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SOUNDGARDEN

Chris Cornell: vocals
Kim Thayil: guitar
Hiro Yamamoto: bass
Matt Cameron: drums

The big bang theory is true, and it's happening now.

Soundgarden creates a primeval pound. Their music simultaneously celebrates the illustrious past of riff-rampant heavy metal while it delves into fertile ground with the beauty and power of Mount St. Helens erupting. Soundgarden's creations are both horrific and holy: shards of shattered greenhouse glass and unchecked, twisted growth.

They began four years ago in Seattle, WA. **Hiro Yamamoto** and **Kim Thayil** had moved there from Chicago a couple years earlier. Hiro and **Chris Cornell** became roommates and were mutually interested in forming a band. Bringing Kim aboard, their distinctive sound was solidified. Soon the band enlisted **Matt Cameron** (originally from San Diego, CA) on drums. They named themselves after a wind-sound pipe sculpture in a Seattle park, though this modest origin hardly belies the band's sound, which is loud, strong, psychic, heavy and...heavy.

In some ways **Soundgarden** is the ultimate American garage band. Their multi-ethnic line-up (Kim is of East Indian and Hiro of Japanese descent), in addition to their coming together from remote parts of the country, make them a real "heavy smelting pot." As Kim explains, "We're all from the same culture, just different origins." And this mixture of origins melds together in their music, as all four contribute compositions to the band.

Soundgarden's first productions came out on local compilations (**Pyrrhic Victory** and **Deep Six**), followed by a single and two EP's for Seattle's **SubPop** label. Their **SST** debut, **Ultramega OK**, features their fiercest material yet, with metal hook-laden songs like "Flower" and their cover of "Smokestack Lightning". The clouds truly part on "Beyond the Wheel", however, which builds from an ominous rumble to an in-yo-face stomp, with Chris's ferocious wail careening around and above it all.

And does it hold up in person? **Soundgarden's** amazing live performances have been repeatedly described in three simple words: **TOTAL FUCKING GODHEAD.**

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Jackpot

On The Cover

SOUNDGARDEN Screaming Life (EP) (Sub Pop, P.O. Box 20645, Seattle, WA 98102)—When are names like Soundgarden going to be emblazoned on the back of denim jackets in high schools across America? Like the bands that dominate many teenage minds, Soundgarden has spent more than their fair share of time listening to Led Zeppelin and Black Sabbath, but some time during their schooling, Soundgarden was also turned on to acid-drenched underground rockers like the Bullhole Surfers. It might be hard to imagine what would happen if Gibby met Ozzy, but it happens on **Screaming Life**, a demented twist of metallic crunch with a frighteningly realistic sense of doom. Heavy guitars mix with heavier rhythms, and the band chugs along like a crazy train that might derail any minute. If the haunted feel of "Hunted Down" and "Nothing To Say" don't have you convinced, then try the powerful psycho-minimalist riff rock of "Little Joe." And if the Zeppelin-ish rave of "Entering" doesn't have you planting your seeds in the Soundgarden, then you should take your gardening somewhere quiet.

KILLER PICKS

SOUNDGARDEN Screaming Life (EP) (Sub Pop, P.O. Box 20645, Seattle, WA 98102)—Here's one for the more adventurous among you. Coming on with all the subtlety of a dinosaur, Soundgarden is a Seattle four-piece that plays some of the heaviest rock 'n' roll we've heard all year. They're not heavy in the sense of Slayer-ish impending-doom death metal; they're more into stomping, cathartic, hair-flying, total-abandon rock that recalls early Sabbath and Zeppelin at their most primitive (vocalist Chris Cornell's voice is a dead ringer for Robert Plant's, circa '69-'70). Played loud enough, this album could probably level buildings. . . it got rid of my hangover, anyway. Picks: "Little Joe," "Nothing To Say," "Hunted Down."



SOUNDGARDEN

Sub Pop

"I don't think the Zep influence is one the band agrees with."

