

Pearl Jam releases new CD, Yield



► Marcus Amaker takes on Pearl Jam's new release and decides how it measures up.
staff writer **MARCUS AMAKER**

YIELD Pearl Jam
★★½ (out of four stars)

Pearl Jam has always seemed a little uncomfortable in its own skin.

After two popular albums, *Ten* and *Vs.*, the band who could do no wrong left their "rock radio" persona and re-invented themselves with *Vitalogy*.

When that album was released in 1994, many people thought Pearl Jam was either crazy or brilliant. Whatever the case might have been, *Vitalogy* was a turning point in the band's ever-evolving history. That CD foreshadowed the aggressiveness of *No Code* and the music on their newest CD, *Yield*.

With the exception of the first single, "Given the Fly," it's hard to imagine the Pearl Jam of *Yield* as the same band who had hits like "Alive," "Black" and "Daughter." That's because *Yield* continues Pearl Jam's trend of releasing albums that sound nothing like their previous work. It comes at a time when many people are not only questioning Pearl Jam, but also the state of rock music as we approach the next century.

But Pearl Jam isn't, and has never been, concerned with the negative reaction to *No Code* or the people who want to hear another *Ten*. Like U2, R.E.M. and the Artist, Pearl Jam is beyond trying to repeat their early success. Their need to grow as musicians is more important.

Yield is not so much a departure from Pearl Jam's past as it is a return to the future. For the first time since *Vitalogy*, Pearl Jam sounds like they're having fun. There's an energy to the new songs, something that was largely lacking on *No Code*.

"Brain of J.," which is actually an old song from their 1995 tour, starts the album off much in the same way that "Last Exit" did for *Vitalogy*. It has a powerful guitar riff and a catchy chorus, with Eddie Vedder singing "The whole world will be different soon / The whole world will be different." This song, along with the second track, "Faithful," has religious themes. "Faithful" could easily make it on a Pearl Jam great-

est hits mixed tape because it is one of those songs that only they can do. Only Eddie Vedder could sing "The man upstairs is used to all of this noise / I'm through with screaming" and make it sound believable.

But *Yield* is not all about Eddie Vedder. It is an album like no other in Pearl Jam's career because it is the first project where each band member plays a vital role in each song. Jeff Ament wrote the upbeat "Pilate," and the other members had a hand in the creation of most of the other songs.

For all of its ambition, *Yield* is terribly uneven. The good songs like "No Way" and "Low Light" are incredible, but other tracks like the repetitive "Wishlist" and random songs like "Push Me, Pull Me" and an untitled instrumental track could have been left off of the album. "MFC" should have been an awesome song, but it's forgettable because it is too short.

The same thing could be said about the whole album. Early reports said that *Yield* was Pearl Jam's best album since *Ten*.

In truth, it is just an average CD from a more than average band. But then again, an average CD from Pearl Jam is better than 80 percent of everything else.

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