

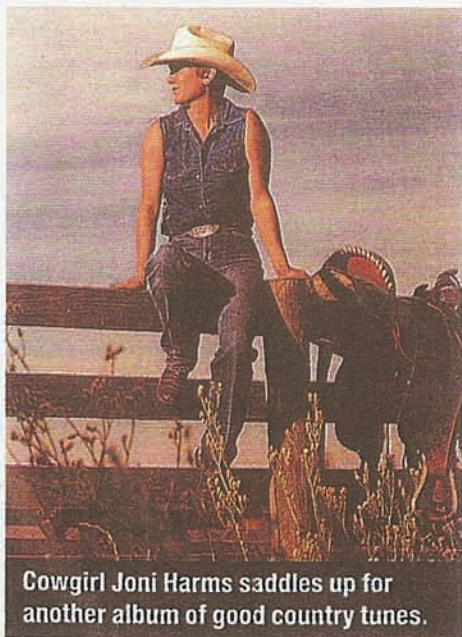
S o n g

Cowgirl Dreams

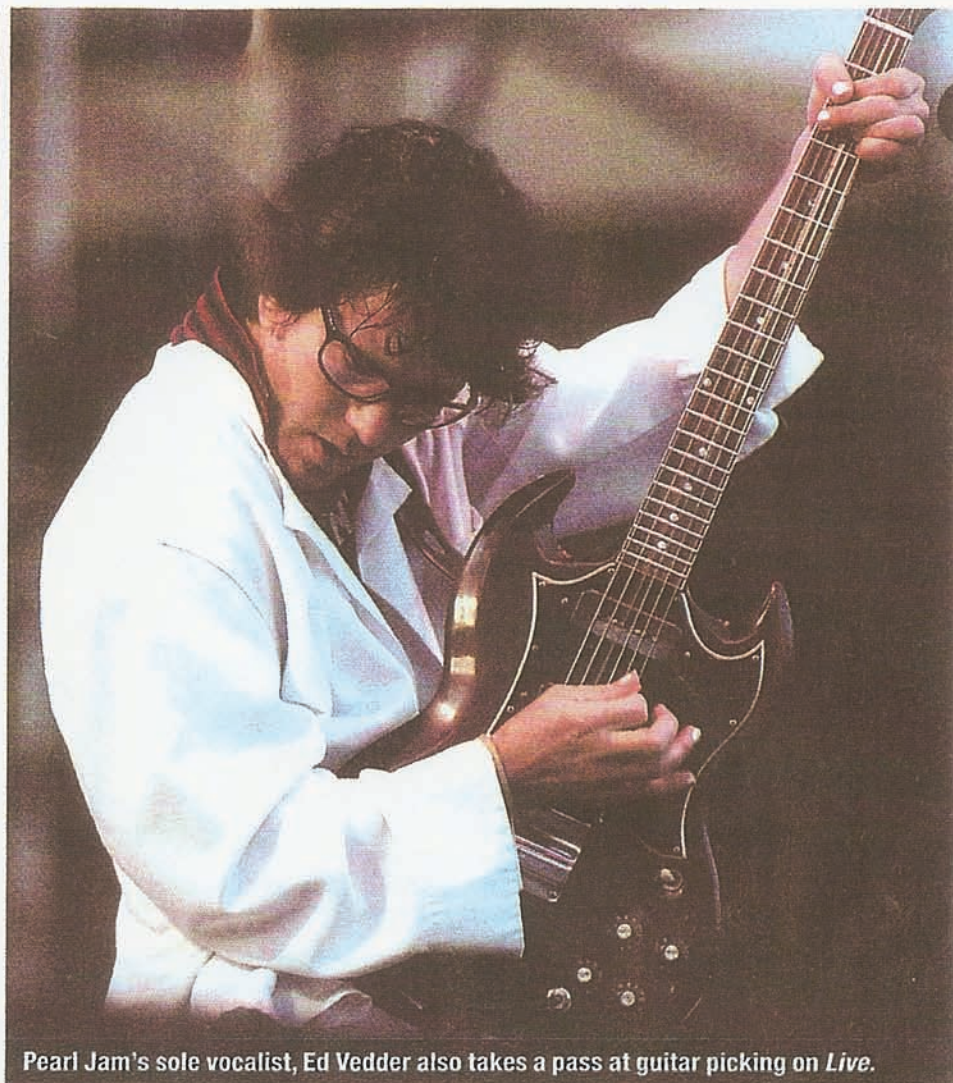
Joni Harms (Warner Western)
Reviewed by Ralph Novak

A real-life cowgirl who grew up on an Oregon ranch, Harms won a Future Farmers of America talent contest at 16 (for playing guitar and singing a song she composed) and at 17 was named Miss Northwest Rodeo Queen. As a singer she has a low, resonant voice that suggests the young Kitty Wells—and sometimes even Lyle Lovett—and if her name sounds familiar, in 1989 she scored a pair of country hits with “I Need a Wife” and “The Only Thing Bluer Than His Eyes.” This vivacious CD, her first major-label release in seven years, represents a comeback of sorts. Harms cowrote all 10 tracks, which range from “Belle Starr,” a story song about the notorious woman outlaw, to the romantic “Blue Montana Moon” and the appropriately lilting “Swing.” You obviously don’t have to know a dogie from a doggy to succeed in country music, and there are plenty of urban cowgirls in Nashville. But Harms’s energy, and her ease with Western idioms in language and music, are very obvious assets. This is such a good comeback album, chances are she’ll never need to make another.

Bottom Line: Unbridled success



Cowgirl Joni Harms saddles up for another album of good country tunes.



Pearl Jam's sole vocalist, Ed Vedder also takes a pass at guitar picking on *Live*.

Album of the week

Live on Two Legs



Pearl Jam (Epic)
Reviewed by Steve Dougherty

Eddie Vedder is no more. The diminutive singer has dropped the diminutive from his first name so that the liner notes to this, the first live album in Pearl Jam's eight-year history, attribute his vocals and guitar work to one Ed Vedder. The name change may indicate new maturity—or maybe just a loss of innocence when it comes to the music business. Having dropped a four-year crusade against Ticketmaster that had resulted in the cancellation of some 1995 shows, Vedder and his four bandmates allowed the ticketing agency to handle some of the tour that this album chronicles. But

fans needn't fret. If Vedder has tempered his idealism, he has not abandoned his passion. “I don't wanna think/ I wanna feel,” he sings at his emotive best on “Hail, Hail.” And he still belts his anthems of angst (“Daughter,” “Better Man”) as if the emotions were being wrung from him on the spot. Thanks in part to drummer Jack Irons, whose time-keeping allows the guitars more room to breathe, Pearl Jam's once dense, almost suffocating sound is lightened. And although Eddie, er, Ed, could use a backup singer to reduce his vocal load, it is heartening to know he is out there, fists clenched, howling, growling and yearning. **Bottom Line:** Last of the great grunge bands keeps the flannel flag flying