

Jammin' on Pacific Avenue

Current rage in rock pays Santa Cruz a visit

By WALLACE BAINE

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SANTA CRUZ — They came. They jammed. They left Santa Cruz feeling like a major spot on the rock 'n' roll flyway.

The five guys who make up the rock band Pearl Jam caused quite a stir Wednesday when they slipped into town and played a sold-out concert at the Catalyst. Like the Beatles in '65, Pearl Jam is popular music's hottest byword of 1993.

Hundreds of fans gathered outside the Catalyst in hopes of getting a stray ticket. Police blocked off one lane of Pacific Avenue, but there was no trouble outside, or in.

For those ignorant of current rock gods, Pearl Jam is the nation's hottest band, dominating MTV and selling more than six million copies of their 1991 album "Ten."

Despite Pearl Jam's best efforts to make their Catalyst gig accessible, there was profiteering outside the Catalyst. With dozens of PJ fans holding up signs or fingers to signify their need for tickets, a few scalpers were making handsome profits selling \$13 tickets for as much as \$100.

The keeper of the Pearl Jam secret was Catalyst booking agent Gary Tighe, who said he first discussed the gig with the band about six weeks ago. Tighe said that the band insisted ticket prices be kept low (they cost \$13.65 to those lucky enough to get them) and that it be a show aimed at young people (fans as young as 16 were admitted to Wednesday's show).

Wednesday afternoon, a few dozen fans were stationed near the back entrance of the Catalyst waiting for a glimpse or a word from any of the heroic Pearl Jammers. "I left early from my job. I might be fired, I don't know," said Michael, who hoofed it down to Santa Cruz from his hometown of Sonora.

As it grew closer to the rumored 4 p.m. sound-check time, the crowd started speculating on where enigmatic lead singer Eddie Vedder might be.

"I bet he's at the (Steamer) Lane," said Santa Cruz High School student Casey, in reference to Vedder's reputed fondness for surfing.

Suddenly, a van was sighted and the crowd gathered quickly to form a gantlet near the entrance to the club. Drummer Dave Abbruzzese and bassist Jeff Ament with a couple of roadies in tow popped out of the van and strolled through the well-mannered crowd, promising to come out after the sound check to sign a few autographs.

A skinny slacker near the entrance watched as the musicians disappeared into the Catalyst. He wore a floppy black T shirt several sizes too large on which was emblazoned "LOSER." He turned to his friend and smiled, "I got close to him, man."