

Pearl Jam's passionate concert gives fans reason to believe again

By DAVE FERMAN
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DALLAS — It hasn't been easy to be a Pearl Jam fan over the past several years.

Between mounting an ill-advised tour of alternative venues amid their battle with Ticketmaster, not touring at all for long stretches and putting out several CDs less wonderful than their first two, 1991's *Ten* and 1993's *Vs.*, Eddie Vedder and company have been hard to truly believe in.

REVIEW

After last night, though, it's a whole lot easier. The band's first show in the Metroplex since November 1993 (when they played both the University of North Texas and Southern Methodist University) was a knockout punch. They produced the sort of passionate, rowdy, well-played and just plain fun evening that harkened back to when they were the heroes of alternative rock and one of the biggest bands in the world.

Not that they're not still popular: Reunion Arena was absolutely packed, and mainly with young fans, most of whom remained standing during the entire show.



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Lead singer Eddie Vedder "jams" at Reunion Arena in Dallas last night.

They played a large chunk of their latest CD, *Yield*, blasts from the past like *Alive* and *Rearviewmirror*. And a shirtless Dennis Rodman (yep, that Dennis Rodman) spent much of the night goofing around onstage.

This is not quite the same Pearl Jam that the world fell in love with in 1991 and 1992. Eddie Vedder (who now sports short hair and a few more pounds than in the past) now plays guitar about half the

time, and is not nearly as animated and physical a performer as five years ago.

Between that and the moodier, more subdued nature of several of the songs they performed from *Yield* — such as *Pilate* — the band's current show doesn't have quite the visceral, almost chaotic edge of past shows.

That's disappointing, but hardly fatal.

More important, Vedder's voice

is still one of the most commanding in rock. And the band (guitarists Stone Gossard and Mike McCready, bassist Jeff Ament and drummer Matt Cameron, formerly of Soundgarden, who is subbing on this tour for the ailing Jack Irons) still roars like a mighty, just-uncaged beast when it wants to.

Rearviewmirror, *Given to Fly*, *Last Exit* and several others were incredibly powerful. For the first time in a long time a band darned near turned Reunion into a small club. Thousands of people jumped up and down continuously and sang along at the top of their lungs. The show took on the sort of unmistakable we're-all-in-this-together edge of old — and of the great performances by a U2 or a Bruce Springsteen.

Having Rodman clowning around onstage — and hoisting Vedder onto his shoulders and then jumping up and down as *Alive* ended — was just the cherry on the sundae. This was, from beginning to end, a remarkably fine concert. The only downside is that one couldn't help but leave wondering how long it would be until we saw these guys again. With any luck, it won't be another 4 1/2 years.

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