

# Pearl Jam lives up to hype

By *Natasha Kassulke*

During his longest rant of the night, Pearl Jam frontman Eddie Vedder gave the crowd some advice:

"Don't let anyone call you Generation X . . .," Vedder said. "They should call you Generation Y because you're asking questions. And it's better than Generation Z, which is falling asleep."

## COMMENTARY

From the songs to the souvenirs to

the advice, Pearl Jam fans got more than their money's worth — which was \$45 to \$150 if you paid for a scalped ticket (originally \$18 plus service charges) outside the Marcus Amphitheater.

Sunday night's sold-out Summerfest show (the second of two nights) featured 24 songs that spanned Pearl Jam's career, from the multi-platinum "Ten" to "Vs." and right through "Vitalogy."

Although Saturday night's show had its highlights, too, and featured apologies from the band for the hassle over getting tickets and the on-again-off-again show announcements, Sunday night's concert had a certain playful quality to it that made it memorable as much as surprising.

Fans who stayed late got to see rumors give way to reality when Neil Young stepped in to add some guitar to Vedder's solo vocals during the encore. Young recently released his "Mirror Ball" album, which he recorded with Pearl Jam's help.

Fans who came early got a surprise, too, when a silver-suited Vedder joined the first opening act, an art-metal-grunge band called the Frogs.

Bad Religion then leaped the Frogs and gave a super-charged 50-minute set with songs off their most recent album, "Stranger Than Fiction," which featured tracks like "21st Century Digital Boy" and "Infected."

But the Bad boys were forgotten once fans brought out the beach balls and blow-up dolls to bat around during a break before the headliners.

Chants of "Eddie" gave way to loud guitars and barked-out vocals as Pearl Jam jumped right into its two-hour set that would close down Summerfest.

More than 24,000 fans responded with collective cries of pleasure during songs like "Spin the Black Circle," "Tremor Christ" and "Better Man."

Vedder prefaced "Not for You" with an explanation about the song that also reflected the band's bitter feelings toward Ticketmaster and mega-media.

"This song is not for you unless you are a tabloid journalist, MTV person, bootlegger or anybody else who makes money off selling tickets," Vedder said.

The show was punctuated with punches like that, but lacked some of the acrobats of past Pearl Jam shows.

Vedder paced around in circles like a cat caught in a cage at the zoo during some songs, rather than resorting to the rope climbing and high-wire swinging that marked Pearl Jam's Lollapalooza appearance at Alpine Valley four years ago.

And it was loud, but not as deafening or as death-defying as Pearl Jam's R&R Station (now the Paramount Music Hall) show years ago.

Yet Vedder seemed at home in the spotlight and was much more visible than when he stopped in Madison recently to play with punk bassist Mike Watt and in the opening band, Hovercraft.

At one point, Vedder used a microphone stand as a sledge hammer. After 24 whacks, he bent it in half and then handed it to a fan.

He also waved, played catch with baseball caps, complimented the audience on its sing-along, and even did something that most alternative rockers wouldn't dare do in public — smile.

Although Vedder was definitely who most fans came to see, he is bright enough to know that he is backed by a talented band.

The music made fans forget about the Ticketmaster fiasco and the near cancellation of the show, even if the merchandise didn't.

A \$5 poster featuring a snake charmer was one of the best take-home reminders of the Pearl Jam campaign. It read "Bad Religion and Pearl Tour '95: Sponsored by no one."