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Hasn't raised white flag: Pearl Jam lead singer Eddie Vedder sings in Casper, Wyo., Friday night.

It's not over yet

Pearl Jam says it hasn't given in to Ticketmaster

By Robert Hilburn
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CASPER, Wyo. — Rock 'n' roll's heavyweight championship fight isn't over after all.

Before singing a note at the opening stop of Pearl Jam's first tour in more than a year, Eddie Vedder stepped to the microphone Friday at the sold-out Casper Events Center to make it clear that the nation's most popular band hasn't thrown in the towel in its bitter dispute with Ticketmaster, the nation's leading concert ticket distributor.

"I guess you've heard ... they are saying in the papers that we surrendered to Ticketmaster ... and that didn't happen," Vedder said. "And take my word, that's not (going to happen)."

As the audience cheered, Vedder and the band went into a nearly two-hour set that delighted the crowd of 9,000, more than half of whom had driven hours to get here, an Events Center official estimated.

Vedder's comments were in response to news media reports in which Pearl Jam's manager, Kelly Curtis, said the group had given up its attempt to bypass the Los Angeles-based ticket firm after find-

ing it impossible over the last year to book acceptable venues in certain cities without the ticket giant. He suggested the group might work with Ticketmaster if it was the only way to play an area.

Backstage here Friday, Curtis said his remarks were made out of frustration after the band canceled its June 26-27 shows at the Del Mar Fairgrounds near San Diego because last-minute safety concerns were raised by the San Diego County Sheriff's Office.

Curtis said he mentioned the idea of turning to a Ticketmaster venue as a last resort on the spur of the moment, out of his desire to reschedule the shows quickly to avoid disappointing fans in the area.

"(Bassist) Jeff (Ament) and Eddie were furious after reading reports that we had changed our policy, because that was not their intention at all, and we are all in agreement that it is not what we are going to do," Curtis said.

Pearl Jam, which maintains that Ticketmaster charges fans excessive service charges, filed a memorandum with the U.S. Justice Department in May 1994, arguing that the company holds a monopoly over ticket distribution in the \$1-billion U.S. concert business. The government subsequently launched an investigation into the ticket distribution industry.