

# Chris Cornell at Newcastle City Hall

Review of Chris Cornell at Newcastle City Hall, 20th June 2012



Last week all eyes were on Sunderland and The Stadium of Light as Springsteen fans awaited the return of The Boss to the region, his first visit in 27 years. This significant event meant little attention was given to a gig taking place the day before in Newcastle, by another iconic and influential songwriter, Chris Cornell.

The Soundgarden front-man is on a UK solo tour (his first ever) to perform acoustic versions of his extensive back catalogue. Spanning 25 years, it includes songs written for Soundgarden, Temple of the Dog, Audioslave, three solo albums, as well as material he's contributed to film soundtracks over the years.

Cornell was a founding father of Grunge, a musical style which emerged in Seattle in the mid-1980s. Alongside Curt Cobain, Layne Staley and Eddie Vedder, he helped create a scene and a sound that still pervades alternative rock music today. Arguably the 'best voice in rock', Cornell's falsetto and vocal belting styles give his songs an unmatched emotional intensity.

Following a successful Download Festival appearance with the recently reformed Soundgarden, he arrived in Newcastle on Wednesday to perform his final UK solo show. This was a night to treasure, in part due to its rarity – Cornell only playing here once before, at Newcastle’s Riverside with Soundgarden, back in the early 1990s.

Kicking off with 2007 single, Roads We Choose, Cornell focused initially on solo material, including his response to 9/11, Ground Zero. The political theme continued with Audioslave’s Wide Awake, a track that criticises the Bush administration’s failure to respond to Hurricane Katrina. It is the Audioslave songs that benefit most from the stripped-down acoustic approach. Their 2004 single, Like a Stone, sounding fresh and better fitted to the ‘waiting for death’ theme.

Three Temple of the Dog tracks were aired including the anthemic Call Me A Dog and Hungerstrike, as well as various Soundgarden numbers, notably Fell on Black Days, Black Hole Sun and Outshined – the latter performed together with a young audience member who Cornell invited on stage.

A surprise inclusion was his first ever solo release, Seasons, written for the 1991 film Singles. This was a movie set in Seattle during the Grunge era and includes cameo appearances from Soundgarden, Alice in Chains and Pearl Jam.

Cornell also showed off his vocal range and guitar skills on various covers. They included Led Zeppelin’s Thank You and the last song of the night, A Day in the Life, by the Beatles.

A special intimate performance by a living legend of rock.

[A version of this article originally appeared on The North East HUB.](#)