

Cobain Mourned By Fans, Industryites In Memorials, Music Stores

■ BY CARRIE BORZILLO

SEATTLE—In the days following the death of Nirvana front man Kurt Cobain, fans of the groundbreaking musician flooded radio stations here with calls, hoping to find some sense in his suicide, and flocked to record stores to buy Nirvana's albums.

At a private memorial service held April 10 at a Seattle church, some 250 people gathered to mourn Cobain. Among those in attendance were Geffen president Ed Rosenblatt, GM Bill Bennett, national college director Rochelle Fox, director of artist and media relations Bryn Bridenthal, and A&R executive Mark Kates; Gold Mountain Entertainment's John Silva, John Cutcliffe, and Michael Meisel; Capitol president/CEO Gary Gersh; Atlantic president Danny Goldberg; R.E.M.'s Peter Buck, and Sub Pop founders Bruce Pavitt and Jonathan Poneman.

Radio responded rapidly to Cobain's fans. Even Seattle talk stations such as KING-AM and KIRO held open phones to discuss Cobain, suicide, drugs, and hopelessness.

Rival album rock stations KISW and KXXR joined forces with modern rocker KNDD (the End) for a special public memorial service for Cobain's fans April 10 at the Flag Pavilion in the Seattle Center, the small amusement park and shopping center where the Space Needle is located.

SEARCH FOR COLLECTIBLES

The most sought-after Nirvana title in the city was "Bleach," the band's first album, released by Sub Pop in 1988. The day after Cobain's death, a teen-age customer asked a clerk at the Seattle Cellophane Square store if "Bleach" was a collector's item yet.

Hugh Jones, marketing director at the three-store Cellophane Square chain, said, "All three stores sold about a few hundred CDs, singles, and vinyl by the morning [of April 9]—even the \$100 interview CD of Nirvana."

"It's a pathetic scene," said Chris Simmons, a buyer at the Tower Records on Mercer Street in Seattle. "Everything is going out the door. If people were really fans, they would've had this stuff already."

"Bleach" sold out at the Mercer Street Tower and the Tower in Seattle's U-District April 8.

A few hours after the King County Medical Examiner confirmed Cobain's suicide April 8, the only Nirvana titles left at Park Ave Records on Queen Ann Street were two "Heart Shaped Box" import CD singles.

"Lots of people have been coming in, asking about what happened," says Tanya Bufton, a salesperson at the store. "But no one is surprised, just sad."

The Warehouse Entertainment store on 45th Street in Seattle sold 20 Nirvana CDs by the end of the day April 8, according to a salesperson there.

At Tower Books on Mercer, employees and customers were outraged when a representative from the Seattle Times posted a display next to the newspapers which read, "Nirvana Singer Dead. Kurt Cobain's Suicide" in large black

and white letters. Within seconds, store employees removed the sign.

One caller on KISW said there should not be a public memorial for someone who killed himself. "He made his child fatherless and totally copped out," said the caller.

The public memorial for Cobain started with approximately 5,000 fans camping out, lighting incense, playing hackysack, and passing out fliers. It later turned into a mass of tears and lit candles as a taped message was played from Cobain's widow, Courtney Love of the punk rock band Hole. The choked-up Love read large portions of the suicide note Cobain left behind.

Also in a taped message, Nirvana bassist Krist Novoselic thanked people for their concern and urged the crowd to follow their dreams. "Catch a groove and



Fans leaped into the fountain at the Seattle Center's Flag Pavilion as Nirvana music played on the P.A., following a public memorial service April 10 in memory of the band's front man, Kurt Cobain. (Billboard photo)

let it flow out of your heart. That's where the music will always be,"

COBAIN DEATH SPURS RUSH AT RETAIL

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counts around the country (Billboard, April 2).

RUN ON PRODUCT

Independent retailers catering to the punk-oriented audience noted a run on Nirvana product the weekend of April 9-10.

"It's all kids," Ron Jackson, co-owner of Benway Bop in Las Vegas, says of the buyers. "The posters and collectibles are selling better than the records... It's like people are saying, 'Hey, maybe this stuff won't be around. It's almost like an infant legend kind of thing... Now he's Sid Vicious.'"

Gay Cronley, manager of Magnolia Thunderpussy Records in Columbus, Ohio, says, "They've bought everything, T-shirts and posters, too... Everybody's trying to cash in, make sure they get everything, because they think it's going to be worth something."

At Tower Records' Sunset Strip store in Hollywood, Calif., clerk Helen Howard reports that only the new album remains in stock, but the store has sold out of all the band's other recordings.

One-stop stores also report that heavy traffic began Friday. Says Sam Ginsburg, GM of Abbey Road Distributors in L.A.: "It's a sad state of affairs, but that's the way it is... The magnitude here is big, and, with our sales offices in Santa Ana [Calif.], Philadelphia, Atlanta, and Milwaukee, I'm sure it's very large [as well]."

FORTHCOMING RELEASES?

With the breakthrough album "Nevermind" and single "Smells Like Teen Spirit," Nirvana kicked open the mainstream door for a number of other acts, including Pearl Jam, Soundgarden, and Alice In Chains, all of which topped The Billboard 200 in Nirvana's wake.

Although there is much speculation about what potential Nirvana releases might be in the offing, it is clear that one musical collaboration will never reach fruition: In a statement, Michael Stipe of R.E.M. said that he and Cobain "had a musical project in the works but nothing was recorded."

The most likely candidate for release is the band's Nov. 18 performance on "MTV's Unplugged," which ran repeatedly over the April 9 weekend. Included in the set were

Nirvana originals "Come As You Are" and "All Apologies," as well as a number of covers. Cobain was backed by the Meat Puppets' Chris and Curt Kirkwood on their songs "Plateau" and "Lake Of Fire." Also covered were David Bowie's "The Man Who Sold The World," Leadbelly's "Where Did You Sleep Last Night," and "Jesus Don't Want Me For A Sunbeam," by Cobain favorite the Vaselines. When Nirvana performed Dec. 30 at the Great Western Forum in Los Angeles, he dedicated the latter track to deceased actor River Phoenix.