Craig, Craig, Chris and Kim converse on Soundgarden

SubPop's Soundgarden are like folks to mention that) who spew out hot lava that crushes your lungs and then steps on your head. They get reviews like "vicious," "brutal," "huge," "total fucking godhead," and "retread." They come from the same deep pit (Seattle) that belched out Green River and the Melvins. They have a single on lovely blue vinyl that's completely sold out so don't even ask, and they have a new EP out, on SubPop -- it's called Screaming Life -- that you might find if you think fast enough. Busy kids, they're already back in the studio finishing a single due out for the New Music Seminar, planning a tour and gigs in NY during NMS, another record for SST is halfway finished and they plan to tour in the fall to support it . . . and they still find time to teach their tour manager how to light his farts. For this they quit their day jobs? Evil twins Craig Koon and Craig Regalla conducted two phone interviews with vocalist Chris Cornell and guitarist Kim Thayil to find out just what the deal is, anyways.

OK, so the seventies are being rehabbed, right (one good thing about the commies, they wait 30 or 40 years before digging up embarrassing subjects)? Currently it seems that the kindest thing a writer can do is toss Sabbath, Aerosmith, and Zeppelin into a review. Even if the band in question has a problem with those comparisons. Guitarist Kim Thayil complains, "I don't think the Zep influence is one the band agrees with. They're not one of the bands any of us grew up listening to . . . I've only started to listen to them in the last four years. I think there are plenty of bands from that era that sound similar; and any band that sounds similar to any of those bands is automatically compared to Led Zeppelin. And there's kind of a domino effect. One person writes it and the rest follow." Cornell agrees: "We get the Bonham refs and people saying I sound like Robert Plant, but I think it's just because Zep is an easy tag. It's just because they're the hugest." Even if a

song like "Nothing To Say" would fit real smooth on side two of Physical Graffiti.

But, as Thayil points out, there are other bands far more important to their development. "Like Butthole Surfers or Scratch Acid. . . Bauhaus and Chrome are two bands that everyone in Soundgarden listened to at one time. Bauhaus has been a pretty big influence on us since the beginning." So much so, in fact, that the opening click track on "Entering" is a direct ripoff from "Bela Lugosi's Dead." "That, and Big Black's 'Il Duce,'" laughs Chris. "We opened up for Love And Rockets one time, and we started off with 'Entering.' The audience heard the opening and got real excited. They were pretty disappointed when the guitar came in. Maybe we should have played it!" Fooling with yer head seems to be a SG trait. Like the name. "People see 'Soundgarden' and they expect some kind of Mitch Easter band." What they get is a longhaired steamroller that grinds rock to fine powder. But it works the other way, too, says Kim. "If we had named ourselves anything with skull, blood or death in it, it might have gone against us, whereas SG is such an unheavy and unpowerful name that we usually exceed people's expectations." That train of thought unfortunately nixed an early name -- BatSkullFuckDick. Which is too bad. Still, considering the names bandled about, are record labels getting their own ideas about what the band should be? So far, no. "The major labels we've talked to have never tried to formulize us, or have us conform," asserts Kim. "Generally, they suggested augmenting distribution to the same audience we currently have. The record is making its way to the college stations and underground stores. They've simply suggested doing that on a larger scale."

So Soundgarden isn't going to dress up, make videos and have a cute song on the next record? "Absolutely not! No novelty hits, no pandering to the audience via spandex and bleached

hair. 3/4 of the band has black or dark brown hair; there's no way a Japanese or East Indian can bleach his hair blonde and have it be as effective as when Whitesnake did it!"

The major label interest we have predates even Screaming Life. This is a point that is important to understand. We get asked why we continue to work with the indies; it's because this is the audience we play for, these are the clubs and bands that we're a part of. We want to maintain and establish that audience . . . We want to remain true to the audience that helped us get what success we have. Then, too, we learn from each level we reach. We really like working with the SubPop organization, but being a small label they have their limits. We're doing a single produced by Steve Flisk for SubPop, which will be out in May; and then we'll move onto a record for SST. They're a larger outfit and have greater strengths in marketing and distribution. So we'll learn from that, and know what direction the band wants to take in the future. Our immediate goal is to do these records, tour to support them, and at the same time maintain and complete negotiations with a major. But it's very important for people to understand that these records aren't just stepping stones to a major label."

