

# MUSIC REVIEW

**"Vitalogy"**  
**Pearl Jam**  
**Epic Records**  
**Grade: A**

Pearl Jam's last release, "Vs.," concluded when lead singer Eddie Vedder asked the listener, "How much difference does it make?" With the band's new release, "Vitalogy," Pearl Jam tries to answer that question.

"Vitalogy" is Pearl Jam's most experimental release to date. Gone are the Godzilla-sized anthems that helped "Ten" sell millions of copies. Instead, the new release contains a short instrumental number, a track that's major instrument is an accordion

and a girl's spoken words on the last track.

As inaccessible as "Vitalogy" can be, it is the logical extension of "Vs." With "Vitalogy," the band members sound matches and sometimes surpasses the powerful vocals of Eddie Vedder while still sounding like a collective whole.

This is especially evident on the song "Satan's Bed." Guitarists Stone Gossard and Mike McCready still provide some of the best guitar work in rock today on this track.

Ironically, some of the best musical moments on "Vitalogy" come from the drumming. Former drummer Dave Abruzzese does

such a great job keeping up with Vedder's rapid-fire lyrics, it's a wonder why they decided to fire him.

As great as the band members are in Pearl Jam, it is lead singer Eddie Vedder who makes this band one of the most important since Led Zeppelin. On "Vitalogy," Vedder swings from thoughtful whispers to enraged screams.

The lyrics on "Vitalogy" focus on people in limbo. Vedder gets a chance to rally against people who have made him into an idol. Both yearning and fearing for the chance to be alone, Vedder sometimes can be a walking contradiction.

"Vitalogy" is bound to scare

off some of Pearl Jam's fans. On the song "Bugs," Eddie Vedder contemplates what he should do about all of the bugs around him. "Do I confuse them?/I don't think they're dumb/ Do I join them/ looks like that's the one," Eddie sings while an accordion plays a twisted melody in the background.

Some may compare this release to Nirvana's "In Utero." Nirvana's last studio album was criticized by some to be unbearable to listen to and was made only to scare away the band's new fans. Some may think the same with "Vitalogy." That couldn't be further from the truth on each release.

Plenty of songs on "Vitalogy" could be released as singles without sacrificing any of their musical integrity. The soft sound of "Better Man," the headbanging "Spin the Black Circle" and "Not for You" are great examples of this.

While "Ten" and most of "Vs." were able to be sound accessible without a trace of selling out, "Vitalogy" steers Pearl Jam in a new direction. It's a release that demands the audience to actually listen to the music. As demanding as it is, "Vitalogy" offers plenty of rewards to the patient listener.

—Sean McCarthy

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## People Watch

### Shaq dedicates rap to stepfather

NEW YORK (AP) — Shaquille O'Neal dedicated a rap song to his stepfather because his biological one "didn't bother."

The basketball star said Joe Toney left the family when O'Neal was a few months old and wasn't around when he was growing up.

"But now that I'm a rapper, movie star and a good basketball player, now he wants to go on Howard Stern and Rikki Lake and let people know. So I did the song," O'Neal said in the latest issue of People magazine.

The song on his recent album is "Biological Didn't Bother." O'Neal dismisses Toney as the man who "left me out in the cold, when a few months old."

The rap is dedicated to Philip Harrison, who met O'Neal's mother, Lucille, when the two were city workers in Newark, N.J. They married when O'Neal was two.

"He took me from a boy to a man," the Orlando Magic star raps. "Phil is my father, 'cause my biological didn't bother."

### Bono bones up on Capitol Hill

PALM SPRINGS, Calif. (AP) — Sonny Bono's head is spinning after a Capitol Hill orientation.

The newly elected congressman and his fellow Republican freshmen are in Washington for nearly three weeks of classes and retreats.

"I cannot believe how hectic this is," the former singer and

Palm Springs mayor said. "They even lecture at us during breakfast. It never ends."

Bono, who takes the oath of office Jan. 4, is getting an earful on the GOP's Contract With America.

The nearly three weeks of orientation began Nov. 29 with a group photo on the Capitol steps. The group got a lecture on House protocol and ethics rules concerning gifts, hiring practices and favors.

"There are a lot of rules," Bono said. "But I learned to separate my personal life from my professional and political life, and to make those distinctions clear, when I was a mayor."

### Alcohol, not sex, addicted Douglas

NEW YORK (AP) — Michael Douglas wants to clarify his former addiction. It was to alcohol — not sex.

The actor said false reports of a sex addiction grew out of his roles in "Basic Instinct" and "Fatal Attraction."

"These characters were sexually driven. The media got this great handle from the film and rode with it. I can't believe people are so titillated by this," Douglas said in the January issue of Vanity Fair magazine.

Douglas said he entered Arizona's Sierra Tucson clinic to deal with the effects of a "cumulative lifestyle" that included excessive drinking.

He was vague on the details. "I went into rehab to save my marriage, but I wound up saving myself," he said.

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