

## Cobain

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which sponsored and broadcast Nirvana's final concert—a feature on the band in the wake of Cobain's death led to a call from a distressed and potentially suicidal female fan.

"She said she felt the same way as Kurt," says head of music **Steve Höper**. "She told us she also wanted to commit suicide. I don't know if she was serious but I think this is a great problem now."

"We're not talking about thousands of people, but because of the particular way he lived his life and the style of his lyrics, some young girls and boys want to go the same way he did. When the girl called us, we spoke to her for as long as we could and tried to tell her that Kurt had his own problems and that they're not the problems people on the streets have."

Paris-based **EHR Fun Radio** rearranged their programming two hours after learning about

Cobain's death. Their two-hour live tribute was inundated by fans anxious to air their thoughts over the singer, his music, and issues such as drug abuse. "The whole week has been Nirvana," says programmer **Caroline Davigny**. "We have had many listeners calling in to talk about their feelings. Some were in tears on air."

**Eddie Hendriks**, programming assistant at **EHR** pubcaster **Studio Brussels**, reports that phone-in reactions were huge the day after the news. The weekend at the station was devoted to a round up of Cobain's career from the moment the news broke, including a Saturday night programme linking up with journalists in Seattle and pop photographer **Anton Corbijn**.

The most disturbing aspect of an event like this is the example it sets to youngsters at a time when morale is already low, says **Thierry Catherine**, head of music at Swiss modern rock/dance-format pubcaster **Couleur 3** in Lausanne. "There are lots of kids of

16 and 17 for whom Kurt was a role model. They see him committing suicide and are deeply influenced by it. The thing about suicide is that it is totally inexplicable. One philosopher—was it Merleau-Ponty?—said that suicide was the most difficult phenomenon to explain. There was an interview with Cobain in the French newspaper *Libération* only a month ago in which he was quoted saying he would love to still be playing guitar at the age of 50 like **Johnny Cash**."

"Kids in France and Switzerland are particularly vulnerable at the moment," he continues. "There is currently a general feeling of unrest and real dissatisfaction, and this event sends out the wrong message—that life is not worth living."

**Jorgen Larsen**, president of **MCA Music Entertainment International** (which handles Nirvana via its **Geffen** label) agrees that the unusual combination of circumstances that contributed to Cobain's state of mind

meant that the shock of his suicide spread far beyond music.

"The news of his death appeared in places that you would not normally expect, such as the financial papers. I think that's because what happened to Kurt was the opposite of what people normally expect, particularly in business. He was young, he was successful, he was a multi-millionaire and he still killed himself. Even people who have never heard of Nirvana still understand the complete tragedy of it all."

Asked where Cobain stood in terms of his contribution to contemporary music, Larsen says, "If anybody comes out of nowhere to sell 11 or 12 million albums you have to conclude that there's something there. He wasn't just a one-hit wonder."

**Studio Brussels'** Hendriks names Cobain the first pop hero of the '90s, and the man who surprised music pundits by proving that grunge was far more than a footnote in history.

At Radio Xanadu, Höper

points out that Cobain was not the first exponent of grunge, but that he was the first to give it an identity and a personality. "He will be seen as very important in developing a new style."

Adds Larsen, "What will perhaps make people review his work in the future is that he had a great short-term impact."

A statement issued by Nirvana's management, **Gold Mountain**, says that Cobain's music "spoke to millions around the world" and that it "will always be treasured."

**Couleur 3's** Catherine goes further, "Nirvana was the most important group since the **Sex Pistols**, and brought back a level of energy and rebellion that had been missing since the '70s. Until Nirvana came along the big groups were still acts like **Pink Floyd** and **Phil Collins**."

## German Music

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ing consumer climate in Germany.

The third largest music market in the world after the US and Japan, the German music industry stood its ground, showing stable growth in the face of a deepening European recession, says the **BPW**. The trade group says the continued growth in '93 was unexpected because of "continuing general economic problems and a consumer climate which is still at rock bottom level."

