Soundgarden - King Animal (2012)



01 – Been Away Too Long 02 – Non-State Actor 03 – By Crooked Steps 04 – A Thousand Days Before 05 - Blood On The Valley Floor 06 - Bones Of Birds 07 - Taree 08 - Attrition 09 - Black Saturday 10 - Halfway There 11 - Worse Dreams 12 - Eyelid's Mouth 13 -Rowing 14 – Worse Dreams (Demo) 15 – Black Saturday (Demo) 16 – By Crooked Steps (Demo) 17 – Bones Of Birds (Demo) 18 – A Thousand Days Before (Demo) Personnel: Matt Cameron – drums, percussion, Moog (5 and 12), backing vocals (8) Chris Cornell vocals, rhythm guitar, piano (6), mandolin (7) Ben Shepherd – bass guitar, additional guitar (7 and 8), baritone guitar (8), backing vocals (8) Kim Thayil – lead guitar, mandolin (4), horn arrangements (4 and 9) + Adam Kasper - piano (6), tambura (4) Jeff McGrath - trumpet (4 and 9) Greg Powers - tenor and bass trombone (4 and 9) Brad Stevens - tenor and baritone saxophone (9) Bubba Dupree - stun guitar (8) Bullet - vocals (9) Mike McCready – guitar (12)

Rock 'n' roll roars back to life with Soundgarden's King Animal.

The group's long-awaited sixth studio offering is both the year's best album and a landmark for the Seattle legends. In essence, it's a journey in the truest since of the word. From the jump, Chris Cornell, Kim Thayil, Ben Shepherd, and Matt Cameron open up the gates into a world not far removed from Badmotorfinger and Superunknown but existent within its personal sphere. In the most wild, weird, and wonderful way, King Animal is distinctly its own beast.

For almost an hour, there are moments of blistering intensity. There are moments of contemplative and compelling psychedelia. There are moments of divine shredding. However, they all come together to form one hell of a ride on par with the timeless work of Black Sabbath, Led Zeppelin, and The Beatles.

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Thayil's airtight riffing sets the tone on the first single and opening salvo, "Been Away Too Long". The track breaks into a serenely haunting bridge punctuated by Shepherd's staggering bass and Cameron's impenetrable percussion. Cornell's wail resounds with more primal power than ever. Oh, it's louder than love for sure.

Soon, "Non-State Actor" and "By Crooked Steps" jaggedly swing between time signatures, painting poetically dark pictures worthy of pondering. "Blood on the Valley Floor" resounds with seesawing distortion from Thayil that's as ominous as it is invigorating. He remains a guitar god in his own right, siphoning melody through the strangest and most searing six-string sorcery.

"Bones of Birds" is an eerie rumination on mortality driven by Cornell's immortal delivery and brilliant lyrics. He ponders, "Sometimes she won't cry when the smallest one is drowned" and "too weak to survive".

"Taree" twists and turns with a dose of Middle Eastern flare, while "Attrition" is a punked-out rocker with real claws and teeth. Another stand out "Black Saturday" haunts and hypnotizes with its airy acoustic guitar and Cornell's lines, "Promise something, kill me right away if I start to get slow". It's a cinematic portrayal that evokes all kinds of beautifully brutal imagery. In other words, it's classic Soundgarden.

"Eyelid's Mouth" and "Worse Dreams" tread heavier territory without ever losing their power. Everything closes on "Rowing". It sounds like the greatest blues song to never happen in the '60s. Cornell urges, "Stopping is dying. You'll be alright".

Now, that there's a new Soundgarden record we'll be more than alright... —Rick Florino, artistdirect.com

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