So just what level of success is Soundgarden looking for? Kim admits they're not really sure. "It would be kind of presumptuous for us to say where we see ourselves going. As we get into new situations, our goals change with growth. Right now playing to 3000 seems fine. Two years down the line we might want to play stadiums, or we might want to do bars and clubs. We are where we should be at any given time, I suppose. We've done each record the way we have because we thought it was appropriate for where we were at. As we do this, we learn, we let our songs develop, we learn how we work together. Do we WANT to put out a record that ships 50,000? We do know that we want to keep growing. At the same time, we've made it a point to be a sincere, idealistic, underground college band."

So they sound serious? You better believe it. Get under their wheels at your own risk.

FROM A WHISPER TO A SCREAM

AN ENCOUNTER WITH JEFF GILBERT

There was a time back in the early '70s when you could drop some acid while listening to a Black Sabbath record played at 78 rpm, and the end result was that you would see God. Or something to that effect. I figure the '80s equivalent is akin to drinking a lot of cheap beer while listening to a Soundgarden LP really loud with all the lights turned off. And then you'll see Led Zeppelin. That would be funny, if it weren't for the fact that there are a lot of people out there who seriously seem to think that Soundgarden are nothing more than an innovative Led Zeppelin rip-off.

"It's really beginning to bug me now," flinches guitarist Kim Thayil in reference to the fact that from the beginning, Soundgarden have been compared, in one way or another, to the mighty Zep. "It didn't bug me at first but now it's getting irritating because, it seems, that the critics are failing to be a little more independent in their judgment."

A little understated, but to get an idea just how far off the mark most critics have been when it comes to figuring out Soundgarden, a recent record review in a well-known New Orleans music magazine said "they sound so serious about their metal, but at other times, they sound like One Big Joke." The "joke" seems to be on the short-sighted reviewer who hasn't figured out the punchline yet. A more accurate statement about the band — and one that seems to come a lot closer to what it is Soundgarden are about — is that they may be the metal band for people who don't like metal bands.

Vocalist Chris Cornell is quick to echo the sentiment. "Our songs get compared more than our overall sound. You might hear one song and it might remind you of Zeppelin, or one that reminds you of Sabbath. But then again you might hear one of our songs that reminds you of Scratch Acid or the Butthole Surfers. It's frustrating for us because that was never the intention."

But if Soundgarden were going to be compared to anybody, they'd just as soon it be Zeppelin. "Being compared to Robert Plant is better than being compared to Jim Morrison," Chris smiles. "So it could be a lot worse."

They may not be Led Zeppelin — or for that matter, the next Led Zeppelin — but that hasn't stopped literally every major record company this side of the equator from trying to sign the hottest band currently writhing and sweating their way across what few stages there are left to sweat on in Seattle. With no less than 12 major biggies lining up to spill ink with the misunderstood group, it looks like the winner is going to be A&M.

"They've given us money already so we're kind of obligated," says Chris about the lucky label that finally, after

two years of pursuit, committed the band to a deal. "We put them off for three releases. We wanted the Sub Pop *Screaming Life* record to come out, and we heard SST was also interested, and we wanted to get in contact with them," adds Kim. Fortunately for Soundgarden, A&M didn't give up or give in so quickly, not that it mattered.

One of the reasons the band held out so long to secure the deal, a move that many considered to be bordering on arrogance, was because they were more into learning the whole record making process than into being rock gods. As Chris points out, putting off a major label wasn't like putting off success.

"It's like we're putting off this other aspect of the music business. We can achieve success with our own means and ways, and if that means eventually winding up on a major label, that's fine. Ultimately, we have a better chance for success because we didn't jump right into a major deal."

Considering Soundgarden's raucous past, one that has been stocked with several critically received independent releases, endless beer-soaked nights playing the dreaded club scene to packed houses, and even an occasional national tour or two, the time now seems right for them to start taking on the big time. Or rather bigger time. But some die-hard purists feel that this move could taint, if not altogether destroy the cult appeal of the band.

"Nobody would want to sign a band like us, and then try to get us to wear spandex and sing pop rock songs," assures the singer. "There are a million bands out there who are willing to do it. But eventually, you have to be on a major to achieve the level of success we want to achieve. It doesn't necessarily mean that we would be happier on a smaller independent label. When we were first offered a major label deal, they weren't offering us any more money than we could get on an independent. Why take their money when you could take the same amount from an independent and make the record you want to make?"

For better or worse, that has been the philosophy that Soundgarden has steadfastly maintained during their last four years together. So much so that the band figures to help the label decide how to market them because, they say, nobody knows Soundgarden better than they do.