The music industry did not come off entirely unscathed, however, as only a small proportion of the market growth in '93 originated from former West Germany with sales up 3% from the previous year. In contrast, the music market in the former DDR grew by 28%.

**Warner Music Germany MD Gerd Gebhardt** describes '93 as an "exceptional" year for the industry. "Despite the recession and unemployment in Germany we've seen a very strong increase in the financial situation of this industry. The extraordinary growth of the CD single and the very high increase in the CD budget market have been major rea-

sons for this. This year I expect this growth to continue with an overall growth of around 3 or 4%. The first quarter of '94 has been rather quiet, but I expect things to really pick up in the second half of the year with a flood of new releases."

**EMI/Electrola Germany** president **GSA territories Helmut Fest** says that though the 8% increase is nice to see, there is no consistency in the marketplace. "My prediction for the market is that it will be increasingly product-related. If the industry comes up with the product, then we may well see another increase next year. Whereas in previous years the market has seen and enjoyed general market increases, it will depend much more on good releases in future and consequently will vary from company to company."

**Fest** says he sees tough times ahead for full-price repertoire, which the industry has been, so far, trying to make up for with smart marketing campaigns and promoting budget and mid-price repertoire, a strategy which he sees as "less profitable and more risky." **Fest** also points out that Germany is enjoying a CD single boom at the moment.

**PolyGram Germany** president **Wolf Gramatke** expects growth in '94 to be above the level of inflation, reaching around 3-5%. "We won't see the same rate of growth this year. The first three months are under that of '93. Last year's increase was mostly down to the CD single boom and the dance craze."

**Gramatke** says that with a national share of 30%, Germany still has a long way to go before it reaches the level of countries like France, and that the market still has great growth potential. "The national share should be nearer to 35%. There are still tremendous growth opportunities. Our target shouldn't always be necessarily to break it big and compete with American and English acts. Germany should be looking towards Eastern Europe, where the background of many people has a cultural reference to Germany. The people there can appreciate and understand German music."

The compact disc continued to build on its dominant position in the market, now accounting for 80% of total turnover, with unit shipments of CDs increasing 15.9% to 152.8 million units. Singles showed the biggest growth in the market, up 38.7% to 36.9 million units, with the CD single as the fastest growing single format. Cassette sales slumped 19% to just 47.2 million units, with the number expected to fall further as CD player penetration increases in Eastern Germany. Vinyl album sales now account for just 1% of the market, dropping by 70% to 1.6 million units. Total album shipments were up 3.3% in '93 to 201.6 million units, with the increase in CD album sales more than compensating for the drop in album and cassette purchases. Sales of the newly introduced DCC and Minidisc were still well under the 100,000 unit level.

Sales in the various repertoire

categories were: pop 40.9%, rock 20.6%, classical 9.4%, schlager 7.7%, dance 5.8%, volksmusik 2.5%, children's product 2.6%, jazz 1.1% and others 9.4%.

Piracy in Germany accounted for an estimated DM220 million last year, up by around one seventh from '92 and a figure which **BPW** is keen to reduce. Piracy is expected to drop dramatically this year, however, following the decision by the European Court Of Justice in October to offer EC artists protection in all member states.

## German Music Shipments '93

(units in millions)

Format	'92	'93	% chg.
Singles	26.6	36.9	+38.7
Vinyl	23.8	5.1	-68.6
Cassettes	58.2	47.2	-18.9
CDs	131.8	152.8	+15.9
Total	221.7	238.5	+7.6
Value	4,155	4,515	+8.7

(DM millions)



**EMI MEDLEY RECEIVES SYDKYSTEN AWARD** — Danish Radio Sydkysten presented its yearly music award to EMI Denmark band **Cut 'N' Move**, which was named "number 1 on Sydkysten's Annual Airplay chart 1993." Sydkysten programme editor **Peter Hald** (l) is pictured presenting the award to **Niels Anker** from EMI Medley in Denmark.

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