



Pearl Jam's lead vocalist Eddie Vedder performs at the beginning of Sunday night's show at the Palace — the group's first performance at the Auburn Hills site.

Star photo: Rob Gardelske

# Lucky fans toast Jam

## Crowds welcome return of Vedder and friends

AUBURN HILLS, MICH.

Well the feud is over, and for that Pearl Jam fans can be thankful.

Eddie Vedder and the boys played hard to a near sell-out crowd at the Palace Sunday night, on their first full-blown tour since starting an inspired but ultimately doomed protest against Ticketmaster in 1994.

The group even testified before the American Congress to condemn the ticket giant for what the musicians felt was price-gouging.

Pearl Jam cancelled its 1994 tour because it couldn't find suitable non-Ticketmaster venues, and stopped its 1995 concert schedule after only 13 shows because the logistics of avoiding Ticketmaster proved too great and the band couldn't offer the lower ticket prices they had hoped, anyway.

In losing the battle they nevertheless made their point, however, that major tours can no longer be staged without Ticketmaster support and thus the major concert scene represents a virtual monopoly.

But the holy war is behind them now, and so is some of Vedder's unrelenting angst.

### Less angry

The group's new album *Yield* is more mature, less angry, and actually contains songs penned by other members of the band.

Meanwhile, Pearl Jam in concert, while heavy and aggressive, seems less sad than the group's reputation as one of the co-founders, along with the now defunct Nirvana, of the Seattle scene. That's equal parts power chords, flannel and melancholy. In other words, grunge.

The Pearl Jammers — Vedder on gui-

tar, vocals and emotion; Stone Gossard and Mike McCready on guitars; Jeff Ament on bass; and former Soundgarden member Matt Cameron on drums for the tour — bashed out a number of tunes from their new album (*Given To Fly*, *Wishlist*, and *Do the Evolution*). But they also showed they now know how to play the rock-and-roll game.

They started the affair rather slow with the B-side *Long Road*, but turned more aggressive with lesser known numbers such as *Last Exit* and *Brain of J.*

But soon, all the hits came out, delivered close to their original sound. From their first album *Ten*, which sold an amazing nine million copies, they served up *Jeremy*, *Even Flow*, *Alive* — all to tremendous applause from the sold-out, 18,000 T-shirt and ballcap jock-rock crowd.

### What's the secret?

Seeing them live, however, you might wonder what exactly it is that made them so immense.

After all, neither their songs nor their stage show (or lack of one) are terribly original.

The music is a direct ripoff of '70s hard rock, and they don't do much except stand there and play much like they would in a garage (OK, Vedder holds the mike, bends his knees, and shakes his head toward the floor on occasion).

That said, these guys can really set their guitars a-strummin' and they have the right combination of talent and attitude to make it work with this

genre. In other words, grunge.

Meanwhile, the understated stage actually contributed some ethereal mood to the otherwise straight-ahead-rock atmosphere, thanks to five large candles burning atop mini-Eiffel Towers and a horizontal screen that soaked up various hues, reflected a strobe light, or acted as a video screen for shots of speeding clouds and whatnot. Even a disco ball made an appearance.

Pearl Jam may have shot through the stratosphere shortly after forming in 1990, with the likes of multi-million-selling albums like *Ten*, *Vs.*, and *Vitalogy* (originally released on vinyl), but they have a way of seeming like a bunch of Joe Averages out there loving the party of loud rock and roll, nothing fancy — even if various issues do tick them off.

In other words, grunge.



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