"We know more about the music that

we're doing, how to record it, how to produce it, how to package it, than any of the labels do," says drummer Matt Cameron. "They can't throw us into a metal market, and A&M in particular isn't a big metal label, anyway. We're not new wave or punk. We're not an obvious any kind of market, so they're gonna need our help."

Kim also brings up the fact that, "we do have a record company that's influential and has money, and will take our ideas and do something with it, and invest in it, and that's good."

So how much money, and how much investment is good? "We are getting a more substantial amount of money than we were initially being offered," Kim replies with just a hint of embarrassment in his voice. "But," he counters,

"it's not as much as what your Jane's Addiction or Guns 'n Roses got. We could've got more, but we don't want to commit ourselves that deep to where the label starts making their demands and expectations upon you. Besides, I don't want to be a dishwasher philosopher for the rest of my life."

Beyond all the money and the hype is a band who are perhaps one of the most unusual sounding groups in America today. In that respect maybe the Led Zeppelin comparison isn't far off, not because Soundgarden are able to take the '70s idealism of hard rock and heavy metal, and fuse them with a unique sort of '80s punk sensibility. It's because they, like Led Zeppelin before them, are groundbreakers. Maybe that's why it's become so hard

for people to pigeon-hole them.

Since the group all but defies classification, even by their own admission, the types of crowds that Soundgarden plays for are characteristically diversified. Judging by their packed-out performances at this year's Bumbershoot festival they are beginning to cultivate a rather large, female following.

"Really?" asks Chris. "It's probably because of Kim's beard. Bearded men are totally in vogue in the late '80s."

"Songwriter first, sex god second, and musician third," Kim smirks.

After the laughter has died down, Chris also says that the band has sort of a "metal audience" in a way. "We've played some shows with some 'metal-esque' bands like the Melvins and Green River. And it just seemed like a lot of the metal fans totally ate it up. Whenever we played in front of an audience that had metal fans, we did real well. But, we rarely do because usually we're associated with Seattle-type artist bands, and when we tour, it's with bands like Sonic Youth and Soul Asylum." But the singer is quick to point out that they haven't been as exposed to the metal audiences as much as they could be. "We've always listened to, and liked bands like the Meat Puppets and Sonic Youth, and we do real well with audiences that like the Butthole Surfers. So we've sort of put ourselves there. But the metal crowd knows what we're doing."

"Metal kids understand us whereas people who tout themselves as intellectuals wouldn't, because the music is gut level," observes Matt.

"I think it has to have a healthy element of both," says Kim about the precious ingredients needed to create whatever it is that gives critics such a hard time. "Not that we're Joe Spiritu-

al Band,' far from anything like that. To incorporate three different elements: sexual, emotional, and intellectual, and make them work, is usually the best kind of music."

Chris, Kim, Matt, and bassist Hiro Yamamoto, seem to have their feet firmly planted in solid ground. Obviously, fame to them isn't so much an opportunity to showcase their beards and bobs on "Lifestyles of the Rich and Shameless," as it is a chance to make a valid musical statement. Fame, for all of its glitz, glamour, and opulence can be somewhat of a threatening burden. Not surprisingly, Soundgarden are quite aware of it, and it doesn't seem to make that much of a difference to them.

Does the thought of fame scare Soundgarden? "Kim couldn't even handle the TV series," quins Chris. "He opted for 'One Day at a Time!'"

"It depends," Kim responds amid assorted chuckles. "If fame means all of the superfluous, surface-type jazz that goes along with it, who needs that? There's plenty of substantial things in my life that I enjoy, like my friends, my family, beer."

Soundgarden's next record, by the way, is in production and should be, barring any delays caused by superfluous jazz, out a few weeks after you read this. Issued on the prestigious SST label its working title is *Ultra-Mega Okay*, as opposed, Kim claims with a nasty grin, to *Total Fucking Butt-wipe*. "We're making it a household word across the nation," he brags proudly.

"We're not trying to take anything away from 'dude,' though," warns Chris. He also says that they are looking forward to recording their next album, the one that A&M finally gets, with Seattle producer extraordinaire Terry Date. "It's cool that we get to work with Terry because when we recorded our SST record, we used somebody that had engineered a Black Flag album. The sound that we sort of came up with for this record is Seattle-based, and it's good that we're gonna record it here, and use people from here."