The band also was featured performing electric on MTV's "Live And Loud," which was taped Dec. 13 and broadcast on New Year's Eve. Also, Nirvana has been the subject of several Westwood One live concert specials.

According to Steve Albini, who recorded the "In Utero" sessions, there are six to eight uncompleted songs that were not included on the album.

One song, "Marigold," written by Nirvana drummer Dave Grohl, appeared on the import version of the "Heart-Shaped Box" single. Another track, the eerily titled "I Hate Myself And Want To Die," featured on the advance cassette of "In Utero," was pulled from the album, but later appeared on Geffen's "The Beavis And Butt-head Experience."

Prior to the release of "In Utero,"

DEALERS URGE HOME VIDEO RETAILERS TO PUSH SALES OF VIDEO GAMES

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on an exclusive basis and Rogers agreed to carry only Nintendo product. That agreement, which van der Lee termed a success for both parties, has since ended, he said, and Rogers now also carries Sega. He said he hasn't seen any cannibalization of Nintendo product because of that addition.

"Since we're 'over there' [in Canada]," he said, "I think it offered Nintendo a chance to do something in terms of a test without upsetting the whole apple cart."

The absence of any Nintendo representatives at the convention gave the meet a decidedly Sega-centric focus, with that company's executives helming four of the nine seminars—and making a point of thanking retailers for their support.

"It was sort of lopsided," said Al

said Novoselic.

The vigil included comments from Reverend Stephen Twoles, the minister who conducted a private memorial service; Larry Smith, Cobain's uncle by marriage; a representative from the Crisis Clinic in Seattle; and three Seattle DJs, KNDD's Marco Collins, KISW's Damen Stewart, and KXXR's Scott Vanderpool.

Smith recalls stories of Cobain's youth, including a time when Cobain, his grandfather, and Smith were fishing. Smith recalled Cobain screaming; when asked what was going on, Cobain replied, "Just strengthening my vocal chords."

Swarms of fans then dived into the fountain at the Seattle Center as Nirvana's music was played over the PA system.

A representative at a Seattle ra-

dio station said Love showed up at the Seattle Center after most of the crowd had gone home.

Surprisingly, Sub Pop's sixth anniversary party April 9 at the famed Crocodile Cafe wasn't as solemn as most expected.

Velocity Girl, Pond, and Sunny Day Real Estate played to the crowd, which included retailers, journalists, radio professionals, and members of various bands such as Love Battery, the Posies, Silkworm, Young Fresh Fellows, and the Walkabouts.

At the beginning of the party, a news crew was camped out front, interviewing guests about the media coverage of Cobain's death.

But inside, talk of Cobain's suicide was at a minimum, perhaps out of respect; Poneman said a few words in memory of the artist at the beginning of the party.

really a lot around." He added that while some "In Utero" outtakes exist, "Those were all considered really minor tracks—in fact, Kurt didn't even want them out in the United States."

While many of Nirvana's scattered singles and assorted recordings were released on "Incesticide," some material remains uncollected.

The Sub Pop track "Spank Thru," heard on the out-of-print "Sub Pop 200" album, is unavailable, as are such DGC-era recordings as "Even In His Youth" and "Curmudgeon." The group also recorded a variety of single sides and album tracks for such indie labels as Touch And Go, Communion, C/Z, Kill Rock Stars, and Tim Kerr Records.

Two live tracks recorded at the Paramount Theater in Seattle on Halloween 1991 surfaced on the "Come As You Are" commercial CD-5, but the rest of the concert is still unsold.

The discovery of Cobain's body came four days before the April 12 release of the debut DGC album by Hole, the band fronted by the late musician's wife, Courtney Love. In a chilling irony, the album is titled "Live Through This."

Assistance in preparing this story was provided by Carrie Borzillo in Seattle and Deborah Russell in Los Angeles.

NO ALBUM PLANNED

A source at Geffen says another Nirvana album is "something that we haven't even considered... To throw another collection together right now would be inappropriate."

So far, there have been no U.S. commercial singles from "In Utero." DGC had considered a single, with B-sides drawn from the "Unplugged" session, but those plans are in limbo.

"We initially didn't plan on doing anything with [the 'Unplugged' material], and ultimately that's going to be up to management and the band," the source says.

Regarding the possibility of a Nirvana album of uncompiled material, the source says, "We collected a lot of that for 'Incesticide,' so there's not

Samanas, president of Video In Motion in Aurora, Ill. "It was supposed to be about retailing video games—but it was about retailing Sega video games," added Cathy Massaro of Your Video in Medina, N.Y.

Karpel said all game manufacturers had been invited, and that with the success of the conference he expected that more would actually come to future affairs; the conference may become an annual event, he added, with a focus on sharing information about the video gaming industry.

"What we're hoping is that people will leave here and tell other companies about how well it was attended," he said. "And that will make it a lot easier to go after companies that don't know us."

Dealers also seemed particularly

concerned about the Sega Channel, due to launch this spring. Dealers are worried about cannibalization of rentals and sales when 50 games per month become available for about \$15 a month over cable lines.

Glen countered that the channel actually would help drive sales. "[Individual] games will be on for only 30 days, and only about once a year," he said, "and then it will be gone. So the gamer who enjoys that game will have to go out and buy that title."

Glen also said Sega will be conducting extensive research on 1,400 subscribers, tracking rental and purchase activity. He promised to share those results with VSDA members.

For additional conference coverage, see page 77.