the first album , I became completely suicidal . It was an eight @-@ month depression , give or take a month , and I was pretty suicidal for about two or three months . " Under the pressure and other complications , the Pumpkins entered the Triclops Sound Studios in Atlanta to record the follow @-@ up to Gish .

" Today " was the first song Corgan wrote for Siamese Dream . Corgan said , " The day after I wrote ' Today , ' my manager heard it and said , ' It 's a hit , ' and I guess in a way , it was . " Corgan played the self @-@ recorded demo to producer Butch Vig and to the rest of his band , all of whom responded positively . " Today " already had a chord progression and a melody , but Corgan felt there needed to be an opening riff to the song . One day , " out of the blue , I heard the opening lick note for note in my head " , Corgan said . " When I added the opening riff , it completely changed the character of the song . Suddenly , I had a song that was starting out quiet and then got very loud . " Soon afterwards , Virgin Records executives were sent to check up on the band after hearing about their problems , but were pleased with the demo . The reaction from the executives only served to put more stress on Corgan ; as a result , he recorded most of the guitar and bass guitar parts himself , including on the finished version of " Today " .

Siamese Dream was completed after running four months after the deadline and considerably exceeding its budget . Virgin Records executives saw " Today " as the ideal lead single , but Corgan wanted " Cherub Rock " , one of the last songs written for the album , as the lead single . Ultimately , " Cherub Rock " was released first , but it was only a modest success . " Today " brought the band popularity through wide radio airplay and a successful music video .

= = Composition and lyrics = =

" Today " is written in the key of E @-@ flat major (E ?) and played in standard tuning . While Corgan briefly considered simply tuning the guitar down a half @-@ step and playing the song as if it were in the key of E , he said , " There was something about the E ? voicing that I liked . So it 's absolutely , intentionally in E ? , not E . " " Today " is one of the Siamese Dream songs on which Corgan took over Iha and D 'arcy 's duties on guitar and bass to ensure quality ; Wretzky later stated

that Corgan " can do something in three takes where it would maybe take me 20 . "

The song , spanning three minutes and 21 seconds , begins with a one @-@ measure opening guitar riff that alludes to the E ? major @-@ pentatonic scale . Corgan uses this riff (along with variations on it) to emphasize certain parts and to indicate shifts in the song . After the riff is played four times , the rest of the band enters backed with feedback @-@ driven guitars . Ned Raggett of Allmusic commented on the song 's ability to " alternate between calmer , almost Cure @-@ like sections and the louder crunches , [and Corgan 's] soon @-@ to @-@ be @-@ trademark guitar style taking My Bloody Valentine 's own hypnotic riffing to more accessible results . " The chorus , consisting of multiple guitar tracks playing barre chords , is an example of the band 's tendency to overdub several rhythm guitar tracks . While the song does not include a standard guitar solo , a short melodic guitar part appears during the bridge . Corgan explained : " The little guitar break over the C chord is actually a forwards sample that we laid in backwards . Then there 's a weird vocal effect that moves across the speakers , a ' yan @-@ yan @-@ yan @-@ yan ' thing , which was generated by using a Roland Space Echo to regenerate on the last word of the vocal line , ' I wanna turn you on . ' "

The dark , ironic lyrics of " Today " , describing a day when Corgan was feeling depressed and suicidal , contrast with the instrumentation . Michael Snyder of the San Francisco Chronicle said that the song is " downright pretty as rock ballads go " but that " Corgan manages to convey the exhilaration and tragic release he seeks . " Corgan told Rolling Stone that " I was really suicidal ... I just thought it was funny to write a song that said today is the greatest day of your life because it can 't get any worse . " Corgan later compared writing the lyrics of " Today " and " Disarm " to " ripping [his] guts out . "

= = Music video = =

The music video , directed by Stéphane Sednaoui , brought even more mainstream success to the band through repeated airplay on MTV . The video debuted in September 1993 . It was shot with low quality photographic equipment , which , like several other early Pumpkins videos , was an intentional stylistic decision . Corgan said that the plot of the video was inspired by a memory he had of an ice cream truck driver who , upon quitting his job , gave out his remaining stock of ice cream to the neighborhood children . This image was then melded with Sednaoui 's own sensibilities inspired by the film *Zabriskie Point* . The video is available on The Smashing Pumpkins ? Greatest Hits Video Collection (1991 ? 2000) DVD , released in 2001 .

