

# Pearl Jam elects to rock the house hard

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MANSFIELD - Concert-wise, it's been a long, grinding summer filled with many of the same bands that tour every year at this time. That makes Pearl Jam's tour all the more notable. Just ask the capacity crowd of 19,900 soggy fans who braved rain and ridiculously high humidity to work themselves into a giddy delirium last night at Great Woods.

## Music Review

It was election day in the Commonwealth - and Pearl Jam, which hadn't been here in several years, won some big time votes of its own with a stellar, all-out show that rocked the very foundation of this site.

Much has been said of the newfound, intraband harmony of Pearl Jam - and the good vibes spilled over into the two-hour show that pulled from all five of its albums, with a heavy and welcome emphasis on the first two head-slamming discs, "Ten" and "Vitalogy." The band even did the both of their early, primal-scream hits "Jeremy" and "Alive," though it has been alternating them from night to night on this climactic comeback tour.

Singer Eddie Vedder, whose voice rang out with renewed assurance (after a bad sound mix on the first few songs), was as friendly as he's ever been in these parts. He thanked the people who had seen Pearl Jam previously at the Orpheum, Boston Garden, and Great Woods (back when Pearl Jam was an early act on the Lollapalooza Festival with the Red Hot Chili Peppers). He even praised Boston's record stores, its old buildings and its history. "But we've got Jimi Hendrix!" he said with a laugh, commenting on the band's Seattle roots.

The night opened with slide guitarist Ben Harper, who again did his patented extended jam on Hendrix's "Voodoo Chile." Then came the unchained Pearl Jam, playing on a stage flanked by some Marshall amps, a video screen (upon which clouds and other spacy images were flashed), plus candles atop small, Eiffel-tower-shaped stands, and the unusual sight of some artificial black birds (was Carlos Castaneda in the house?) on top of the lighting grid.

Anyway, people came for the music, not the stage set. And Pearl Jam rewarded them with a blistering, well-paced set that clicked early with "Corduroy," "Hail,



Pearl Jam's newfound good vibes spilled over into the 2-hour show, which covered all five albums.

PEARL JAM  
With Ben Harper  
At: Great Woods, through tonight

Hail," the restless "Animal," and the new tension-and-release track "Given to Fly."

Vedder, who wore a black T-shirt from the punk band Exploited, sang his anthem of dysfunction, "Daughter," before really exploding on the manic "Rear View Mirror," for which he donned a guitar to join the axe attack of Mike McCready (whose shorn, bleached-blond hair was a shock compared to his hippie days) and the steady Stone Gossard, a bulwark of rhythm-guitar strength (with some occasional Joe Perry-esque leads) all night.

New song "Wishlist" was a highlight ("I wish I was a sacrifice but somehow still lived on," sang Vedder), but so was the classic "Evenflow" (with Vedder leaping with such excitement that he almost fell over a stage monitor) and the surprising, almost hymn-like "Nothing Man."

There was no moshing at the show (a change from the early days), but the band's raw, pummeling power was still intact. But while it remains a punk/hard-rock express at heart, it also has definitely grown, witness the more atmospheric new song, "In Hiding," where new drummer Matt Cameron let his chops show. Pearl Jam still has an almost unrivaled passion onstage - and is a needed exclamation point to what's been a fairly generic summer in the sheds.