

Album Charts

Rock Pool Top Ten

1. Camper Van Beethoven
Key Lime Pie
2. Red Hot Chili Peppers
Mother's Milk
3. Sugarcubes
Here Today, Tomorrow ...
4. Bad Brains
Quickness
5. Meat Puppets
Monsters
6. Soundgarden
Louder Than Love
7. Jazz Butcher
Big Planet, Scary Planet
8. My Dad Is Dead
The Taller You Are ...
9. The Mekons
... Rock-n-Roll
10. Mighty Lemon Drops
Laughter

WXYC

1. Neil Young
Freedom
2. Muzikass
The Prisoner's Song
3. Lenny Kravitz
Let Love Rule
4. Spacemen 3
Playing With Fire
5. My Dad Is Dead
The Taller You Are ...
6. Snatches of Pink
Dead Men
7. The Mekons
... Rock-n-Roll
8. Various Artists
Live at the Knitting Factory
9. Glass Eye
Hello Young Lovers
10. Primitives
Pure

Heavy metal for the thinking man

Soundgarden

Louder Than Love

A&M Records

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The first thing you see is the black label that says "Explicit Lyrics—Parental Advisory." Is there any better way to guarantee record sales? My first thought was "Oh boy, scum metal!" But Soundgarden's debut album *Louder Than Love* is no sex, drugs and rock'n'roll album. It's a Zeppelinesque psychedelic blues-fest for the thinking man. Follow that?

Soundgarden takes its name from a sound sculpture of steel tubing. In much the same way that this carefully sculptured piece catches and transforms the wind, the band members elegantly craft their music from what they see around them. The album is a return to the good old days of rock — the '70s — before bleach blonde and tattoos became the staples of the music business. The group cares about the music itself, not just the fact that it will turn some groupie in the front row into a love-slave for the evening.

"Hands All Over," one of the best songs on *Louder*, is a perfect example of Soundgarden's work. To a driving rhythm, vocalist/guitarist Chris Cornell laments the world political and ecological condition, pleading "Put your hands away/Your gonna kill your mother."

The most riveting element of most

ALISA DEMAO

albums

of the other material is the rhythm section. Check out "Power Trip," with a bluesy, strip-tease sound in the best Zeppelin tradition. Bassist Hiro Yamamoto and drummer Matt Cameron provide a pounding, erotic beat that drives the body onward while Cornell's molten voice sensuously carresses the eardrums. Turned on yet?

Unfortunately Yamamoto is no longer with the group. It remains to be seen how well new bassist Jason Everman, formerly of the Seattle-based band Nirvana, will fill his musical shoes as the band goes out on the road.

Another great song was "I Awake," which I rather enjoyed once I got used to the idea of speed metal slowed down so that you could understand the words. Speed freaks be warned: this album will take you by surprise. It's got a speed metal edge to the sound, but not the actual mph. It may have been merely a preconceived notion of what the album should sound like, but at first I wondered if the batteries in my Walkman were running down.

These guys are nothing if not versatile, however. "Gun" fulfilled my 150 mph expectations and my mosh pit fantasies. "Full On" is pure, unadulterated rock. And I could almost picture Spinal Tap doing the underground soon-to-be-classic "Big Dumb Sex." This song is guaranteed to turn



Soundgarden (l-r): Kim Thayil, Matt Cameron, Jason Everman, Chris Cornell

the Parents' Music Resource Center rabid.

Guitarist Kim Thayil has described the band's music as "zen metal." Admittedly there is a lot of Zeppelin here. But these guys add a rough edge to the music that gives it a tougher sound. Their psychedelic blues is music with integrity.

The Ratings

- — miserable
- — mediocre
- — enjoyable
- — quite good
- — unmissable

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No musical grab bag, but no progress

Smithereens

11

Enigma/Capitol

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On their third major label release, *11*, the Smithereens continue to refine their melodic, '60s retro-rock. But while the album is more tuneful and well-crafted than earlier efforts, the band makes

BRIAN SPRINGER

albums

little forward progress.

Taking the approach of "The World We Know" from 1988's *Green Thoughts* for a starting point, the Smithereens have perfected a crunching rock sound. *11* is stylistically consistent and a change from the musical grab bags of previous releases. Don Dixon, who produced the last

two Smithereens efforts, has been replaced by studio veteran Ed Stasium, who is known for his work with such bands as Living Colour and Soul Asylum.

Despite a few changes, the sound is very familiar — perhaps too familiar. Singer-songwriter-guitarist Pat DiNizio's lyrics remain almost as melodramatic in their tales of woe as in earlier albums. The band's lineup is the same, with lead guitarist Jim Babjak and a rhythm section composed of drummer Dennis Diken and bassist Mike Mesaros.

The first single, "A Girl Like You," opens the album. The song, a crackling, straightforward rocker, resembles *Green Thoughts* in arrangement and style. The next track, "Blues Before and After," is the album's finest example of the crunch-rock sound. "Room Without a View" closely resembles last year's "House We Used to Live in."

More interesting are the songs which diverge from the last album's approach. "Blue Period" makes use of the cello and harpsichord, with DiNizio admitting "I think of you/Much more than I'd ever be willing

to say." Surprisingly, Belinda Carlisle contributes an unobtrusive harmony vocal.

"Yesterday Girl" softens the sound somewhat with acoustic/electric guitar interplay. As if in response to the charge of stylistic stagnation, DiNizio sings "I'm not the singer that you used to know/I used to be the guy with someplace to go."

"Cut Flowers" is more in the vein of *Especially for You*, with a quieter sound and exquisite vocal harmonies in the bridge. "Maria Elena" has Tex-Mex overtones, with accordion and a shuffling beat.

11 clocks in at only 34 minutes — a disappointingly short set. But the album is devoid of filler. Only "William Wilson" and "Kiss Your Tears Away" approach the bounds of the unnecessary.

While *11* sounds overly familiar, it is a good album. Certainly, the Smithereens made this record for the concert setting; as a studio album, it sounds a bit flat, lacking the fire of a Smithereens live show. Even if the band has yet to fulfill the promise shown on its debut, *11* is an enjoyable stop along the way.

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