The video begins with Corgan reading a comic book dressed in an ice cream man uniform . A clip of the intro to the song is played and stopped repeatedly before the song begins . Groups of two or more people are kissing each other around Corgan as he drives in an ice cream van through a desert . Corgan picks up a dress @-@ wearing Iha and the two drive for a while before stopping at a gas station , where Chamberlin and Wretzky appear as gas attendants . After Iha changes into a yellow and white cowboy outfit , the band paints the van in a multitude of colors . More people are shown kissing in the hills as the band drives away from the gas station in the van . However , Corgan is ultimately kicked out of the van , and the video ends with Corgan walking off the road wearing a cowboy hat as the van drives away .

= = Reception = =

" Today " has received generally positive reviews . Ned Raggett of AllMusic called the song an " at @-@ once storming but catchy smash single " . Johnny Black of Blender noted that the song " has achieved a remarkable status as one of the defining songs of its generation " . Robert Christgau cited " Today " as one of the highlights of *Siamese Dream* . However , Stylus Magazine 's Brett Hickman said " nothing can make ' Today ' sound fresh again . This is a prime example of the power that radio and MTV have in ruining a great song . " " Today " topped Eye Weekly magazine 's year @-@ end list of best singles , and also appeared at number 32 on NME 's year @-@ end list of best singles .

" Today " was one of the most successful early singles by The Smashing Pumpkins , and additionally has been recognized as one of the songs that brought the Pumpkins into the mainstream . The song was , at the time of its release , the highest @-@ charting song by the band , peaking at number four on the Billboard Modern Rock Tracks . The song also reached a peak position of number 28 on the Billboard Mainstream Rock Tracks , and was one of the first Pumpkins songs to chart in the UK , peaking at number 44 . " Today " was later called one of the " hits that took the cool alternative band into stadium rock territory " by the BBC 's Dan Tallis in a review of the band 's greatest hits album , Rotten Apples , and similarly referred to as the " Smashing Pumpkins ' red carpet to the glorified frat houses of alternative rock radio " by Nick Sylvester of Pitchfork Media .

= = Other releases = =

" Today " has appeared on several Smashing Pumpkins official releases , including the band 's greatest hits album Rotten Apples and the box set Siamese Singles . A live version of " Today " performed in the band 's hometown of Chicago was included on the 1994 video release Vieuphoria and on its companion album Earphoria , and was praised as " a triumphant recording " by Pitchfork 's Chris Dahlen . A different live recording from Chicago appears on the promotional album Live in Chicago 23 @.@ 10 @.@ 95 and the song is featured on 14 volumes of Live Smashing Pumpkins . The song has also appeared in different versions on several Smashing Pumpkins bootlegs such as Unplugged : 100 % Pure Acoustic Performances , which includes unofficial live recordings and acoustic recordings .

" Today " has been included in a few compilation albums . The eighteenth volume of Indie Top 20 , a Melody Maker @-@ sponsored compilation series which serves as a " time capsule of U.K. indie music " , features " Today " as its fourth track . The song appears on a two @-@ disc MTV Dutch import , Rock Am Ring , a collection of hit singles from the early 1990s .

The song is also included in the video game Rock Band 2 .

= = = Cover versions = = =

The song has been covered for several tribute albums . A Gothic ? Industrial Tribute to The Smashing Pumpkins features a dance music @-@ influenced version of the song by industrial band Shining . Solomon Burke Jr . , the son of influential soul musician Solomon Burke , contributed a " radically altered " rendition of " Today " for Midnight in the Patch : Tribute to The Smashing Pumpkins , performing the song in a Motown style . Other covers of " Today " for tribute albums include performances by Armor for Sleep on The Killer in You : A Tribute to Smashing Pumpkins and by Death Rawk Boy on Ghost Children / Friends and Enemies . The main guitar passage was also sampled by Japanese hip @-@ hop act Dragon Ash in its song " Grateful Days " . It was covered by John Craigie on his album Leave the Fire Behind . Deerhunter reinterpreted the song live in 2015 , following a legal dispute between frontman Bradford Cox and Corgan , " transforming the song 's opening riff into a 10 @-@ minute noise @-@ pop improvisation . "

= = Sales chart positions = =

= = Track listings = =

CD single

" Today " ? 3 : 22

" Hello Kitty Kat " ? 4 : 32

" Obscured " ? 5 : 20

7 " single

" Today " ? 3 : 22

" Apathy 's Last Kiss " ? 2 : 42
Japanese CD single
" Today " ? 3 : 22
" Hello Kitty Kat " ? 4 : 32
" Obscured " ? 5 : 20
" Apathy 's Last Kiss " ? 2 : 42
" French Movie Theme " ? 3 : 49

= = Personnel = =

Jimmy Chamberlin ? drums
Billy Corgan ? guitar , vocals , production
James Iha ? guitar
Butch Vig ? production
D 'arcy Wretzky ? bass guitar

= = Accolades = =

(*) designates unordered lists .