

# Pearl Jam pure pandemonium in Missoula

## Rock band brings Opportunity man on stage to propose

**Editor's note:** *Following is a Missoulian newspaper copy editor's reflections on the Pearl Jam concert Saturday night in Washington-Grizzly Stadium at the University of Montana, Missoula.*

By JAMIE KELLY  
of the Missoulian

MISSOULA — The view from the stadium was stark and surreal. A turbulent sea of bobbing bodies and heads, flushed in purple and red light, giving bodily homage to those godlike grungers Pearl Jam.

Yeah, the stadium seats were nice, but you could still hold a polite conversation. So I took a quick trip to the core, the earleed section known as stadium floor. About 8,000 of us and growing, as rabid fans escaped their seats, dodged security and disappeared into anonymity.

Inside the mosh pit, it was calm, the eye of a human storm. There was no berth for movement. Just hands grasping at the sky, carrying people, while the crowd swayed and rocked in its self-perpetuated momentum.

The fringes of the pit were raucous. These guys and gals were crazed, dazed and delirious. The moshers' bodies were convulsively wracked in their Dionysian dance, pounding and beating their fellow humans indiscriminately.

Ten brutal minutes later, my body begged me to leave. I'm wiser for the wear — and I was worn.

A generation from now, we'll be talking about the grunge mosh pit with the same historical reverence reserved for Elvis' undulating hips.

**THEY CAME FROM** everywhere to see Pearl Jam in Washington-Grizzly Stadium on Saturday. Washington, Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, California. They couldn't find motels — "Don't even bother trying," one woman was warned by a motel clerk — so they pitched tents or slept in their cars. They endured the sacrifices for this biggest of concerts.

There were young girls with braces, corpulent men with arms webbed with tattoos, Generation X-ers and the remnants of the oft-neurotic flannel

brigade. Clearly, Pearl Jam has cross-generational appeal.

The sun — hitherto a faint memory in western Montana — beamed brightly, as if to give approval for such a monumental gathering. The crowd's buzz erupted to thunder, even for the warm-up band, Goodness', entrance.

**TWENTY MINUTES LATER,** the crowd was caterwauling for the band's departure, bored by its tired brand of pop metal. "These guys suck" was not an uncommon musing. Perhaps giving a local band a shot at playing on its home turf would have made more sense.

Pearl Jam, however, injected a fierce energy into the crowd, creating near pandemonium as they sauntered onto the stage. Every song that thrust the tight Seattle quintet into rock royalty emerged from a two-story wall of speakers with punch and grind. "Evenflow," "Jeremy," "Alive" — all greeted by a collective scream so loud it shook the plate glass in the sky boxes.

Eddie Vedder was Eddie Vedder, enigmatic as usual. He roiled and rocked, hurling his body across stage. At one point, he appeared to be — how shall we say? — enamored with the stage.

Not necessarily the best role model for impressionable youth, especially as he summed up the delirious mood: "Right now, you are the most crank-smoking degenerates ..." More pandemonium.

There were few pauses. This guy named Wayne Challeen got up on stage and asked this girl named Kelly McCarthy for her hand in marriage. They're from Opportunity, near Anaconda. She said yes. Wayne appreciated the band's time.

"Only a band like Pearl Jam would let me do this. They're the best," he exclaimed. Even more pandemonium.

Added Kelly: "When he got on stage and said 'Kelly, I got this ring here, would you marry me,' I just couldn't believe it."

Now she has a big rock on her finger surrounded by emeralds to go along with her ticket stub. Pearl Jam played "Better Man" after Wayne's nuptial plea.

Vedder said he liked it here so much, he wants to kick off the next tour here. We'll see how long our collective memory is.

Montana's own Jeff Ament, Pearl Jam's bassist, stopped to thank his parents as dark descended on the stadium. He also wished dad a happy Father's Day.

Two encores, five more songs. The night drifted away but the crowd wouldn't let Pearl Jam go with it. The old "Montana! ... Grizzlies!" chant that alternates between sides at football games was replaced with "Pearl! ... Jam!" Only this chant was noticeably louder. So Pearl Jam played.

We were warned that the post-concert traffic would be hell. Few of us were really prepared for it.

Cars were backed up for scores of blocks in every direction around the stadium. Missoula officers did a great job in the Herculean task of keeping the peace and the cars flowing. And except for a mild brawl at a local eatery, little happened in the way of crime.

**CONCERT MAYHEM** spilled into downtown as youthful exuberance gave way to downright anarchy. Twenty minutes to get a drink, if you could get through nearly impermeable walls of sweaty bodies. Suddenly, curling up with a book or movie sounded like bliss.

If the 1998 Pearl Jam concert is a precedent-setting event for Washington-Grizzly stadium, we'll see more concerts there. Bigger acts will undoubtedly notice our little presence.

The 22,000 fans who attended this leviathan concert walked away satiated, at least if a quick straw poll is any indication. And Pearl Jam has wielded its power once again, showing they are far from relinquishing its reign as a singular musical force in this decade, even if grunge really is dead.

It's guys like Greg Crauthers, 24, from Butte, who will see to that, because, he said, he'll always be a fan.

"We're lifers," he said as Pearl Jam took the stage. "That's what they call us — lifers."