

New Slang

Words and music by James Mercer



Natalie Portman may have said it best in the 2004 film, *Garden State*: "You gotta hear this one song—it'll change your life, I swear." Her character is referring to the Shins' "New Slang," an acoustic strummer hallmarked by mismatched time signatures and disaffected tone, both of which suit the morosely quirky movie that helped make the song famous.

Emphasize the bass notes on each first and third beat as you tackle the 4/4 intro shown here. This evenly strummed pattern repeats three times and lands on C, fol-

lowed by a fifth-string walk-down to Am to kick off the verse. The song thwarts convention by squeezing two extra beats into each of the first three verse measures, then bounces through various time signatures as shown until the lyric is finished. It may sound complicated, but it's really not bad—listen to the recording to internalize the phrasing of the melody, and the time will start to come naturally. Outside of the verse, the time stays in 4/4 for the entire song—the sole exception occurs in the interlude section, where the second to last measure (C-Am-G) is a bar of six.

—DAN APCZYNSKI

Intro

Am (x02310) C (x32010) F (134211) C (x32010) G (210034) C (x32010) Am (x02310) G/B (x10034)

Chords

Am (x02310) C (x32010)
F (134211) G (210034)
G/B (x10034)

*Strum: ▣ ▤ ▣ ▤ ▣ ▤ ▣ ▤ (etc.) * ▣ = down; ▤ = up

Verse

Am C F C G C F Am G

Am C F C G C F Am G

Intro: Am C F C G C Am G/B (repeat 3x and resolve to C)

- Am C F C G
Gold teeth and a curse for this town were all in my mouth
C F Am G
Only I don't know how they got out dear
Am C F C G
Turn me back into the pet that I was when we met
C F Am G
I was happier then with no mind-set

Chorus

- G C F C G
And if you'd a took to me like a gull takes to the wind
- C
Well, I'd a jumped from my tree
- F C F C
And I'd a danced like the king of the eyesores
- F C G
And the rest of our lives would've fared well
- Am C F C G
New slang when you notice the stripes, the dirt in your fries
C F Am G
Hope it's right when you die old and bony
Am C F
Dawn breaks like a bull through the hall

- C G
Never should have called
- C F Am G
But my head's to the wall and I'm lonely

Repeat Chorus

Interlude: FC / FCG / CGC / F / FC / FCG / C Am G / C

- Am C F C G
God speed all the bakers at dawn, may they all cut their thumbs
C F Am G
And bleed into their buns till they melt away

Chorus 2

- G C F C G
I'm looking in on the good life I might be doomed never to find
- C F C G
Without a trust or flaming fields, am I too dumb to refine?
- C
And if you'd a took to me like
- F C F C
Well I'd a danced like the queen of the eyesores
- F C G
And the rest of our lives would've fared well

Repeat Interlude and Intro and end