"Besides," Kim adds, "He knows how to work with a major label budget, and that's important because he's not going to spend all of your money renting out the Kingdome for you to practice in. He's dealt with major labels and A&R people, and he's aware of the Seattle scene."

It's pretty clear, from this vantage point, that A&M aren't getting one, but two bands for their money. One is made up of the four skilled musicians who are serious as a funeral when it comes to protecting the integrity of their music and careers. The other is a group of long-haired wise guys who delight in trading light-hearted, tongue-in-cheek insults like baseball cards on every-



SOUNDGARDEN
SOUNDGARDEN

For some, music is little more than that catchy tune which accompanies a favorite commercial, or something to focus on besides the dentist's drill. To those less fortunate, music is a way of life. The misbegotten few began listening to what they heard and (worse yet) gave it meaning. In an effort to figure out what went awry with Soundgarden, each member was asked to talk about records which made a profound impact (good or bad) on him.

The only bad influence mentioned was Kim's aversion to the Sounds of Young Seattle cassettes which he felt were "largely indicative of what was happening in England five years previously and had very little to do with Seattle or even the U.S. at the time, even though a few of the bands were interesting."

This is what happened to Soundgarden:
KIM: "Kiss Alive was the second album I ever bought and the first record that made me realize things could be a lot louder and more violent than the Beatles. It emphasized volume and guitar over harmony, melody and lyrics; all the stuff I never listened to anyway. It was a long awaited synthesis of things I was into while growing up: comic books, monster movies, and what seemed like loud fast rock at the time. It paralleled the onset of my pubescent bathroom hikes; I usually waited until my parents weren't around. It made me teach myself guitar. I just started doing drugs, too."

"MC5 Kick Out the Jams is wilder, looser, more chaotic than Kiss. It exposed me to a certain social and political spectrum. It was at this time I realized that the guitar was a vehicle to say 'Fuck You.' It also opened me up to the Doors, Stooges, and Velvet; the latter two were far more intense and fright-

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SOUND

SOUNDGARDEN CONTINUED FROM PAGE 20

thing from life and fame to music and each other. They take themselves seriously, but not too seriously — which is the key to longevity. As an illustration of this point, a momentarily unattended tape recorder later yields whispered hidden messages like, "Hail Satan," "The Rocket sucks," "We're going to kill you," and "We had sex with our

dog, Foo Foo!" Like I said, Soundgarden, if anything have a sense of self, and a sense of humor.

Kim sums up Sound Garden's "meta-physical" reason for existence at the end of the interview: "Some people plot their careers and live their lives through the interviews the read with Nikki Sixx. Many young glamsters and metal people who can't play their instruments, who really have no talent or vision." But

falling back into that good ol' Soundgarden charm, he proudly proclaims that, "We plot our careers by Rob Reiner films: *Spinal Tap*, in particular."

Chaos Against Aids with Soundgarden, Skinyard, Ghostflesh, the Refuzors and Boolleg Howdah, proceeds benefitting AIDS organizations, 10/12 at the Eastlake East (119 Eastlake E.), 9 pm, call 747-KBAD or 523-4406 for more info.

SOUND-OFF CONTINUED FROM PAGE 20

oning than Sabbath was to a sixth grader's ears. I stopped doing drugs and started reading."

HIRO: "I listened to 'Have You Seen Her' by the Chi-Lites daily before school in fifth grade. I had green and gold striped bell bottoms and I wrote notes to Cathy Garepis.

Neil Young Everybody Knows this is Nowhere. I first heard this record in high school and it affirmed the futility I felt. Still, it had a powerfully intangible quality that overcame my depressiveness.

"The Butthole Surfers debut is so freaky, fucked-up, and wild that it made my head spin. It has the same qualities Neil Young

has that make me go 'Yeah!'"

MATT: "Jimi Hendrix Axis Bold as Love. 'Hendrix is God! I like his songs as well as his playing on this record. I like to get wild and possessed when I drum, while remaining in control. This is the feeling I get from Jimi Hendrix's playing.

"Debussy Afternoon of a Fawn cracked my mind and heart wide open.

