

Pearl Jam mixes old, new songs in lively rock set

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REVIEW

Pearl Jam came home Tuesday night, with a few sentimental words and a lot of older songs.

The band seemed to acknowledge the relative rarity of its Seattle shows by opening up its two-night Memorial Stadium stand with "Corduroy," off its 1994 disc, "Vitalogy."

"The waiting drove me mad ...," Eddie Vedder sang, as the crowd's palpable anticipation turned into a rush to the stage. So much for the no moshing/no body surfing rules posted all around.

As the song went on, the crowd sang along — something it would do often that night. "Everything has changed/Absolutely nothing's changed," Vedder sang.

Those conflicting words fit the evening perfectly.

Pearl Jam's a different band than it was back in 1996, when it last played Seattle. Back then, Pearl Jam seemed

like a band crushed under the weight of trying to change the world. Ticket complications frustrated the hometown crowd, which has gotten to see the band perform publicly in Seattle only once since late 1993 (not including this week's shows).

Despite everything, Pearl Jam outlasted its Seattle "grunge" brethren, picking up Soundgarden drummer Matt Cameron along the way. Cameron is a powerhouse addition, by the way, and the band seems glad to have him. They treat him not like a fill-in for Jack Irons, the drummer who couldn't make the tour, but as a member of the band.

The show had a feeling of nostalgia about it, such as when a guy in a Kurt Cobain memorial T-shirt posed for a picture with a buddy.

And when the band launched into "Even Flow," it sounded like 1992 all

over again, with every growl and "whooo" and "yeah" in familiar places. The only thing different was the way the band looked. In the "Even Flow" video, one of the last the band ever made, Vedder and company hurled their long, long hair around.

Now, they're mostly buzz-cut boys, though Vedder's curls reach toward his collar and drummer Matt Cameron's blond bangs won't stay out of his eyes.

One thing that hasn't changed is the way Pearl Jam can move an audience. Live, the band is still capable of transcendence, and it is making new music that can match the old.

They played 25 songs, with one of the best sequences coming early: "Even Flow," "Jeremy," then newcomers "Given to Fly," "Leatherman" (which appears on the "Given to Fly" single), "In Hiding" and the classics "State of Love and Trust" and "Daughter."

Vedder said little between songs, and the rest of the band said nothing.

The other band members may be contributing to songwriting more than before, but it was Vedder's show.

Fans shouted "Ed-die, Ed-die" and got vintage Vedder in return.

He grasped the mike in his trademark fashion, two hands hiding his face. He screamed, he beat his chest, he got political. He reminded the crowd that the show raised nearly \$500,000 for charity, then suggested bassist Jeff Ament as a candidate for governor.

Toward the end of the show, Vedder went from angry punk to tender poet in a flash, with the punky "Do the Evolution" to the whisper of "Wishlist" (both songs are from "Yield").

It wasn't the first time the band managed such a change in mood. The desperate "Rearviewmirror" dissolved into the desolate "Black," which brought out the crowd's lighters and singing voices.

The crowd sang with many songs, but "Alive" got the loudest response. Vedder leaned close to the crowd as

he sang. Mike McCready played the familiar solo behind his head, rock-god style, then pulled his guitar down to expand upon it.

"Alive" ended at 9:40 p.m., after almost an hour and a half of song after song in rapid succession. The band then offered a half-hour of encores, including "Baba O'Riley" by the Who.

The Wallflowers, who opened the show along with local punkers Zeke, had ended their set with a Who song as well: "Won't Get Fooled Again." Pearl Jam won the Who-off, offering more unrestrained power than the gentlemanly Wallflowers.

Many people knew Pearl Jam's relatively obscure show closer, "Yellow Ledbetter." The song appears on an import disc from the band's heyday, along with "Footsteps," which Pearl Jam also played Tuesday, to the delight of the die-hards.

Pearl Jam has still got it. They may be trying to tame it, they may be growing up, but live, they rock.