

## CHRIS CORNELL

Alain Johannes - Guitars and backing vocals  
Natasha Shneider - Keyboards and backing vocals  
Ric Markmann - Bass  
Greg Upchurch - Drums

"Success is really only a measure of what has happened before," says Chris Cornell, who as singer for Seattle's recently disbanded Soundgarden, reintroduced integrity and reckless passion back into the tired genre of hard rock. Though Soundgarden split in 1997 at the height of their 12-year-career, Cornell continues on in the tradition of breaking boundaries and challenging traditions with his daringly eclectic debut *Euphoria Morning*. "I don't think you ever really reach a plateau where you're good enough at your craft to just stop and rest on past achievements. You always have to create something new rather than borrow or lean on what you've done in the past. It's like being a baby. You've just been born and have totally new parameters. The world is wide open."

*Euphoria Morning* is Cornell's rebirth into new realm of more experimental and emotional terrain. Using Soundgarden's sonic diversity as a jumping off point, the singer/songwriter explores more surreal musical textures, esoteric studio techniques, emotional lyricism and varied singing styles. "Suddenly I could do anything I wanted, and that's kind of scary," says Cornell of working solo. I became really inspired by the Beatles, not so much their songwriting or sound, but the fact that they were really diverse. They would discover different styles and feelings, incorporate that into what they did, and create an incredible landscape of sounds. With *Euphoria Morning*, I felt like 'Let's not just do it the normal way. Let's have an environment that you put your hand into, your head into...'".

That sonic environment is big, lush and velvety in "Can't Change Me," surreal and opiated in the "Flutter Girl," and seductively foreboding in "Follow My Way." A plethora of subtle studio effects and layered production add an enigmatic dimension to songs, while the use of vintage guitar and amps to give *Euphoria Morning* an overall warm and familiar feel. "Sweet Euphoria" is just Cornell with an acoustic guitar; it's delicate, beautiful and biting, while numbers like "Mission" reflect Cornell's hard rock origins and newfound love for technological tweakings.

Throughout *Euphoria Morning* he explores new vocal possibilities, his voice stretching out over piano and slow-hand guitar in bluesy and spiritual numbers like "Disappearing One", then dipping and swaying with the smokey-blue "When I'm Down". "I really love old R&B ballads of the sixties, and wanted to sing in that style," says Cornell. "In a way, it's like re-inventing the wheel. How can I make it a little different? If I'm influenced by something, I want to take it to another place rather than emulate exactly what they did with Soundgarden. I assumed the role as another instrument in the band: the lyrics I wrote were often influenced by the mood of the music," says Cornell. "With this solo record, the reverse would happen-the music is tailored to the mood of the lyrics."

"Wave Goodbye" is a prime example of that newfound vulnerability. A tribute of sorts to the late singer Jeff Buckley, Cornell sings sweet, simple and sorrow-filled lines like: "When you miss somebody, you tell yourself a hundred thousand times nobody ever lives forever." "I wrote it right after he died," say Cornell. "The lyrics are about Jeff, but also about losing someone, about that experience. Lyrically, it's one of the most straight-forward songs I've ever written." Working solo allowed Cornell to work in a more spontaneous fashion. Without the democratic band process, he was able to freely explore the songwriting process, savor the unconstrained beauty of mistakes and delve deeper into his own emotional well. "There were many moments where I'd sing something, and it didn't go the way I planned," says Cornell. "My voice would do something I didn't want it to, and there'd be a lot of vulnerability in there," says Cornell. "I was really self-conscious at first, then eventually, that mistake would become my favorite part. That also happened in writing lyrics. After a while, I had this system: If I wrote a line, then questioned it 'Do I really want people to hear me say that? Is that too personal?' That moment of fear meant I should keep it. That means it's powerful."

Cornell has been playing music ever since the age of eight. As a boy growing up in Seattle, he took up the piano and began composing his own "silly kid tunes." He went on to discover guitar, and then drums. He joined a cover band in high school ("AC/DC was a requested favorite," recalls Cornell) and by his late teens, met up with newly transplanted guitarist Kim Thayil. They started Soundgarden (named after a wind sculpture in outer Seattle) in 1984, and Cornell focused on his singing duties. Playing the same circuit that would several years later be traveled by Nirvana and Mudhoney, the band released 1987's *Screaming Life* EP on the new label SubPop, and its LP debut the following year, *Ultramega OK*, on another indie label SST. Interest around the band began spreading outside the confines of the

Northwest, just as their A&M debut *Louder Than Love* was released in 1989. The band toured non-stop, released *Badmotorfinger* in 1991, then hit the big time with *Superunknown* and its dynamic single "Black Hole Sun" in 1994. Soundgarden kept up momentum with their most experimental release, 1996's acclaimed *Down on the Upside*. But the album would find the band grappling with their imposed legendary status, a mantle of importance proved too suffocating for Soundgarden. They disbanded the following year, releasing the best-of collection *A-Sides* (1997) as a goodbye of sorts. According to Chris Cornell, Soundgarden's split was an act of self-preservation. "A large part was that we were so self-contained in the beginning, I don't think we ever really adjusted to the success part of it," says the singer, who describes his former bandmates in terms of family.

As he begins his long, solo career, Chris is working outside the structure of Soundgarden. The singer wrote most of the material on the critically acclaimed, 1991 album *Temple of the Dog*, a collective of Pearl Jam and Soundgarden members who formed in tribute to late Mother Love Bone singer Andrew Wood. Chris's duet with Eddie Vedder, "Hunger Strike," became a classic. With *Euphoria Morning*, Cornell admits he missed the process of collaboration, so he sought the writing and producing input of Alain Johannes and Natasha Shneider. The three, who had worked together on a song for the *Great Expectations* soundtrack, made *Euphoria Morning* in Johannes's LA-based, home studio. They recorded the entire album digitally (no tape machine required), yet offset the sharp precision of technology with the warm, imperfect sounds of vintage '60's guitars, amps and other equipment. "We had this old stuff filtering through up-to-the-second-technology," says Cornell. "To me, it makes this record sound totally unique. I think it's also proof that technology and rock music are okay together. You don't have to be a techno or hip hop artist to benefit from a new recording environment. There's so much hesitance from people who play organic music, but you don't have to make it that way."

But for Cornell, the ultimate appeal of any album or piece of music comes down to its emotional impact and its effect in very human terms. "The only criteria I apply when making music is 'Does it make the hair on the back of my neck stand on end?'" says Cornell. "It doesn't matter what style it is, what it reminds me of, what it doesn't remind me of. If it doesn't give me that feeling of inspiration, then it's not there yet. That's the beauty of being able to do this as my job. It's intangible. Nobody can tell me how to do it. I can't tell anyone else how to do it. You have to invent it as you go along. It's challenging, completely unpredictable and sometimes frightening, but that's what makes it all worthwhile."

Chris Cornell and his band will tour extensively through the year 2000 to support *Euphoria Morning* band.