

Rock bands jam Memorial Hall

Chili Peppers please crowd with mix of funkadelic rock, entertaining stage antics

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It was a freakshow at its finest. And some damn good music, too.

The Red Hot Chili Peppers, Smashing Pumpkins and Pearl Jam filled Memorial Hall in Kansas City, Kan., to near capacity Wednesday night with a fan combination that was colorful, to say the least.

REVIEW

Pearl Jam primed the audience, opening with the band's signature hypnotic yet obvious rock-oriented sound. Yet another powerful band from the well-publicized Seattle scene, the group spun through its set list of consistently one-word titled songs like "Porch," "Once" and "Deep."

Lead singer Eddie Vedder sported a flirtatious rapport with the crowd that would make corporate rock marketers drool. Near the end of the group's short set, Vedder told the audience: "These guys up here in front keep motioning for me to jump in the crowd

— do you think I should trust them?"

Of course, the response was an overwhelming, "yes," but it wasn't until after a few "psyches" that he did. Vedder then swam a lap over the mosh pit, much like the popular scene in the "Doors" movie.

Smashing Pumpkins followed, with songs that manipulated fans on the floor like the catalyst to a chemical reaction. As the group would withdraw its sound to a dream-like state, the movement on the floor would grind to a halt. Then, without notice, the artists would kick in a driving groove that commanded the body to follow. This one-two punch combo kept the show fresh and thrilling to the end.

The Chili Peppers headlined the show and were the crowd favorite, although not by as obvious a margin as most shows. Anthony Kiedis and Co. produced their usual deadly mix of funkadelic rock and entertaining stage antics.

Many of the songs performed were from the new album, although the band did songs from "Mother's Milk"

and "Uplift Mofo Party Plan."

The show had several highlights, one of which was a burning cover of Stevie Wonder's "Higher Ground," off the "Mother's Milk" album. This song sounds great as a recording, but live it was nothing short of incredible.

Bassist Flea confirmed his position as one of rock's greatest in "Stone Cold Bush." Between his smoking solos and the guitar work of John Frusciante, this song was one of the musically superior of the show.

"Suck My Kiss" and "Give It Away" sparked immediate expansion of the pit activity. Although these tracks on the new album are drawing pop appeal — the kiss of death for alternative fans — it didn't seem to affect the crowd at the time.

A slight disappointment occurred

with the choice of the encore. The group performed the title track off "Blood Sugar Sex Magik," by far one of the weaker songs on the album. The crowd response was more like a cooldown to an extended aerobics session than a rousing finale.

However, the very fact that the opportunity existed to see these three great groups in a venue as intimate as Memorial makes up for any drawbacks.

Besides, the people watching were excellent. At one time, I was standing between a clean-cut guy with greek letters on his shirt and a teenage girl sporting an animal skin vest and a blue mohawk.

And even though I will probably need a whiplash collar for the rest of the weekend, it was well worth it all.