



GARDEN PARTY

“The 12-year break is over and school is back in session. Knights of the Soundtable ride again!”

And just like that, Soundgarden was back. Chris Cornell’s twitter post from New Years Day 2010 bears its first fruit, following three live shows, with the release of *Telephantasm*, a satisfyingly comprehensive Soundgarden retrospective. Fans can pick from three versions of *Telephantasm*. There’s the basic single disc edition with the 12 biggest cuts, one of which is “Black Rain,” a *Badmotorfinger*-era track, never before released. The double-disc edition has an additional 12 tracks (5 of which are previously unreleased) and also includes Soundgarden’s first-ever DVD. How is it that such a visually-riveting band has not previously released a collection of vids? The DVD features 20 videos, 13 of which have never been released. It’s Soundgarden heaven.

For serious audiophiles, there is a deluxe 3-LP Vinyl Edition and, for monster Soundgarden fans, an individually-numbered Super Deluxe Collector’s Edition. The Super Deluxe Collector’s Edition will be available for a limited time with its two CDs, the limited edition DVD, three heavy vinyl discs, a collectible poster, lithos and a bunch of extras.

In an unprecedented marketing move, *Telephantasm* will also be released bundled with Activision’s new videogame *Guitar Hero®: Warriors of Rock*. “The fact that this seminal band chose *Guitar Hero: Warriors of Rock* as the way to reintroduce themselves speaks volumes about *Guitar Hero*’s ability to deliver music, in an exciting, interactive way, to millions of music fans and gamers, said David Haddad, Chief Operating Officer, *Guitar Hero*. Cornell’s kids play *Guitar Hero*. As a “rock-guitar Dad,” he’s philosophical. “Can, for instance, my kids playing *Guitar Hero* actually be an investment in being able to play an instrument later? We don’t know if there’s any clinical studies that have proved that yet. So, let me know if you find out,” he laughs.

Soundgarden is bringing back the heavy / by ANDREA TRACE

Cornell is also philosophical on his about-face vis-à-vis the Soundgarden reunion. “We were able to have a career as Soundgarden and make records all the way up to the last one that I feel were totally vital and totally creative and daring records and I think the last record was the best one. Then we just kind of put it away unscathed, you know, and untainted.

“I can’t imagine what would be a good enough reason to take that back out and start tampering with it,” Cornell has said. “The only reason would be for the fans, but I feel like that’s a kind of a double-edged sword in a way.” It looks as though the reunion doesn’t boast a “reason” as such. A get-together by Soundgarden guitarist Kim Thayil, drummer Matt Cameron and bassist Ben Shepherd during Tom Morello’s stop in Seattle in March of 2009 was followed by Cornell joining Cameron and Pearl Jam onstage in October and, seemingly as a logical consequence, a Soundgarden reunion became a reality.

Soundgarden-mania kicked off earlier this year when the band played a small hometown show in April at Seattle’s Showbox, under the moniker Nude Dragons (an anagram for Soundgarden). Thirteen years away from the stage had not dulled the razor edge of the band. The 90-minute set roared through radio hits and deep cuts and featured all the menace, melody and dark virtuosity the band has always been known for. All the elements were there: Thayil’s aggressive riffs, Shepherd’s low-slung, predatory bass, Cameron’s thunderingly complex drumming and Cornell’s powerful wail.

By all accounts their headlining Lollapalooza set in August of this year was also a resounding success. Again pulling out deep catalogue surprises along with the hits, Cornell was in better voice than ever, thanking the fans for their enthusiastic reception and calling the hiatus a little break. But for the most part, he kept the banter to a minimum. The music alone provided maximum entertainment value.



Telephantasm is available now.

Historically, Soundgarden was a part of the music that “replaced the commercial norm, was [about] aggressive attitude, clearly guitar-based, clearly organic” as Cornell phrases it. Perennially associated with Nirvana, Pearl Jam, Alice In Chains and the Seattle scene of the 20th century’s final decade, Soundgarden were darker, heavier: almost metal. What could be more natural, more organic than a reunion in the somewhat forbidding climate of 2010? Heavy music is back on the menu and Soundgarden fills the bill. ♣