



— Wayne Hebert, Citizen

Eddie Vedder, lead singer of the Seattle band Pearl Jam, performs Tuesday in Hull

Fans thrash, bounce to grunge's Pearl Jam

By Lynn Saxberg
Citizen correspondent

There was electricity in the hot, stale air of the Robert Guertin Arena when Pearl Jam's Eddie Vedder bent his tormented howl around the song *Alive*.

"I-I-I'm still alive," wailed the singer as the stage lights shone on a sellout crowd of 4,500 young people raising their voices with him.

The song has clearly become something of an anthem for Generation X. Now we know what it must have been like when The Who did *My Generation* in the '60s — spine-tingling.

In fact, Pearl Jam played The Who's *Bob Dylan* for one of the encore songs, proving that the two bands aren't so far apart. Both groups have a similar spirit and energy to their music, although Pearl Jam is part of the modern rock scene and The Who is part of rock history. Pearl Jam is one of the Seattle-based bands that revitalized rock a few years ago with the heavy, raw sound that's become known as grunge.

In concert, these gods of grunge leave the costumes, choreography and glitzy stage set-up for the Rod Stewarts and Tina Turners of the business. Instead, the show centres on the personalities and unique abilities of the band members, particularly Vedder, but also guitarists Mike McCready and Stone Gossard, drummer Dave Krusen and bassist Jeff Ament.

Vedder, whose round face is both cherubic and demonic at the same time, was moving in slow motion compared with the others. He arrived on stage in a monster mask, carrying a bottle of red wine, which ended up in a puddle on the stage after he poured it over a white T-shirt. He rarely strayed from his spot at the front of the stage, throwing all his energy into producing those incredible vocals.

Stage trappings were not only minimal but odd. A stuffed cow rested on one pile

Music review

Pearl Jam
Robert Guertin Arena, Hull
Tuesday only

of amplifiers, while a line of miniature basketball figurines graced another.

But they didn't need anything more than their instruments and the equipment, along with a few stage lights. The band has the power and the songs to grab an audience, as they showed with such tunes as *Jereq*, *Even Flow*, *Why Go and Black* — all from the band's breakthrough album *Ten*. In the nearly two-hour set, they also played several songs that aren't on the disc, perhaps some new material.

Fans ate it up. The concert had sold out in less than a day, making the show one of the most eagerly anticipated of the year so far. Still, the stands were dotted with empty seats, but only because people left their seats to get closer to the stage in the general admission area.

Down there, it was a zoo. Fans moshed, thrashed and bounced constantly, and a couple of them even got away with stage diving. One woman actually made it far enough that she was able to give Vedder a hug before she was pulled away.

The security guards in front of the stage handled the mayhem coolly and professionally, dumping water on fans as needed and pulling folks out of the chaos when the heat and the flailing bodies were too much for them.

The show opened with a set by Montreal's Doughboys, one of the city's top club acts, recently signed to a major label. The band delivered a full-volume, fast-paced onslaught of grunge/punk tunes from its major-label debut, *Crash*. It was a strong set, and they undoubtedly won a few fans.

Unfortunately, the sound in the concrete arena is abysmal. Doughboys sounded like mosh and the sound for Pearl Jam, though louder, wasn't much better.