

pearl jam

America's
top-selling
rock band
goes
on
the road
to new
venues,
including
Augusta,
showing
it can defy
the touring
industry
while
playing to
sellout
crowds



Pearl Jam performs in concert, led by vocalist Eddie Vedder.

From Staff and Wire Services

how did one of America's hottest rock groups end up scheduled to perform tonight at the Augusta Civic Center, not even the biggest concert hall in Maine? When the group is Pearl Jam, the event is a direct result of the band's ongoing battle with Ticketmaster, the nation's largest ticket-sale agency.

The Seattle band began its first North American tour since June 1995 with a sold-out concert Sept. 16 at Seattle's Key Arena. When the 11-city tour ends Oct. 7 in Miami, Pearl Jam departs for Europe for 19 shows in 15 countries. The final date is Nov. 25 in Lisbon, Portugal.

The North American tour is no small feat for the biggest rock band to emerge in the '90s. Pearl Jam's previous attempt to tour without Ticketmaster, with whom it has had a longstanding dispute over service fees, ended in disarray last summer after only six shows.

The Ticketmaster saga began in March 1994 when Pearl Jam announced it would try to keep ticket prices for its summer 1994 tour below \$20. The band blamed Ticketmaster for charging what it

thought were excessive service fees.

Pearl Jam tried to launch a tour using venues that did not have exclusive Ticketmaster contracts, but the effort failed in May 1994. Shortly thereafter, Pearl Jam filed a memo with the U.S. Justice Department's antitrust division claiming the ticketing giant had created a monopoly.

The biggest blow to Pearl Jam came in July 1995 when the Justice Department dropped its Ticketmaster antitrust investigation. Accompanying the decision was a terse statement that the Justice Department would "continue to monitor competitive developments in the ticketing industry."

For its latest tour, Pearl Jam enlisted Fans, Tours & Tickets, a computerized telephone ticket system that mails tickets directly to concertgoers. Tickets to the band's Seattle show sold out in six minutes after going on sale Aug. 12. Other dates also sold out quickly, including the Augusta show, which sold out in seven minutes — good news for a band that has had numerous setbacks in its battle with Ticketmaster.

With its tour successfully underway, the group can concentrate on its music. Its fourth album, "No Code," was released Aug. 27 to brisk sales

a n d lukewarm critical reviews.

For example, esteemed New York Times critic Jon Pareles had this to say about "No Code": "While it's trying not to sound like a band of overbearing superstars, Pearl Jam asks for a different indulgence from its fans: that they'll play 'No Code' enough to let the songs sink in slowly. About half are worth the effort."

Still, as multi-platinum albums "Ten," "Vs." and "Vitalogy" show, when Pearl Jam records new music, its fans will come. As will awards, as the band took home its first Grammy Award this past February, a sure sign that Pearl Jam has been accepted into the mainstream of the music industry.

The band's current lineup includes Stone Gossard and Mike McCready on guitar, Jeff Ament on bass, Jack Irons on drums and lead Eddie Vedder on vocals. Irons is the only musician who was not a founding member of the band, which emerged in the fall of 1990 in its original incarnation as Mookie Blaylock, following the dissolution of the original Seattle band Mother Love Bone.

Along the way to rock superstar—
See Rock, C3, Col. 5

Pearl Jam to rock Augusta

Rock, from C1

dom, the group's members have regularly been involved in side projects. Ament, Gossard and Vedder took part in the 1991 album "Temple of the Dog," a tribute album to Andrew Wood, Mother Love Bone's late lead singer. There were songs on the soundtracks for the movies "Singles," "Judgment Night" and "The Basketball Diaries" and "Dead Man Walking," and the benefit albums "Sweet Relief," "Music for Our Mother Ocean"

and "Home Alive." The band also backed up Neil Young on 1995's "Mirrorball."

What can those attending tonight's concert expect? If earlier shows on the tour are any indication, it will be a mix of signature tunes including "Daughter," "Alive" and "Jeremy," and new songs such as "The Long Road" and "Hail Hail."

Pearl Jam should offer an energetic set after being off the road for the better part of two years.