"John Coltrane A Love Supreme made me appreciate music as a religion."

CHRIS: "Alice Cooper Billion Dollar Babies.

"Every Friday in fifth grade the teachers would let the kids play their favorite records. I brought this, which was a big risk in itself because I swiped it from my neighbor's older brother (who looked like a big warthog), and they wouldn't let me play it.

They never vetoed anyone's choice before or since. This showed me that rock 'n' roll could scare the fuck out of certain people.

"Killing Joke Killing Joke is the first record I heard that mixed New Wave and Heavy Metal. It made me realize that I could do the same thing without getting eggs thrown at me. Before this record, these two genres were very separate. This record broke ground for bands like Metallica and us.

"Meat Puppets II blew me away when it first came out and continues to do so. Most of the records that came out when this came out seem dated, but Meat Puppets II seems timeless to me. It also taught me what to hate on their later releases. Hey man, what about the Zep?"

► Mark Arm

... I'd never seen Soundgarden before and their Club X show was a baptism by fire. Earmelting, lightning fast and bone crunching ecstasy in hell. They deserve all the attention they're getting these days. I'd rather listen to these guys any day over Kingdom Come, Guns 'n' Roses or any other of this genre...

The Rocket
The World's Greatest Magazine



Reviews

Clubs

Soundgarden

Scream
Los Angeles

□ **The Players:** Chris Cornell, vocals/rhythm guitar; Kim Thayil, guitar; Hiro Yamamoto, bass; Matt Cameron, drums.

□ **Material:** Soundgarden is just that—a garden of sound picked from the orchards of Led Zeppelin, Bauhaus, and the Butthole Surfers. But God forbid I should lead you to believe that this is a copy band, like 80 percent of the "talent" in this town. On the contrary, Soundgarden is 100 percent surefire, original, like-you've-always-wanted-to-hear-it stuff. Instead of trying to disguise their influences, they blatantly throw in direct quotes from classics like "Communication Breakdown" and "Bela Lugosi's Dead" (done exceptionally well, I might add), making it a matter of pride rather than plagiarism. This was the first set I've seen in a long, long time where I didn't want the jam sessions to end—and songs like "All Your Lies" and "Nothing to Say" are nothing less than incendiary.

□ **Musicianship:** Singer Cornell is Robert Plant, but with his integrity intact; his vocal gyrations demand and command. Cameron (not Phil Collins) is the drummer they should call for the next Zeppelin reunion—his masterful technique and sheer power were (yes, I've got to say it) awesome. Any drummer who can put a ¾ fill into a 10/4 bar has got my admiration. Lead guitarist Thayil's area of expertise is color, and it was his choice of timbres that really iced the cake. Bassist Yamamoto had some tasty solo moments, but clarity was unmercifully sacrificed in this echo chamber of a room. If these descriptions sound overzealous, you'd better check out the band before dismissing them.

□ **Performance:** In tattered jeans and shirtless for most of the show, Cornell looked like he'd just gotten off the bus from Santa Cruz. Meanwhile, his cohorts defiantly maintained a garage band image—but the similarity ended right there. Thayil and Yamamoto created their own rubbery moves and



Soundgarden: Seattle band brings some heavy weather to Southern California.

energies, all highly intense and resourceful, but it was the towering Cornell who dominated with all the natural charisma of a naughty child. He lumbered about the stage as if in a trance, flinging his long hair in time to the music. (Whether he remembers that he kicked his guitar off the stage is doubtful.) And when the road manager (in like attire) joined him in an end-of-set wrestling match—climaxing with Cornell held aloft in a shoulder lock, his head swinging in time to the beat and barely missing the floor monitors—the typically stiff Hollywood crowd roared its approval.

□ **Summary:** The only reason you haven't heard of Soundgarden before is because this is their first trek out of Seattle; I repeat—the *only* reason. Merely by playing a few shows in the L.A. area, they've done more to shake up a trash-weary scene than any local band in ages—and they've certainly given Jane's Addiction something to think about. When the album comes out of SST next month, I'll be first in line.

