



# Foo Man Crew

**'Fingernails are pretty / Fingernails are good / It seems that all they ever wanted was a market...'**

**What does it mean? What does it matter? The only thing that really matters is where the lyric of the year comes from — and the answer to that is, the Foo Fighters' debut album. Coming from their debut single track, 'This is a Call', it's got to be the most quoted line since: 'Here we are now / Entertain us,' which is ironic, to say the least. If you need to ask who Foo Fighters are, one can only assume you've been living in solitary confinement for the last eight months.**

**T**he Foo Fighters' press file is a fat one. It stretches back to the beginning of this year, when Pearl Jam's Eddie Vedder introduced their material on his satellite radio broadcast, Self Pollution Radio. The world pricked up its ears and sucked in a collective breath of anticipation, but still, we had to wait. When *Foo Fighters* was released, so were loud sighs of relief and raucous whoops of joy, for yes, it was good, damn good.

So, what does it take for a brand new band to generate such a stir before barely a soul has heard them? You could try having your frontman emerge from the still smoking ashes of one of the greatest bands ever. It worked for the Foo Fighters, even if said frontman was former band's drummer.

Still stumped, cave dwellers? Remember Nirvana, by any chance? Remember the guy

"[I] had a guitar around the house all my life, but never got around to really learning how to play it until I was about 10 years old. I was told to take lessons because everyone was sick of hearing 'Smoke on the Water'," recalls Grohl of his humble beginnings.

The first band he joined was called Freak Baby. He began as their guitarist, later moving on to the drums. Drumming stints in Mission Impossible and Scream followed, before Grohl heard word that what he has referred to as "the N band" were looking for a drummer, and had been looking at him. The rest is history. Today belongs to the Foos.

The seeds of *Foo Fighters* were planted back in 1992. "With little action on the Nirvana front, I could pay more attention to my music," says Grohl. "Most of my time was spent writing and experimenting with harmonies and arrangements. Songs like 'Good Grief' and 'Exhausted'

tracks in two and a half days, meaning I was literally running from instrument to instrument, using mostly first takes on everything. All vocals and rough mixes were finished on schedule: one week." That was in October last year.

Grohl didn't recruit the other Foo Fighters until after the album was completed. As a live unit, they've had critics all over the place doing the written equivalent of wetting their pants since their March 3 debut performance, at the Portland Satyricon, in Oregon.

Capitol Records president/CEO Gary Gersh was responsible for signing Foo Fighters, in the midst of a record company bidding frenzy which included Nirvana's former label, Geffen. Gersh has been associated with Grohl since he was an A&R executive at Geffen, where he was responsible for signing Nirvana. The album is released on Grohl's own Capitol distributed

ing letter saved my life, because as much as I missed Kurt, and as much as I felt so lost, I knew there was only one thing I was truly cut out to do, and that was music."

Pat Smear, whose Germs frontman, Darby Crash, also met an untimely demise, was also stunned into submission by Cobain's death. "After you've been in the coolest band ever, what do you do?," he says. "I sat on the couch with the remote control in my hand for a year. I didn't know if I ever wanted to be in a band again. I was just working on solo stuff. Dave and I had kept in touch, and I heard about his [*Foo Fighters*] tape, but I didn't know what to expect. When I heard the tape, I flipped. But I didn't want to ask to join the band. I waited for him to ask me."

With the demise of Sunny Day Real Estate (due to one band member's conversion to Christianity, "a condition unfamiliar with artistic

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that sat behind the stellar bright Kurt Cobain? Well, that was Dave Grohl. Hand the guy a microphone and a guitar, then stick him in front of Nirvana's best known extra and former Germs man, Pat Smear (on second guitar), and former Sunny Day Real Estate members Nate Mendel (bass) and William Goldsmith (drums), and you've got Foo Fighters. But it hasn't always been this way. In the beginning, there was only Grohl.

The most popular label to be pasted on Grohl in the months leading up to the Foo Fighters' live debut and album release was 'the Grunge Ringo'. The scoffers couldn't have been more wrong, and have now had their too hastily shot bolts on the matter shoved right back down their throats.

were written around this time. 'Weenie Beenie' and 'Poduk' were thrown together in early 1993, as were lots of other songs I sure hope no one ever hears. 'For All the Cows' was done around the same time."

In case you haven't guessed, Dave Grohl is a lot more clever than a lot of people (usually unjustifiably) give drummers credit for. He's so clever, in fact, that he went on to record *Foo Fighters* all by himself, except for the track 'X-Static', which features the Afghan Whigs' Greg Dulli on guitar. (Grohl and Dulli were both part of the Back Beat Band, which formed for the film *Back Beat*.)

"I wanted to see how little time it could take me to track 15 songs, complete with overdubs and everything," explains Grohl. "I did the basic

label, Roswell. Both he and Krist Novoselic were released from their Nirvana deals with Geffen after Cobain's suicide in 1994.

Cobain's death not only put an end to Nirvana, but almost drove Grohl's own musical plans into a brick wall. "After Kurt's death, I was about as confused as I've ever been," he says. "To continue almost seemed in vain. I was always going to be 'that guy from Kurt Cobain's band', and I knew that. I wasn't even sure if I had the desire to make music any more.

"I received a postcard from fellow Seattle band 7 Year Bitch, who had also lost a member. It said: 'We know what you're going through. The desire to play music is gone for now, but it will return. Don't worry.' That fuck-

tolerance", as Goldsmith says), Grohl saw his chance to make a pitch to Goldsmith and Mendel. Grohl's proposals were accepted all around, and now the Foos are all sporting the Cheshirest grins since the Osmonds ruled the small screen.

"I didn't want this to be some ridiculous solo project," says Grohl. "I sure as fuck didn't consider Pat, Nate and William my backing band. I realised this was a bizarre foundation for a band, but that's exactly what my goal was: to have another band. We got together and it was soon apparent that this was to be that next band. I wanted everyone to have the freedom to do whatever they wanted to do within the songs, each member as important as the next."

BRONWYN TRUDGEON