



ALAN FREUND / Herald Staff

MOSH PIT MADNESS: An estimated 25,000 Pearl Jam fans packed Fort Lauderdale Stadium Monday evening for a concert by the hot rock band.

Pearl Jam fans feel the squeeze in Ft. Lauderdale

■ CONCERT REVIEW, 1C

By **FRANK FERNANDEZ**
Herald Staff Writer

The thousands of Pearl Jam fans who flocked to Fort Lauderdale Stadium on Monday night had few places to sit or park, but the concert went off smoothly at the place more used to hosting minor-league baseball than major-league rock bands.

Fort Lauderdale police officer Mike Dimaggio said, "I think everybody just wanted to have a good time and listen to music."

Stadium Manager Vince Gizzi expected hordes to rush the four gates when they opened about 4 p.m. for the 6:30 show. But only about 800 arrived that early.

"I thought there would be quite a bit more," Gizzi said.

Among those early arrivals was Georgina Acuña, 23, of Miami.

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Rock-'n'-roll fans feel the squeeze in Jam-packed stadium

CONCERT, FROM 1B

"We wanted to sit down," she said.

That was a luxury concertgoers had to secure early. Some 25,000 tickets were sold for the show, although the stadium has only 8,000 seats. Most fans watched — standing up — from the baseball field. That works out to about six square feet per person, Gizzi said.

Wary that such close accommodations could cause trouble, one band manager took the stage periodically to remind people to drink a lot of water — and to watch out for each other in the mosh pit.

Rain threatened earlier in the day, but by show time, the clouds had disappeared and a breeze blew through the stadium at 5301 NW 12th Ave.

Pearl Jam, one of the biggest bands of the '90s, plays stadiums as small as Fort Lauderdale's because of a longstanding feud with Ticketmaster, a company they call a monopoly and criticize for high service charges.

Limited parking had been a concern for organizers, but security guards Monday said it may have helped keep order by regulating the traffic flow.

"They couldn't all arrive at the same spot at the same time," said John Harte, security director for DAK, a firm hired for the event.

Police described the evening as calm and reported few arrests.

Security was tight for the show, with 80 police officers and 200 private guards on hand.

Before the gates opened, fans were kept at bay by a fence. On the other side, a wall of security guards kept watch. Fort Lauder-

dale police officers stood beyond the turnstiles, and officers on horses rode near the crowd.

When the gates did open, security guards patted down fans to make sure they weren't carrying weapons or other restricted contraband, such as cameras, tape recorders or alcohol. There was some confusion over what they could carry in.

Steve Hanaway, 36, of Pompano Beach was unhappy he wasn't allowed in with his "binoculars." What the guards didn't know was that they were really a flask in disguise.

"I can't get my Captain Morgan's in," he said of the rum he was carrying in the "binoculars."

Past the ticket checkers, fans dashed about 100 yards across the expanse of asphalt into the stadium, heading for a spot on the field nearest the band.

A few lingered over drinks in the parking lot, like Matt Lobe, 30, and his friend, Ken McDavid, 32, both of Fort Pierce. They had arrived about 2 p.m. and cooked some burgers on a portable grill.

Harte attributed the smooth evening partly to tips from Pearl Jam. For instance, the band advised setting up separate areas for checking purses, backpacks, etc., and taking the tickets.

The band has experience with crowds that get out of control. In March 1994, eager fans rushed the chain-link fence surrounding a concert at Bayfront Amphitheater in downtown Miami. Some started throwing bottles at officers.

Herald staff writer Annmarie Dodd contributed to this report.