

KONCERTZ

simulated pearls

PEARL JAM
Borderline, London



Tuesday, February 4

COME THE revolution they won't be able to get away with this. Oh, sure, any major record company can fly in this week's buzz band and arrange a showcase gig so minuscule that nobody can get in to see it. That's hardly difficult. Come the revolution, however, major record companies will have to hang a sign outside the venue saying: SORRY, NO PLEBS. WANKERS ONLY.

Alan Cryan and Sue Penney queued up outside the Borderline for over three hours along with maybe 200 fellow fans of Pearl Jam, only to be told that they wouldn't stand a chance of securing a ticket. Wankers like me get in. Wankers like Epic Records get in. The people who buy the goddamn records, it would seem, can simply freeze to death.

"Basically it was just guest tickets and passes," comments Sue. "One of the bouncers told us that we didn't have to queue up if we didn't want to! I mean, they let the fans in for Love/Hate."

In the pub around the corner, people have given up.

"F**k Pearl Jam!" moans one ex-fan. It's really no wonder that major record companies are such a sad joke.

Pearl Jam are, in fact, not Nirvana. They're also not Soundgarden. But, hell, Seattle seems like a cool place to be these days, and we've all forgotten Mudhoney anyway. Following the pop-a-tastic success of '...Teen Spirit', the frenzy and paranoia surrounding Pearl Jam is understandable. Whether it's entirely justified is a matter for the jury.

They're squashed onto the tiny stage like proper anti-heroes. Within three songs Eddie Vedder has tested the 50 or so genuine punters down the front by sliding gracefully onto their heads. The noise is massive and brooding. A piercing stab of guitars and hollow drumming from rock's darker side.

Vedder himself is deceptively casual. No Rock God for sure, but nonetheless a natural performer. If he came from Sunderland he'd be a geek, but then Pearl Jam are the band who are supposed to save the world.

The set predictably revolves around 'Ten'. 'Once' and 'Alive' are greeted like baby favourites. 'Black' is a monumental racket. Vedder slips back into the crowd and no doubt the cash tills are ringing up at Epic HQ. Tonight, however, was a mere rehearsal for good things to come.

Despite the disgraceful display of molly-coddling, Pearl Jam deserve another chance. Make an effort to get to ULU on February 28. Tonight the hype backfired badly. Thank God for Leatherface at the Camden Palace.

CHRIS WATTS

PEARL JAM (Eddie Vedder): vive la revolution!

Pic Paul Harries