



SOUND WAVES!

SOUNDGARDEN (Chris Cornell, above) enjoy a free shower, while Neil Young (below) basks in his own ragged glory

NEIL YOUNG, SOUNDGARDEN, BLIND MELON



**Jones Beach Theatre, Long Island, New York
Friday, August 20**

JONES BEACH Theatre is a beautiful outdoor facility with one major drawback: it sits right on the ocean, so when it rains, it doesn't just rain... it storms. Lollapalooza '92 was nearly washed off the stage last year.

It was already drizzling by the time Blind Melon took the stage, but lead singer Shannon Hoon made the most of it, splashing in

the little puddles that formed at the lip of the stage. The band was heavier and rocking harder live than on disc, and clearly showed the effects of almost a year of road-work. The musical attack was tight and focussed, while Shannon prowled the stage like a hungry tiger. 'Holy Man' was tribal and high-spirited, while the sudden smash-hit single 'No Rain' was completely appropriate, shimmering with its catchy melody line. Blind Melon's new found stardom in the US seems deserved; they work hard, and will no doubt grow as a result.

Soundgarden hit the



BLIND MELON (Shannon Hoon): more bite than on record

stage and five songs in, the weather hit them. Incredibly, a new song called 'Let Me Drown' seemed to trigger a virtual hurricane as the wind shifted and began hurling water across the entire stage – even drenching the roadies at the back who were trying to save the equipment. But the band played on – soggy, yet unflagging.

Soundgarden are gradually stripping away all the needless baggage they picked up last year – even down to Chris Cornell's hair. With his short buzzcut, he looks much more like Everyman than some sort of Seattle sex-bomb. And the new songs – five in all – point in a leaner and meaner direction for the next album. 'Spoon Man' has a sinuous, hip-shake feel to it, wrapped around a slowed-down Boogie stomp, while 'Kicksand' is a two-minute burst of controlled fury – much like 'Face Pollution'.

'Let Me Drown' was more like standard Soundgarden, with a heavy bottom and catchy, inside-out riff, while 'My Wave' was

sparse Biker Rock propelled by meaty axework from the imperturbable Kim Thayil, who's mastered the art of never changing his expression once during the set.

The last new song was 'Fell On Black Days', a sombre, haunting number, pulled from the same wind-blown place as the brilliant 'Room A Thousand Years Wide'. A mournful melody carried this one as the band succeeded again at pulling off Heavy Mellow.

The group put up a good fight, but the gear was so waterlogged that the sound started to go completely during 'Rusty Cage' and was mud by 'Jesus Christ Pose'. But the new songs, and their sharper-than-ever ability to build tension and then explode into moments of sheer, untamed anarchy, holds much promise for next year's full-on assault.

The sky was clear by the time Neil Young hit the stage, and the mixed crowd of young Grungeheads and aging Classic Rockers gave a warm, thankful reception to one of Rock's true originals. With Booker T And The MGs backing him up, Neil had no worries about the music behind him, leaving him free to leap and bob around the stage in pure enjoyment of playing.

The set was a crowd-pleaser all the way, and even if you're not a major Neil Young fan, there's no way you can't be affected by the beauty of songs like 'Pocahontas', 'Southern Man' or the glowing 'Helpless'. So deep is his songbook that Neil was able to play 'Like A Hurricane' a half-hour into the show, its apocalyptic finale one of several powerful climactic moments. '...Hurricane' can send a chill through ya even on a humid night like this one.

He didn't say much, but he didn't have to. Young speaks eloquently through his music alone. Even a stompin' anthem like 'Rockin' In The Free World' carries a new urgency in these days of renewed Puritanism and intolerance in the States. It's timeless, just like the man himself.

DON KAYE

