

## **Odds and Ends: Kurt Cobain, Playing for Change, and Rock Trademarks-- Michael's Rock and Roll Posse**

A few odds and ends, for your information and to help you dodge those exams and papers waiting for you.

Last night, HBO carried the premiere 'Montage of Heck,' featuring Nirvana's Kurt Cobain. As a number of you know, I have considered the case of Kurt Cobain among the saddest of all the rock and roll slow suicides that have taken so many of these singers. In my view, almost no one showed the extraordinary gifts and talent he (and his bandmates) showed during their short time together. I had seen some of the materials from this documentary in the KC exhibit a few years ago at the Experience Music Project and Science Fiction Museum and Hall of Fame (EMP|SFM)—originally designed as a museum for hometown hero Jimi Hendrix— now known as the EMP Museum, in Seattle. That great exhibit not only had almost an hour of energetic performance footage, but a number of relevant documents, including many of Kurt's notebook, drawings, and lyric sheet—all handwritten with his recognizable script. (He signed some of them as Kurdt, as also was visible in the HBO documentary.)

I agree with the *Rolling Stone* review by David Fear and Jason Newman about the new materials that are woven into the documentary. It is almost too painful to absorb all the events that led to his suicide, and I had not known of all his earlier attempts. The part of the film where he and the pregnant Courtney Love are strung out on heroin is unbelievably difficult to watch, and it is striking just how much footage there is of him and early Nirvana. I even found the early family photos and film fascinating, and the interviews with his parents, stepmother, and an old girlfriend just made me cry. The wonderful Cameron Crowe 2011 documentary about Pearl Jam and the early Seattle rock and punk scene included great Nirvana footage, but this HBO film is almost entirely about Cobain and his brief life, and less on actual concert footage. The final musical portion is about their making "Unplugged" for MTV. One small gem, among many—the HBO show has several Nirvana songs (including the incredible remakes of Meat Puppets, Bowie, Leadbelly, and The Vaselines songs) playing in the background as orchestral instrumentals. I was jarred by the juxtaposition of that style against my near-exclusive memories of their headbanging and all-out songs. See if you notice it, when you see it. And do see it. Check local HBO listings, while it is in rotation. I have had "Unplugged" and "Nevermind" in rotation all day, along with "Sliver," their Best-of collection, which has a number of their very early efforts and

outtakes. They were an incredibly important and ill-fated band, whose great work was still improving. If only...

<http://www.rollingstone.com/movies/features/9-things-we-learned-from-the-kurt-cobain-doc-montage-of-heck-20150505> (RS story)

Read more: <http://www.rollingstone.com/movies/features/9-things-we-learned-from-the-kurt-cobain-doc-montage-of-heck-20150505#ixzz3ZIG48wBN>

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1417592/> (Pearl Jam 20 movie)

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On another note, Posse member Jenny Moore reminded me of the PLAYING FOR CHANGE montage version of “Stand By Me,” with people from all over the world singing the song: <http://playingforchange.com/episodes/stand-by-me/> . As you might imagine, I am partial to the portion filmed in Zuni Pueblo, NM.

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One last thing, for the lawyerly among you. I have followed this trademark case about the group The Slants, and it seems like a postmodern attempt to re-appropriate and detonate the pejorative word, like Queer, NWA, or other transgressive terminology. I think the group will ultimately win, if their pockets are deep enough: Rock band gets First Amendment rehearing in its quest for a trademark deemed disparaging--  
[http://www.abajournal.com/mobile/article/rock\\_band\\_gets\\_first\\_amendment\\_rehearing\\_in\\_its\\_quest\\_for\\_a\\_trademark\\_deeme](http://www.abajournal.com/mobile/article/rock_band_gets_first_amendment_rehearing_in_its_quest_for_a_trademark_deeme)

<http://www.cafc.uscourts.gov/images/stories/opinions-orders/14-1203.Order.4-24-2015.1.PDF> (rehearing)

Who loves you?

Cinco de Mayo, 2015

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