

It' Clear Cut -- Pearl Jam, Keeping Its Fans In Mind Rather Than The Bottom Line, Decides To Stay Closer To Its Audience

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Concert preview

Pearl Jam, 7 p.m. Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, Seattle Center Arena; sold out; 628-0888. -----

Why is Pearl Jam playing the Arena and not the Coliseum?

Currently the hottest rock band in the world, the Seattle group could fill the Coliseum three times over, easily. But the fact that it has decided instead to do three nights at the 6,000-seat Arena - less than half the capacity of the Coliseum - says a lot about the band and its philosophy.

Fighting the pressures of rock superstardom, Pearl Jam is thinking of the fans rather than the bottom line. By avoiding huge halls, it is trying to retain some of the best aspects of the concert experience. On its current tour, it has opted for venues in the 3,000- to 7,000-capacity range, in order to stay closer to its audience - literally. And it has booked itself into smaller cities, along with some major metropolitan areas.

Towns like Mesa, Ariz., Nacogdoches, Texas, and Oklahoma City, Okla., have been part of the tour, along with San Francisco, San Diego and Las Vegas. As has been widely reported, the band canceled the third of three sold-out shows at the University of Colorado in Boulder because it disapproved of security measures there - campus police tried to stop fans from moshing.

Pearl Jam will only play venues where people can mosh - a kind of slam-dancing that occurs in front of the stage.

The homecoming

Of course, the Seattle shows are going to be different from anywhere else on the tour. It's homecoming, with longtime fans and friends, as well as family members, in the audience.

Secrecy surrounds the identity of the opening acts. Only one has been announced, for Thursday night. It's Hater, made up of drummer Matt Cameron and bassist Ben Shepherd of Soundgarden, vocalist Brian Wood (brother of the late Andrew Wood of Mother Love Bone) of the Fire Ants, guitarist John McBain from Monster Magnet and keyboardist Glen Slater of the Walkabouts.

Rumors abound that Nirvana may open for one of the shows. The rumor has been stoked by the recent announcement that Pearl Jam and Nirvana will star in "MTV's Live and Loud" on New Year's Eve. That program, which also includes Cypress Hill and the Breeders, will be filmed here next week at a secret location. The only way to get tickets is by listening to the End (KNDD/107.7 FM), which will be giving pairs away from 6 a.m. to midnight today and tomorrow. Ticket-holders will be told the time and site on the day of the show.

What will they play?

What can we expect Pearl Jam to play at the Arena dates?

The group has been emphasizing songs from "Vs.," its new album, which has been No. 1 in Billboard for five weeks. Again breaking with tradition, it has been opening with slower songs, such as "Daughter," rather than rousing crowd-pleasers. The rocking tunes - "Glorified G," "Why Go?," "Evenflow," "Go," "Rearviewmirror," "Animal" - come in the middle. Then the show winds down with more slower songs, such as "Garden" and "Jeremy," before the finale of "Alive" and the encore of Neil Young's "Keep On Rockin' in the Free World."

The Who's classic "My Generation" has cropped up in several shows, as has a new song called "Whippin'," which reviewers have praised as one of the best songs the band has ever done.

Of course, the success of any Pearl Jam show hinges on Vedder. The highly-emotional, mercurial lead singer has already made headlines on this tour, because of his drinking. He was arrested Nov. 18 in New Orleans for public drunkenness and disturbing the peace, following a pre-dawn barroom brawl. Vedder's friend Jack McDowell, of the Chicago White Sox, was knocked out by a bouncer in the incident. Vedder and McDowell said they were attacked; others involved say Vedder started it by spitting in the face of a waiter.

At some of the shows on the tour, Vedder has arrived on stage carrying a bottle of wine. He drinks throughout the show, sometimes sharing his bottles

of vintage Bordeaux wines with the first few rows. Other members of the band have expressed concern about his drinking, but it has apparently not affected his performances. ----- Other guys in the band

Eddie Vedder, above right, gets all the publicity, but he isn't the only one in Pearl Jam. Here are thumbnail sketches of the other members of the band:

-- Jeff Ament, 30, bass, above second from right - Originally from Missoula, Mont. Formed band Deranged Diction in 1982 at University of Montana. Band moved to Seattle in 1983. Ament occasionally appeared on stage in a kilt and heavy eye makeup. Member of seminal Seattle punk band Green River. Member of Pearl Jam predecessors Mother Love Bone and Mookie Blaylock, as well as Temple of the Dog. Loves to ride his mountain bike.

-- Stone Gossard, 27, guitar, above center - Seattle native, from a wealthy family. Stone is his real name. Big Kiss fan as a kid. Previous Seattle bands: Ducky Boys, March of Crimes, Lords of the Wasteland, Green River, Mother Love Bone, Mookie Blaylock, Temple of the Dog. Inspiration for Matt Dillon character in "Singles"; Dillon wore Gossard's clothes in the movie, and his character's bedroom was modeled after Gossard's. Does all of Pearl Jam's artwork.

-- Mike McCready, 28, guitar, above second from left - From Seattle. Played guitar starting at 11. Big Kiss fan as a kid. Met Gossard when he was 15. First band was Warrior in 1978-79; later became Shadow. Shadow went to L.A. in 1987 and stayed 13 months, but did not get a recording contract. Other Seattle bands: Love Chile, Luv Company, Mookie Blaylock, Temple of the Dog. Quit music for a while before being lured into Pearl Jam.

-- Dave Abbruzzese, 25, drums, above left - Texas native. Old friend of Matt Chamberlain (see below) in Dallas. First gig with Pearl Jam was free show Aug. 3, 1991, at the Mural Amphitheatre. Occasionally suffers from carpal-tunnel syndrome.

Former member Dave Krusen, drums. From Gig Harbor. First band: Outrigger. Also in the Boibs, Agent Boy, Tramps of Panic, Hard Time, Warm Drive. Joined Pearl Jam in fall of 1990, when it was still called Mookie Blaylock. Last performed with band at wrap party for "Singles," May 25, 1991, at RKCNDY.

Former member Matt Chamberlain, drums. Texas native. Brought in to replace Krusen. Appears in "Alive" video. Soon quit to join the G.E. Smith Band on

"Saturday Night Live." Suggested replacement, Dave Abbruzzese.
