

# Chris Cornell returns with first solo album

BY MARC WEINGARTEN  
REQUEST MAGAZINE

Chris Cornell is chowing breakfast in his plush suite at the Four Seasons hotel in Los Angeles and checking out a certain rock magazine's list of



the 90 best albums of the '90s. He's made the cut, but just barely: Soundgarden's 1994 masterpiece *Superunknown* checks in a No. 70, which kind of tickled him, but he still grumbles about Sleater-Kinney being much higher on the list—like, what's up with that?

Besides, Cornell is a bit befuddled about this constant need for rock critics to canonize. "I'm so schizophrenic about my musical tastes. I like songs, and then I don't like them," he said. "I don't even remember all the amazing songs I've ever heard."

Then it occurs to him that his first solo album, *Euphoria Morning*, will drop three months before the century's end. Does that mean it will slip through the cracks when it comes time for other critics to weigh in on the decade's best? "It'll make the Best Album of the Last Three Months of the '90s list," he said with a laugh.

A solo venture isn't always the smoothest flight plan for those whose identities have been subsumed

by a band brand-name. If you want to hear sob stories on the topic, just give Alice in Chains' Jerry Cantrell and Stone Temple Pilot's Scott Weiland a ring. But believe this: When Cornell sings, attention must be paid.

Let's face it: We all loved Soundgarden guitarist Kim Thayil's monster-truck riffage, and bassist Ben Shepherd and drummer Matt Cameron's booming system made our necks sore. But Soundgarden still might have been shilling seven-inch product on Sub Pop Records were it not for Cornell, a charismatic, frightfully sexy frontman with turbo-powered pipes. He's the kind of artist for whom rock was invented.

Working closely with the L.A. duo Eleven, aka multi-instrumentalists Alain Johannes and Natasha Shneider, better known as the opening act for the *Superunknown* tour (and as the band drummer Jack Irons was with between his stint with the original Red Hot Chili Peppers and current job as Pearl



Courtesy of Request Magazine  
**Chris Cornell, former lead singer of Soundgarden, releases his first solo effort, *Euphoria Morning*.**

Jam's drummer), Cornell retains Soundgarden's smoldering drama and visions of apocalypse on *Euphoria Morning*, but does so with less bluster and more subtlety. The melodies weave and slink around his stunning muscular growl, while guitar armies and tribal drums quietly conduct field maneuvers behind him.

"I thought, If I'm gonna have a solo career, I'm not really an instrumentalist, I'm a singer, and that's what the focus should be," Cornell said. "Very often I was the first one in Soundgarden to say, 'You know, turn the guitars up,' but when you've done something for a long time, you've got to become better at it."

For *Euphoria Morning*, Cornell decamped to L.A. from Seattle and went strictly homemade. The album was recorded at Johannes and Shneider's home studio in West Hollywood—no six-figure producers or catered meals to distract from the task at hand. "Alain and Natasha were very quick and ready to go at all times," Cornell said. "We

tried to keep things really sparse and keep my voice as big a part of the mix as possible. We never felt like we weren't gonna achieve what we wanted to achieve."

Still, are the Teen Beat-niks and the aggro-rock fans that control the fin de siècle zeitgeist ready to embrace a guy who made his first album when Britney Spears was in Huggies? This is, after all, the same denuded pop-cultural landscape that produced the first grunge wave in the late '80s. Maybe, according to Cornell, it's time for a counterrevolution.

"In 1989, it was hair metal [that stank]; now it's commercial rap," he said. "Back then, every video was, we arrive at our gig by helicopter, and my supermodel girlfriend is doing splits on my Jag, and we're richer and better than you. Now rap is all about that kind of bravado. Who would've thought there would be a musical style where the person's name would be the lyrics? At some point, fans have got to feel insulted by that."

