

# Youthful spirit spreads Jam

By Mike Sion  
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Pearl Jam specializes in spontaneous, high-energy shows. And though singer/focal point Eddie Vedder was deeply congested (ever the poet, he moaned: "My loogies are like tears"), Thursday night's sold-out show at Lawlor Events Center pleased both trendy fans and the devoted who trekked from as far as the Bay area.

The eager crowd, predominantly teens and early-twentysomethings, weren't treated to the anthemic "Leash" ("Drop the leash!/Get out of my ---ing face!") or The Who's "My Generation," which has closed some shows. And though Vedder did lick a sneaker tossed at him, and entered the crowd twice, he didn't move like he usually does; his veins didn't bulge.

But — perhaps to compensate for his ailing performance — he delivered the soul-churning torch song "Black," which he rarely sings live, in the first encore.

And before a final, moody encore of "Indifference" (after many had left in the second 10-minute interlude), the Seattle quintet was joined by members of opening acts

Urge Overkill and Mudhoney to madly jam two songs by '80s punkers the Dead Boys.

Throughout, the fist-shaking spirit of the Alternative Nation — united by youth and youthful angst — burned bright.

Pearl Jam took the stage at 9:30, the frizzy-haired Vedder arriving on a skateboard, kicking it away and gruffly announcing, "We're gonna be here for a while, so get comfortable." But almost everyone stood the entire set, and the floor was a sea of bobbing heads.

Vedder wailed on a guitar between lead ax Mike McCready and rhythm ax Stone Gossard as the band rocked into the full-tilt "Whippin'," an unrecorded song, then "Rearview Mirror," one of the fastest numbers on its instantly popular new album, "Vs."

The stage set had no gimmicks save a flanking screen flashing blue to magenta to yellow. Band members placed personal props on the stacked amps, such as Monkey statues, incense and a dairy cow.

The black-jeaned, short-sleeved Vedder spent most of the set framed by Gossard and bassist Jeff Ament. Pearl Jam is, foremost,



Don Marquis/Gazette-Journal

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**VEDDER:** At Lawlor Thursday night.

# Pearl Jam

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about propulsive pulse.

"Even Flow" and "Animal" followed. The smash "Daughter" (arcanely about child abuse) descended from poignant chords into a Doors-like dirge as Vedder intoned, "Give a little bit of your heart . . . g-g-give it." The song melted away on a dark stage.

About the only thing in the rock world more pervasive now than Vedder's visage on magazine covers is the compulsion to analyze his band.

So here goes: Pearl Jam's meteoric popularity seems to stem partly from its accessible hard-rock sound, but largely from songs that talk about bad feelings. It somehow connects and is cathartic.

Vedder's anguished cries on "Why Go Home" access the punished child within. "In too deep . . . can't touch the bottom!" on the roiling "Deep" sums up a lot of feelings of people who haven't yet reached the adult age where they come to terms with themselves.

"Jeremy," about a neglected, deranged schoolkid, is received like an uplifting singalong.

"This next song is called, 'My mom ---ed me and all I got was

this dumb T-shirt,'" Vedder announced before "Alive," another sick song (about incest) with a surging, triumphant feel.

For the dark, furtive "Rats," Vedder held a fake rodent to check, serenading with the line from the old Michael Jackson hit: "Ben, the two of us need look no more."

"You're all a lovely bunch of rats and I'm proud to be one of you," Vedder said.

That seemed to distance himself from the figurehead status he loathes. Vedder read lines from a poetry book (" . . . I've burned out of my costume") after a 10-minute break, before emoting "Black."

The crowd dressed grungy — lots of plaid or T-shirts, backward ballcaps as prevalent as stocking caps. Hardy moshers carved an enclave. The masses endlessly

passed bodies overhead toward the stage and the blue-vested security from Bill Graham Presents had an endless workout at stage-front.

I missed most of Urge Overkill's set, which began at 7 — but have it on authority from Crystal and Angie of Sonora, Calif., that the Chicago trio did a fine 45-minute set, more thrash than grunge.

Seattle's Mudhoney's 45 thunderous minutes jarred brainstems. Singer-guitarists Mark Arm and Steve Turner traded licks from chunky garage-rock to wah-wah'ed psychedelia. From the blues-rock stomp of "Between Me & You Kid" to the vacuum attack of "Suck You Dry," it was like being sucked into a cave near a volcano.

Grunge. Rock. Whatever.  
Youth was served.