



Grunge. Your parents probably think this word refers to dirt and grime like something they might find stuck to the bottom of a garbage bin. Until the mid to late 1980s, that is exactly what it meant, but since then, the word Grunge has also been used to describe a style of alternative rock music. It is even defined as such in the dictionary!

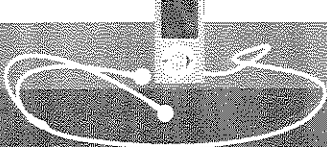
Grunge was born in Seattle, Washington, U.S.A. with the **record label Sub Pop**. Like other independent - "**indie**" - labels, they were a locally based private record company that sought local talent to record, produce and sell. The success of **Sub Pop** came with the signing of local bands **Nirvana** and **Soundgarden**, and through these bands, they were credited with raising the popularity of Grunge music.

So what exactly is Grunge? It is a style that developed out of the punk music genre and shares many of its characteristics, including loud, heavy drumming. The term Grunge largely comes from the fuzzy, "grungy" sound of the guitars. This sound was also enhanced by using **distortion** and **feedback** techniques and tuning guitars to a lower key. Songs like *Spoonman* by **Soundgarden** and *All Apologies* and *Heart Shaped Box* by **Nirvana** use these alternative guitar tunings, known as **drop D** tunings, which makes playing **power chords** easier.

Like Punk music, Grunge also came to be associated with a type of **sub culture** with its own **ideologies** and dress styles. The disappointment of grunge culture members with mainstream society resulted in lyrics that were angry, sad and frustrated. They also were opposed to "**selling out**" to the big record companies and instead preferred to stick to the indie labels. Grunge stage shows had minimal theatrics - performances were focussed on the music. The original grunge bands didn't even like being labeled "grunge" and didn't really want to be popular! The Grunge uniform was generally comfortable clothing such as flannel shirts and cheap worn-out jeans - anything that would convey their apathetic attitude towards the fads and trends in wider society. Hair combs and brushes were optional.

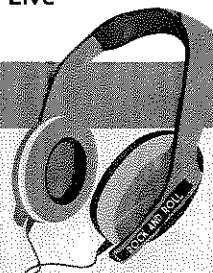
As grunge became less **mainstream** in the 1990's, post-grunge bands cropped up in other parts of the US and the world. **Silverchair** from Australia, and **Bush** from England are two such examples. Other grunge and post-grunge bands include **Alice in Chains**, **Stone Temple Pilots**, **Live** and **Collective Soul**.

Fast Facts



Time Span: early-mid 1990s
Influences: Punk, Heavy Metal
Primary Instruments: guitar, bass, drums and vocals.
Major Artists: Nirvana, Soundgarden, Silverchair, Bush

Fun Fact



The indie label **Sub Pop** which is associated with the grunge music genre started off as a fanzine (fan + magazine) dedicated to promoting American independent record labels. Its creator, Bruce Pavitt even received college-credits for writing it! Soon afterwards, he started compiling recordings of local "underground" bands and with a little investment from a friend, was able to grow it into a full-blown label.