

Pearl Jam keeps fan connection on track

KERRY GOLD
VANCOUVER SUN

Alternative rockers Pearl Jam played a sweaty, fast and furious, runaway train of a show for an explosively loud audience of about 14,000 fans last night at the Pacific Coliseum.

By the time Eddie Vedder — clearly worshipped by his fans — and the band opened with *Sometimes* at around 9 p.m., the crowd was so over-boiling with enthusiasm that not even Vedder's low-key mood could set the tone. When Vedder made his first few comments to the crowd, he responded to the audience's mega-blast of applause for one of the best songs off the new *Yield* album, *Given to Fly*.

"All right, I like that one too," he acknowledged, strapping on a guitar. He made the requisite warm-up comment about being in Vancouver, and the crowd went nuts for so long that Vedder joked: "You gave yourselves quite a hand there," before launching into another one of their signature '70s arena style rock anthems

complete with metal hard riffs and lyrics for anguished young men like Vedder.

It was a sell-out show for the 17,000-seat capacity Coliseum, with a seating arrangement that was almost 360-degrees around the stage, save for a screen that ran across the back of Pearl Jam's set up. Anyone stuck in these rear-view corner seats would have been staring at the back of Vedder's head all night, which was surprising, since the band has built a reputation on its anti-marketing, anti-sell out quest to provide their fans with the fairest deal possible. While the band allegedly chose the Coliseum because GM Place has too much of a corporate image (bands like Radiohead and the Beastie Boys are making the Coliseum the choice of true alternative types as well), the \$50 price tag on some T-shirts wasn't exactly a fire-sale deal.

The show itself, however, was well worth the \$40 or so, mostly because Vedder can belt out a song with a God-given intensity that is a joy to

watch, and the guitar solos are so boisterously relentless that you're utterly convinced guitar solos are a good thing after all. No wonder the crowd was on its feet from the moment that Pearl Jam appeared until the raucous end of the hour and three-quarters set, moving en masse to keep time with the lengthy solos.

One of the many highlights included the band's hit *Evenflow*, on which Vedder growled and spat and sweated and made it clear that he loves playing music. After the song, paramedics carried someone out on the floor, which could have been due to the hysteria, the humidity, or a combination of both. Pearl Jam kept sustained the momentum on songs from their new album, *Do the Evolution* and *Wishlist*, played to a disco light ball, and followed by an old hit, *Jeremy*.

Burly Frank Black of Pixies fame (the rock band that's become something of a legend since its split) set the tone for the evening with grinding guitar melodies and quietly ruling demeanour.



PETER BATTISTONI/Vancouver Sun

EDDIE VEDDER: Pearl Jam front man clearly enjoyed show.