—Kat Chase



SOUNDGARDEN: Screaming like a 12" Soundgarden brings the Led Zeppelin formula up to date — Chris Cornell has Robert Plant's pipes without the whine, and the band distills the essence of Led Zep's sound, then uses it as the basis for a new approach to a tired genre. Intelligently executed, well-produced, and crisply recorded — "Tears to Forget," features dognotes from Cornell and a sound so thick it's virtually three-dimensional. "Nothing to Say" is a "Dazed and Confused"-style wailfest, and the group's avant tendencies pop up in "Hand of God," which works in a recording of an evangelist. This is good stuff — Soundgarden may be the metal band for people who don't like metal bands. (Sub Pop, Box 20645, Seattle, WA 98102) — Lee Moore

SOUNDGARDEN BENDS SOME MAJOR MIND: Through a startlingly intense EP (on hometown SubPop Records) and some carefully chosen showcase performances, Seattle-based hard rock quartet Soundgarden has deftly positioned itself for a deal with a major—and it looks like the band will have (or already has) several substantial offers to choose from. With a sound that's dark, psychedelic, and disturbingly powerful, Soundgarden has set up camp in the shadowy realm first discovered by Led Zeppelin in the lower depths of *Physical Graffiti*. And in vocalist Chris Cornell, the band

has a memorable frontman, one who renders those Jim Morrison comparisons that reviewers like to throw around like confetti seem cheap and superficial. This guy seems to have the same *dreams* the Lizard King did—so much so that you can imagine him creeping down the hallway right next to Jimbo in "The End." Yikes. Here's another analogy: Imagine the Cult burrowing straight from their doomy Southern Death Cult mode to a point directly beneath the Led Zeppelin of *Electric*. In short, this stuff is truly spooky.

Soundgarden makes uncompromising music, not the sort that's likely to be played on KISS. But with the right video, the band could explode on MTV, or even sell without airplay by virtue of a hip cachet, a la Metallica and Guns N' Roses. Consequently, a number of adventurous A&R reps are dying to take the plunge. While this is only speculation, the frontrunner may well be Aaron Jacoves of A&M—which has no act remotely like this one. Even as the majors are fighting over the band, SST is set to release Soundgarden's first longplayer—which should provide a compelling (some might say harrowing) introduction to this upwardly mobile unit. The important thing is, Soundgarden has the fierceness to make rock sound *dangerous* again—no mean feat in an era epitomized by Depeche Mode's hideous demolition of "Route 66." We'll let you know who gets 'em.

BACKLASH

Best Band

1. SOUNDGARDEN
2. Young Fresh Fellows
3. Green River
4. Chemistry Set
5. Skin Yard



Soundgarden

Best New Band

1. COFFIN BREAK
 2. Couch of Sound
 3. H-Hour
 4. Crisis Party
 5. Catbutt
- (An honorable mention to Blood Circus, a very new band who received an impressive number of votes during the last week of counting.)

Best Vocalist

1. CHRIS CORNELL, Soundgarden
2. Mark Arm, Green River, Thrown-ups, etc.
3. Rhonda Pelikan, Crypt Kicker 5
4. Jan Gregor, Variant Cause
5. Ben McMillan, Skin Yard

Best Single:

1. MY EYE, "Empty Box/ So Much Going On"
2. U-Men, "Solid Action/ Dig it a Hole"
3. Skin Yard, "Gelatin Babies/Bleed"
4. Soundgarden, "Hunted Down/Nothing to Say"
5. (TIE)
Girl Trouble, "Riverbed"
Thrown-ups, "Smiling Panties" 7"

Best Guitarist

1. KIM THAYIL, Soundgarden
2. Jack End. 10, Skin Yard
3. Stone Gossard, Green River, Lords of the Wasteland
4. Milton Garrison, Vexed
5. Greg Morlan, Variant Cause

Best National Album, 1987

1. METALLICA, *Garage Days Re-revisited*
2. Sonic Youth, *Sister*
3. Replacements, *Pleased to Meet Me*
4. Redd Kross, *Neurotica*
5. Butthole Surfers, *Locust Abortion Technician*

Sex Object of the Year

About 3/4 of the respondents who answered this question voted for themselves, or for parts of their own bodies, so:

1. YOU
2. Chris Cornell, Soundgarden
3. Landrew
4. Dolly Parton
5. Lisa Bonet

Best Local Album/E.P.

1. GREEN RIVER, *Dry as a Bone*
2. Soundgarden, *Screaming Life*



Chris Cornell