

Just a tad shy of legendary

• Pearl Jam's concert at Blossom is great, but lacks a little of the fun, passion of 1992 classic

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Pearl Jam's first Blossom Music Center appearance in 1992 is the stuff of local legend.

When the band took the stage, in the second slot at the second Lollapalooza, grunge rock was just about to burst into the musical mainstream and the rain clouds were just about to burst above Blossom.

When Pearl Jam launched into *Even Flow*, sheets of rain fell and the sold-out crowd on the

Blossom lawn rushed the pavilion – busting through barricades and overwhelming security to be out of the rain and into the musical minirevolution. By the time the band reached its breakthrough hit *Alive*, it was an all-out frenzy.

No such frenzy broke out at the Pearl Jam show Wednesday night.

It was a great show, with the crowd that made it the fastest-selling show in Blossom Music Center history cheering the Seattle quintet every beat of the way.

There were loads of highlights – from the meditative *Wishlist* to a fantastic *Daughter*, which included snippets of The Pretenders' *My City Was Gone*, to a stirring *Elderly Woman Behind*

the Counter in a Small Town.

But when the band hit *Even Flow* this time, the eighth song in a 22-song set, it was clear a lot had changed.

Eddie Vedder was still charismatic, glowering intensely and gripping the microphone with both hands as if holding on for dear life while he sang. Mike McCready still delivered a blistering guitar solo while doing flying Pete Townshendesque flying kicks. Stone Gossard still bounced uncontrollably as he pounded out the rhythm guitar parts. Jeff Ament still holds it all together with his grooving bass lines.

And the crowd was definitely

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LEW STAMP/Beacon Journal

Pearl Jam's Eddie Vedder does his thing at Blossom.

JAM

• Iggy Pop proves punk still has powerful punch

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much more vocal, screaming so well along with the lyrics that it even drew praise from Vedder.

"That was pretty good," he said, mumbling slightly. "I could use a little help on the next one."

The crowd responded with an even more powerful joint rendition of *Jeremy*, also from the band's now-classic *Ten* album.

"All right," said Vedder, clearly pleased by the participation. "The next chorus might be one of the tougher ones."

It was. But *In Hiding*, the band's recent radio single from its latest album, *Yield*, wasn't more difficult to sing, the crowd just didn't know it as well. Unlike the early hits, Pearl Jam songs no longer assault fans from all avenues of pop culture.

The band doesn't do videos, although it did commission an animated clip for its new single, *Do the Evolution*. Its TV appearances and interviews have been cut back. And sales of *Yield* are only one-sixth the sales of *Ten*.

But something else has changed.

It seems like a little bit of the passion and a lot of the fun has been drained from the band's show.

Only on Vedder's little Elvis-like hip swivel during *Do the Evolution* did he seem to loosen up, even flashing a small smile.

And only on the fiery version of The Who's *Baba O'Riley* did the band seem to catch fire the way it did in the early days.

The passion is still there. Hopefully, this touring will help Pearl Jam tap into it again.

Iggy Pop opened the show with a set that explains why he is a legend.

Raging through an 11-song set that included some of his greatest hits like *I Wanna Be Your Dog* and *The Passenger* and his latest hits, like *Home*, the shirtless Pop jumped and preened and posed and screamed like a man possessed.

His energy sent *Lust for Life* and *Raw Power* to new levels, showing how punk sounds as potent today as it ever did.

In true punk fashion, Pop even mooned a guy in the front row. Pop said his victim had been yawning and looking at his watch throughout the set.

"I'm just a guest here, trying to do my best," Pop told the guy, be-

fore dropping trou. "If you don't like it, why don't you get another beer?"

Then he launched into a powerful version of *Johnny B. Goode* that, as Vedder and Ament would say later, should put Pop into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

Amen to that.

Injury takes bass out of Blossom Festival

Bass Nathan Berg has cancelled his appearance with the Cleveland Orchestra on Sunday at the Blossom Festival due to an eye injury.

Eric Owens, bass, will replace him. The program, to be conducted by John Nelson, will remain the same: Bach's *Magnificat*, Handel's *Royal Fireworks Music* and excerpts from *Julius Caesar*. For more information, call the Cleveland Orchestra at 216-231-1111 or 800-686-1141.