During the recording of *Euphoria Morning*, a little mantra played over and over in Cornell's head, and it went something like this: Don't suck. He knows he can't control the consumption patterns of fickle pop fans, but he can control the quality of his output. "I wanted to make a record that wasn't being done by 50 other bands, and I'm not chasing the tail end of any trend." Cornell steals a glance at his half-empty breakfast tray and says, "It's really about quality, service and value. Listen to the record, and I'll change your sheets in the morning."

COVER PHOTO COURTESY OF REQUEST MAGAZINE

## McCain concert raises money for children

BY BROCK VERGAKIS  
NEWS EDITOR

Edwin McCain performed a benefit concert Wednesday night at the Koger Center to raise money for The Alliance for South Carolina's Children.

The proceeds raised will be donated to help the alliance, which is "committed to preventive programs and early interventions which improve the quality of life for children and save tax dollars," according to a pamphlet provided by the alliance.

McCain, a South Carolina native, and former USC student, is on tour promoting his latest album, *Messenger*.

This is McCain's third album since sign-

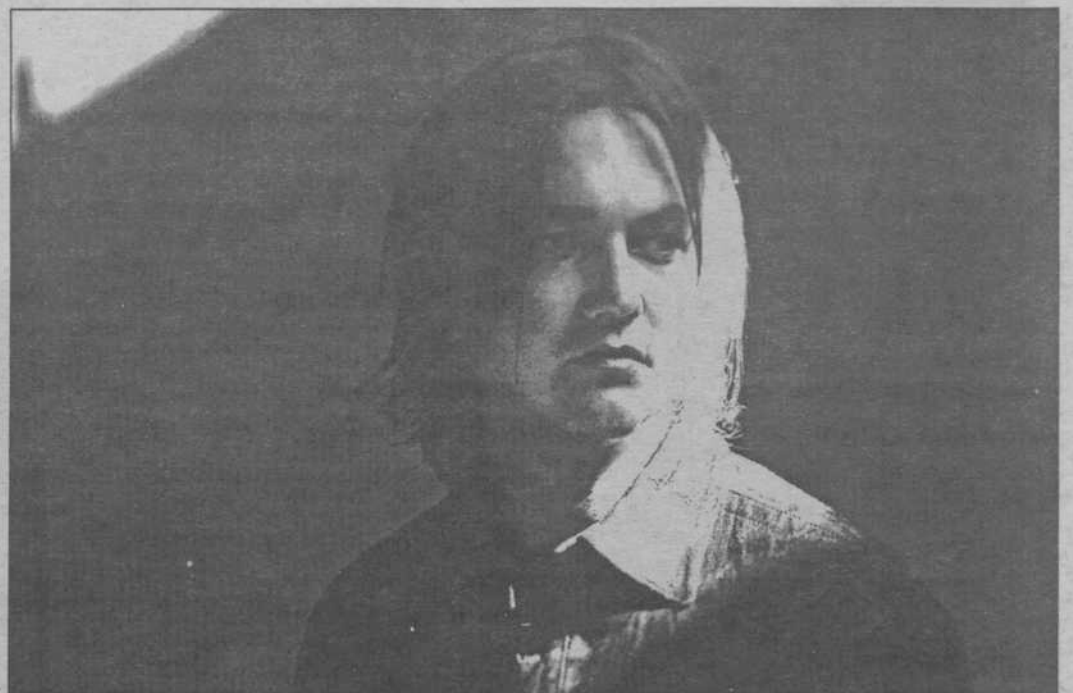
ing with Atlantic Records.

At the Koger Center Wednesday night, "Charleston's native son" told stories and played music for about two hours.

Members of USC's Symphony Orchestra provided backup music for part of the concert.

This was the first time The Alliance for South Carolina's Children used the Koger center as a venue for a benefit concert.

According to Connie Scrivens of the Koger Center, ticket sales were "tremendously successful."



**Edwin McCain and his band were joined by the USC Symphony Wednesday night at the Koger Center. They played to raise money for The Alliance for Children.**