

Thousands of fans storm barricades to see Pearl Jam

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MIAMI — Thousands of fans with and without tickets waiting in fenced-in areas and on Biscayne Boulevard to get into Monday night's Pearl Jam concert at AT&T Bayfront Park Amphitheater stormed fences and barricades about 9:20 p.m. to get into the theater and close to the stage.

About 8,000 tickets were sold for the show. But when Pearl Jam took the stage almost an hour late, 12,000 to 20,000 members of Generation X were crammed into the place, police officers and Miami Fire-Rescue workers said. Thousands more fans remained outside on the street hoping to hear one of the hottest alternative bands in the country as Metro-Dade police helicopters flew overhead shining powerful spotlights on the crowds.

"They should have had this stupid thing at the Orange Bowl, then they could have sold as many tickets as they wanted to," one fire-rescue worker said. "They knew something like this could happen."

The Miami Police Department put riot police on alert in case of trouble, but they were under orders not to arrest people unless they were committing a felony, according to Sgt. Ed Blanco. He said that he had never seen a crowd this size and this concentrated at the Amphitheater.

Information on arrests and injuries was not available late Monday.

Fans were also worried about the lack of crowd control and feared for their safety.

"I appreciate the fact the band wants to be in a festive, outdoor atmosphere," said Glenn Richards, a former WSHE radio disc jockey. "But they are too big. It was unrealistic of the band to play in this place."

Richards and others also complained about waiting more than one hour to get in and about the show's late start.

The late start was caused by the band's refusal to perform if the AT&T logos around the venue were not covered up, said Dan Barnett of Cellar Door Concerts, the concert promoter. The band won that battle, and the logos were covered.

But the band's influence went only so far. They couldn't demand the removal of the SunBank, Citibank and other corporate logos atop the city's surrounding skyscrapers.

Fans were stage diving and body surfing long before the band took the stage. The heat generated by the fans' intensity and anticipation was combustible.

"Wait till they start playing. This place will get crazy," said Boca Raton resident Trevor Smith. "There's a sense of sincerity about this band not found in many bands today. When they play they mean it. . . . And all these kids are here willing to get hurt for that."