

# Pearl Jam rewards faithful with inspiring show

By Jon Bream  
Star Tribune Staff Writer

It had been six years since Pearl Jam, the biggest U.S. rock band to emerge in the 1990s, performed in the Twin Cities. In popular music, six years can be an era.

Since Pearl Jam last played at Lollapalooza '92 in St. Paul, grunge died, so did alternative-rock, and Seattle is no longer the epicenter of music. (Not to mention that Pearl Jam has released four albums of its own plus one with Neil Young.) So it goes in ever-changing rock 'n' roll.

At the Seattle quintet's overdue return Tuesday night at instantly soldout Target Center in Minneapolis, Pearl Jam singer Eddie Vedder, after receiving a louder-than-a-sonic-boom ovation during the band's encore, said, "I guess we had forgot what it was like up here. You kinda shocked us."

The 18,000 fans haven't forgotten about Pearl Jam. And the no-frills band rewarded the faithful with a no-surprises but inspired and inspiring performance, which lasted 10 minutes short of two hours.

At age 33, Vedder may no longer be the rock 'n' roll crazy (who climbs into the rafters or dives from the stage into the crowd) that he was six years ago. But he's still got what makes rock stars special, that elusive quality that says to fans, "I've got something you want but cannot have." He's intense and knowing and lost and searching. He can be

## Music review



Star Tribune photo by Audrey Lee

**Pearl Jam's lead singer, Eddie Vedder, crooned for nearly two hours to a full house at the Target Center in Minneapolis Tuesday night.**

tormented and tender in the same song, his voice can glide from a warm croon to a banshee wail as he did during the Zeppelinesque "Given To Fly."

Once he's flying, Vedder turns his songs into epics and anthems. Pearl Jam devoted

the first half of the concert to compact yet thrilling songs, including "Last Exit." The band, featuring new drummer Matt Cameron (formerly with Soundgarden), was tight and forceful, the sound careening like a well-rehearsed wedding of Metallica and the Who. Vedder's falsetto fueled "Faithful," and then the crowd went wild for the 1992 hit "Even Flow" featuring Mike McCready's soaring, fast-fingered guitar solo.

Over the years, Pearl Jam has grown increasingly eclectic, especially on its new album, "Yield." After the 1994 hit "Daughter," the group slid into an Eastern-flavored jam with Vedder improvising lyrics like a sober Jim Morrison. "MFC" was a riff-rocker that showed that the once-lumbering Pearl Jam has transformed into a mighty groove band, too. "Wishlist," the group's current single, was a pretty pop song, dressed up with a mirrored ball, and "All Those Yesterdays" was Beatlesque.

Nothing summed up classic Pearl Jam more effectively than the old fave "Black," which started slow and somber, then built in intensity to a controlled scream, buoyed by guitar tension, and the inevitable anthems, the fist-saluting "Alive" and the jangly, sing-along "Better Man." The only way for this evolving band to top it off was with some plain old fun — a rock 'n' rolling original "Do the Evolution," and the Who's rock classic "My Generation," an enduring anthem for every generation.