



KURT WILSON/Missoulian

Shangri-La Speedway guitarist Tim Bierman tunes up in the band's dressing room before going on stage opening for Pearl Jam Wednesday night.

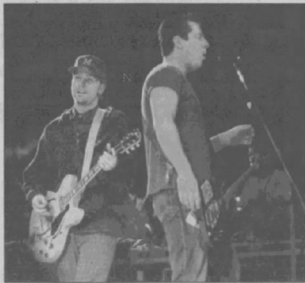
# Shangri-La guys cut into big time

By MIKE MCINALLY  
of the Missoulian

Pearl Jam's dressing room was ready to go: Two plush couches on a freshly laid square of shag carpet. Wall hangings. A nice spread of food and nonalcoholic beverages. The smell of incense thick in the room.

Down the hall in Adams Field House, in the hours before Wednesday's rock 'n' roll concert at the University of Montana, the opening act, the Missoula band Shangri-La Speedway, was getting ready for the third show of its career.

Tim Bierman had this assessment of his dressing room, which doubles as the locker room for UM's women volleyball team: "It's



KURT WILSON/Missoulian

Jeff Ament of Pearl Jam, left, joins singer Randy Pepprock during Shangri-La's final song.

## Pearl Jams it for moshing fans

By MIKE MCINALLY  
of the Missoulian

The Seattle rock band Pearl Jam played a tightly no-frills rock 'n' roll show for about 7,000 fans Wednesday night in Missoula.

The Missoula show, a tune-up for the band's tour of the Far East, was light on stage effects, emphasizing instead the band's power.

The concert was also designed to showcase new drummer Jack Irons, who enjoyed one of the show's few flashy solos during the song "Immortality." A spotlight was focused on Irons for much of the concert.

At another point in the concert, lead singer Eddie Vedder sang Irons' name

repeatedly and invited the audience to sing along.

But for much of the evening, Vedder was more low-key, intently hunching over his microphone as he sang.

Throughout the concert, fans near the stage threw themselves over the barricades that had been set up between the stage and the crowd. Security guards behind the barricades spent the evening catching these fans and escorting them back into the "mosh pit" in front of the barricades.

The band took the stage about 9:30 p.m. after a 45-minute set by the Missoula band Shangri-La Speedway. Pearl Jam played for about an hour and at about 10:30 p.m. had returned to the stage for an encore.

# Band

(continued)

modest."

Yes. Instead of incense, the smell of coleslaw from the smaller spread of food. ("Everyone's too nervous to eat, though," Bierman said, but later, he made himself a sandwich.) Instead of big bottles of Evian water, considerably smaller bottles. Instead of couches, benches and folding chairs that read "The University of Montana" on the backs and "Grizzlies" on their seats.

The band did have the benefit of the various motivational posters that had been placed throughout the locker room for the volleyball team: "Success begins with a single step that takes you as far as your determination and dedication want to go."

Inside their dressing room, as Pearl Jam — one of the nation's most popular rock bands — went through a thunderous sound check, the members of Shangri-La Speedway waited for their turn and tried to keep loose.

Randy Pepprock talked about how he used to come to the Field House to watch big rock 'n' roll shows.

Back then, more than a decade ago, he thought, "there was no way you could ever be like that. Now, if you have ideas, and you work hard, it could happen."

As if there wasn't pressure enough, Tim Bierman's mother flew out from St. Louis for the show. Friends of bassist Jeremy Hough drove out from North Carolina. The band's name was even mentioned on MTV.

It helps, as well, to be nice.

Pepprock recalled playing a Missoula punk-rock show a decade or so ago and, afterward, letting a youngster named Jeff Ament play. Ament now plays with Pearl Jam, and is friends with other members of Shangri-La Speedway as well. When Pearl Jam elected to play a warm-up show in Missoula before their Asian tour, the band invited Shangri-La Speedway to open.

And so it was, that after just two dates playing to a couple of hundred people, Shangri-La Speedway got to play to 7,000 fans in a sold-out Field House.

If that weren't pressure enough, Bierman's mother flew out from St. Louis for the show. Friends of bassist Jeremy Hough drove out from North Carolina. The band's name was even mentioned on MTV.

Inside the dressing room, Pepprock advised his bandmates, including drummer Dave Bond, on what to do during those first moments on stage: "We're all going to be speeding a little bit," he said. "Take a deep breath. Look at each other."

Later, with his bandmates out front watching Pearl Jam's sound check, he joked about running out on stage when the band was announced and tripping over a cord.

The moment of doubt passed: "People don't go to a show and say 'damn, they played perfect!' They say 'Damn, they rocked!' That's what we'll try to do. We'll just go out there and do the best we can."

In fact, the band seemed comfortable on stage during its 45-minute set, which concluded as Ament joined the band for one song on guitar.

"Buenos dias, boys and girls," Pepprock said as Shangri-La Speedway took the stage. "Glad you could all make it to the show."

In front of the stage, fans bounced up and down and against each other, slamming against barricades — brought by Pearl Jam — that left a couple of feet between the fans and the stage.

During intermission, guards standing behind the barricades handed cups of water to the fans in the mosh pit.