

Ohio

(Crosby, Stills, Nash, & Young)

[Hook]

Tin soldiers and Nixon coming
We're finally on our own
This summer I hear the drumming
Four dead in Ohio

[Verse]

Gotta get down to it
Soldiers are cutting us down
Should have been done long ago
What if you knew her
And found her dead on the ground
How can you run when you know?

[Bridge]

Na, na, na, na, na, na, na, na
Na, na, na, na, na, na, na, na
Na, na, na, na, na, na, na, na
Na, na, na, na, na, na, na, na

[Verse]

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Soldiers are cutting us down
Should have been done long ago
What if you knew her
And found her dead on the ground
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[Hook]

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We're finally on our own
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Four dead in Ohio

[Outro x10]

Four dead in Ohio

"Ohio" is a protest song and counterculture anthem written and composed by Neil Young in reaction to the Kent State shootings of May 4, 1970, and performed by Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young. It was released as a single, backed with Stephen Stills's "Find the Cost of Freedom", peaking at number 14 on the US Billboard Hot 100 and number 16 in Canada. Although a live version of "Ohio" was included on the group's 1971 double album *Four Way Street*, the studio versions of both songs did not appear on an LP until the group's compilation *So Far* was released in 1974. The song also appeared on the Neil Young compilation albums *Decade*, released in 1977, and *Greatest Hits*, released in 2004.

The song also appears on Neil Young's *Live at Massey Hall* album, which he recorded in 1971 but did not release until 2007.

Young wrote the lyrics to "Ohio" after seeing the photos of the incident in *Life Magazine*. On the evening that CSN&Y entered Record Plant Studios in Los Angeles, the song had already been rehearsed, and the quartet—with their new rhythm section of Calvin Samuels and Johnny Barbata—recorded it live in just a few takes. During the same session they recorded the single's equally direct B-side, Stephen Stills's ode to the war's dead, "Find the Cost of Freedom".

The record was mastered with the participation of the four principals, rush-released by Atlantic and heard on the radio with only a few weeks' delay. (This was despite the group already having their hit song "Teach Your Children" on the charts at the time.) In his liner notes for the song on the *Decade* retrospective, Young termed the Kent State incident as 'probably the biggest lesson ever learned at an American place of learning' and reported that "David Crosby cried when we finished this take." Indeed, Crosby can be heard keening "Four, why? Why did they die?" and "How many more?" in the fade.

According to the notes to *Greatest Hits*, it was recorded by Bill Halverson on May 21, 1970, at Record Plant Studio 3 in Hollywood.

An article in the *Guardian* in 2010 describes the song as the 'greatest protest record' and 'the pinnacle of a very 1960s genre.' while also saying 'The revolution never came.'

The lyrics help evoke the turbulent mood of horror, outrage and shock in the wake of the shootings, especially the line "four dead in Ohio," repeated throughout the song. "Tin soldiers and Nixon coming" refers to the Kent State shootings where Ohio National Guardsmen shot and killed four students and Young's attribution of their deaths to the President of the United States, Richard Nixon, even though the National Guardsmen had not been federalized and were under orders from Ohio Governor Jim Rhodes. Crosby once stated that Young keeping Nixon's name in the lyrics was "the bravest thing I ever heard." The American counterculture took the group as its own after this song, giving the four a status as leaders and spokesmen they would enjoy to varying extent for the rest of the decade.

After the double's release, it was banned from some AM radio stations because of the challenge to the Nixon Administration in the lyrics, but received airplay on underground FM stations in larger cities and college towns. Today, the song receives regular airplay on classic rock stations.