

JAM

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"It was intense! It was a rush, it was real life, something I earned. I felt so happy to be alive. Was it because I'd just tempted death? I don't think so. It was more like this was such a great experience, death had nothing to do with it.

"And while I was out there, I got a light bulb. So the next night, before we went onstage, for me to hold that light bulb in my hand, nothing else mattered, it symbolized so much. Actually, I got two. One for me, one for the writer."

After we finished talking, I sat

back to watch Pearl Jam play its soundcheck. I had mentioned to Vedder earlier that the band's song "Black" was my favorite, and he sadly informed me that it wasn't part of the abbreviated opening set.

As the opening riff of "Why Go" began, though, Vedder suddenly stopped the song. The band then ripped through an incredible version of "Black."

"This one's for you," Eddie called from the stage. At that moment, I knew how that reporter from *Rolling Stone* must have felt receiving a lightbulb from such an enigmatic and beautiful person. Unfortunately, I never got to thank

him for a small gesture that really meant a lot to me. So hey, Eddie — thanks, man.

PEARL JAM performs tonight at the Blind Pig, with special guests THE ZOO GODS. Tickets are \$7.50 in advance from TicketMaster (p.e.s.c.). Pearl Jam also opens for THE RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS and THE SMASHING PUMPKINS tomorrow night and Saturday night at Clubland. Tickets are only available for the Saturday show and are \$23.50 at TicketMaster. The Clubland dates are all-ages shows, and the doors open at 6:30 p.m.

Diving for the Pearl

Seattle band is glad to be 'Alive'

by Scott Sterling

LANSING — It was one of the first nights of the Red Hot Chili Peppers tour, and the opening band — Pearl Jam, Seattle's latest export — was starting to work magic. As the band roared into the anthemic "Alive," from its debut album, *Ten*, Vedder flung his tiny body into the crowd, swimming across the ocean of hands beneath him. Before the show was over, he had scaled the balcony, catwalking along the edge.

After the show, people were excitedly talking about what they had just witnessed. There was the same buzz in the air that I'd imagine one would feel after seeing U2 for the first time back in a pub in Ireland.

Vedder, along with guitarists Stone Gossard and Mike McCready, bassist Jeff Ament, and new drummer Dave Abbruzzese, created a feeling of intimacy one rarely experiences at a concert. There was a sense that this was something special.

I got the same feeling talking to Vedder, who radiated a genuine warmth that is literally hypnotizing.

"I love this music," he said. "The fact is that by the end of the songs, and even a lot of times during the beginning, I'm, like, fully hypnotized. This music has hypnotized me right from the start, when I first got this tape from Seattle through my friend Jack (Irons, former Red Hot Chili Pepper and currently of Eleven) that was nothing but the music. There was something about it where I could lose myself."

After listening to the instru-



Pearl Jam is aloof and cool and totally with it, man. They are alive, and they are (from left to right) Stone Gossard, Eddie Vedder (front), Mike McCready (back), Jeff Ament, and Dave Assruzzese. Jam on, dudes.

mental jams by Gossard and Ament on that tape, Vedder sent it back with words, as a group of complete songs. One of these songs was "Alive," a piece which obviously means a lot to Vedder and the band.

"When we're playing that song, watching all the people with their arms raised, singing the words back to you, seeing what it means to them, is really intense," he said. "Even for me, the song has so many different interpretations. Sometimes life can be very much a burden, even though I'm enjoying it right now. In all honesty, I realized this the other night standing on the side of the stage. I'd just been in the crowd, stage-diving during the Peppers, and now I was back on the side of the stage, like two feet away from Flea as he sang background vocals, and I was thinkin', 'I'm the fucking luckiest man alive.' Fifty shows with these guys, and I get to play basketball with them and stuff. What a rush, you know?"

But Vedder also admitted that the song, like real life, has a dark

side.

"The fact is that in a lot of these cities, I see the shittiest things," he said. "In Portland, we saw a shooting right before we went on. What happened was, before our shows, I lock myself in the back of the equipment van to warm up. While I'm in there, these shots rang, three shots. I press myself to the floor, and I could hear this guy screaming for help. When they finally let me out, a crowd had gathered around this guy whose leg is bleeding. Earlier, I also saw this woman get assaulted by this sort of gang ... So I'm thinking, 'Jesus Christ, now I'm supposed to go onstage and sing about being happy to be alive ... you know, I wasn't happy. Why is life to some people such an invaluable thing?' Vedder's voice drifted downward, as he seemed to be pondering the answer to his own question.

"Life is such a fucking amazing thing," Vedder said, "and we can do so much with it if our heads are in the right places." He then asked if

I'd read the Pearl Jam feature in *Rolling Stone*. In the article, the reporter recalls Vedder's attempt to climb outside of the guard rail of Seattle's famed SkyNeedle, a towering skyscraper. The terrified reporter begged him not to after she realized he was serious.

"I was trying to prove the point about life, getting the most out of it, and what an intense experience it would be," Vedder said. "I was totally confident that I could do it." Vedder's eyes glowed with excitement as he recalled the scenario.

"But the night before we went on tour, me and one of the guys that works with us went back up there," he continued. "There were a few other people around, but not many. The cables that she (the reporter) mentions pull apart about six inches. I wasn't sure I could actually get out there, but I really wanted to. It was really windy, but that was it. It was do or die. So I went for it. I totally busted out on these beams ...

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