GARDEN STATE SALUTES ITS OWN
(Continued from page 34A)

ZVE, rockers John Eddie and Saraya, jazz singer Little Jimmy Scott, soul singer Evelyn "Champagne" King, and the vocal group the Shirelles. "The difference between New Jersey and other places is you," Eddie told the audience of about 600 people between songs in his brief set, which included a sizzling cover of Elvis Presley's "Suspicious Minds." You name it, he was able to make it happen in New Jersey.

Bon Jovi drummer Tico Torres, who showed up to pick up the best male vocalist award for his "New Jersey" and best-pop-rock-male-vocalist award for band mate Jon Bon Jovi, drew shrieks as he thanked the crowd from his home state.

Skid Row won as best new artist, Jordan Stone's "Cornucopia" took the best hard rock album award, and Joe Walsh's "Rocky Mountain Way" won for best classic performance. The band members received an award for best male vocals in R&B or dance and Sandy Saraya, lead singer of the band Saraya, won best female vocalist in the pop-rock category.

In addition, Les Paul and the late Sarah Vaughan were inducted into the Garden State Music Hall of Fame.

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TALENT IN ACTION

SUSANNE VEGA
Cambridge Corn Exchange Cambridge, England

WITH A SET design that resembled a college campus room, Susan Vega should have been more comfortable playing this famous university town than she appeared, particularly since she opened her U.K. tour here three weeks earlier.

But Vega was never able to connect with her audience long enough to leave the kind of impression that her deceptively sweet music and hard lyrics merit. There were occasionally light-hearted and impromptu moments; when she said, "Feel free to ask any questions" and promptly got a marriage proposal, or when she took a childhood-like stance for the "Walla-bee Song." But there were also long periods of unrelieved introspection when she drifted out of reach.

Vega reserved most of her anecdotes for older songs. In doing so, she shortchanged new, less familiar songs from her current A&M release, "Days Of Open Hand."

Her band's neat baroque folk tending to emphasize the music's pristine qualities, except when the musicians stretched on songs like the ambitious "Those Whole Girls," where they allowed the dynamic edge that was lacking on songs like "Marlene On The Wall," "Solitude Standing," and "Luka."

The full potential of Vega's songs was realized when she was at her most exposed, playing solo or with a few well-chosen percussion numbers like "Some Journey," "Room Off The Street," "Neighborhood Girl," and "Gypsy" into stark relief. But she needs to maintain this impact of her show is to be more than a dang-ling conversation.

HIGH FIELDER

SOCIALLY DISTORTED GANG GREEN
The Tocadore, Philadelphia

ALMOST APOLORIZING for the revamped, cleaner sound on his group's major-label debut, lead singer Mike Ness of Social Distortion reminisced repeatedly from the stage at this May 21 show about his punk days, an era marked, he said, by "Quashekes and gin and tons." Yet, no matter how far the songs on the self-titled album for Epic strayed from this Southern Californian band's hardcore past, they didn't need Ness' defining, "Story Of My Life" and "Sick Boys," though lyrically simplistic, stood on their own and carried a three-chord urgency absent in much of today's pop. The tattoo-covered Ness, standing at the stage's edge, was his occasional exception.

With the proves formula of finding a melodic chorus and going to it quickly and often, Ness and company played a powerful 90-minute set of mostly new material for the all-ages crowd of a few hundred people. The band was at its best when it jumped into the messy, blues grunge of "It Coulda Been Me" and "Drug Train" and the very catchy pop single, "Ball And Chain," a first-hand account of Ness past additions.

Gang Green, a Boston band that refuses to give up its hardcore stance, pounded out nothing for about 45 minutes to open the show. Though its distortion-drenched skateboard boogie is a bit less fashionable these days, it was still fun to hear singer Chris Doherty whine the vocals to the band's trademark "Alcohol," as well as "Voices Carry," its accelerated cover of the '71 Tuesday ballad. The rest of the set, most of which came from the group's recent live Emergo/Roadrunner release, "Can't Live Without It," blunted by without incident.

SCOTT RHODES