

Pearl Jam
"Live: On Two Legs"
 Epic Records
 Grade: B+

Before a version of "Daughter" on Pearl Jam's first official live album, "Live: On Two Legs," vocalist Eddie Vedder explains, "We're making up for lost time here." There probably isn't a better way to sum up 1998 for Pearl Jam.

Unfortunately for its fans, the act rarely toured, leaving only the relatively weak follow-up albums "Vitalogy" and "No Code" to experience.

However, this year, Pearl Jam released its best album since "Vs." with the new studio album "Yield." The band also conducted a thorough tour of the United States, released a music video for "Do the Evolution" and also released a home video titled "Single Video Theory."

To cap off such a turnaround, Pearl Jam is releasing "Live: On Two Legs,"

New Releases

which captures some of the best moments from the band's summer tour. The album also serves as a glance into some of the band's greatest hits, including such tracks as "Better Man," "Even Flow," "Given to Fly" and the rather uplifting "Black."

Die-hard fans will flock to hear the sound quality of the album, with its stereo acoustics and subdued crowd noise. However, casual fans will note that "No Code's" three best songs, "Hail, Hail," "Red Mosquito" and "Off He Goes" are here, so owning that album is now not even necessary.

To give committed fans with time on their hands something to do, the band is leaving it up to its following to figure out which shows the songs are from, rather than just including the information in the liner notes.

That won't be an easy task, though. Other than "Daughter," which changes from show to show, Vedder's vocals on most songs are almost wait-for-wait identical to the album versions.

Instead, much of the improvisation and the most captivated parts of the record are courtesy of guitarists Mike McCready and Stone Gossard, who work wonders on "Corduroy," "Black," "Even Flow," and a cover of the Neil Young song, "F**kin' Up."

The result of mixing the guitarists' musicianship and Vedder's throaty voice bring forth a very rounded sound that works well throughout, from the lively anthems to the slow ballads.

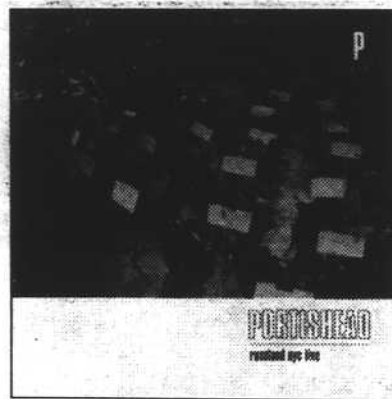
—Patrick Miner

Portishead
"PNYC"
 GoBeat!
 Grade: B+

As a rite of passage, the live album is pretty standard fare for the traditional rock 'n' roll band.

After three albums — maybe four — most bands feel obligated either by their record label or their overinflated egos to release a "chronicle" of their "legendary" live shows.

Portishead is no such band. After two starkly beautiful albums



and a virtually nonexistent live reputation, this straight-outta-Bristol group has dropped "PNYC" on an unsuspecting record-buying public.

Its studio albums sound like the aural equivalents of film noir, filled with reverb guitars, spooky echoes and the frail, passionate voice of vocalist Beth Gibbons. Programmer Geoff Barrow stands in the background, creating the mixed rhythm and mood for these songs.

And, along with Massive Attack, Portishead is considered one of the foremost practitioners of that ill-labeled sub-genre of sub-genres — trip-hop. Methodical, airy and electronic are the adjectives that spring to mind.

So, as one might expect, studio work would outweigh live performance

in Portishead's repertoire.

Well, bite your tongue.

An atypical band with an atypical sound, Portishead has released a live album recorded under atypical circumstances.

"PNYC" documents the first performance of last year's world tour, a one-night-only performance at the Roseland Ballroom in New York.

Amid a crowd of close friends, family and selected fans, Portishead performed songs from both of its albums with the assistance of orchestral arrangements. The result is a beautiful recording of songs that have never sounded the same.

The addition of traditional instruments fleshes out songs such as "Cowboys," "Mysterons," "Only You" and "Glory Box" in amazing ways.

By the time the set ends with "Strangers," it's obvious that throwing Portishead into the pile of anti-musicians who often work in the electronic music community is a great injustice.

In this setting, Barrow and Gibbons' songs sound more like the modernist experimentalism of Phillip Glass and the Kronos Quartet than the beeps, whistles and bass of their genre peers.

And, on top of it all, they've never sounded better.

—Jeff Randall

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McCLAIN from page 9

One wore overalls every day — with no shoes.

McClain laughed about his lack of shoes and his careful, backwoods demeanor. She loved it. The unrepentant hippie still remembers the hip-hugger jeans and leather fringe she wore to school in seventh grade.

"Well, nobody did that — not in seventh grade," she said. "The only kids that dressed that way were the 10 really bad kids in 10th grade. Within a couple weeks, I was in the school office. The principle asked me if I was on drugs or selling drugs."

She wasn't. At that time, she had owned her guitar for a year, and she played with the dream of being Suzanne in the like-titled Judy Collins tune or any other woman who sang on record, stage or in film.

"The movie 'Mary Poppins,' I wanted to be Julie Andrews," McClain recalled with a soft smile.

In her teens, she was a loud and nervous kid who lived through the music of Neil Young, Simon and Garfunkel and two brilliant singer/songwriters who became mainstays of her inspiration: Bob Dylan and Joni Mitchell.

In accordance with the tormented musician legend, McClain dropped out of high school at age 16, immediately got her G.E.D. and went to work. She also played at open-mic nights in downtown Lincoln. Later, she got gigs at what was the Town and Country Hotel's Freedom Lounge on Cornhusker Highway. She waited tables at Tico's on 16th Street.

Before she was old enough to get in, she sneaked into the Zoo Bar to listen to the music. She and her third husband, a local guitarist, would later play there often.

At 21, she entered the first of three failed marriages, interlaced with failed careers and personal tragedy.

At 38, Nashville was a beacon offering a fresh start.

"I thought, life is short. What do you really want to do with your life? And I wanted to move there."

So McClain left what she deemed "26 years of failure" in Lincoln, and she left for Nashville. A friend chucked McClain's belongings in a truck and followed behind her; she carried the precious cargo: her daughters.

"It's given me a chance to be myself," McClain said. "I felt haunted by a lot of memories here (in Lincoln). I don't think you really have to leave

places to get your life open. But it's just really artistically satisfying to do this."

Regardless of why she left and what she survived in Lincoln, McClain chose to return to Lincoln for her CD-release because she still considers it her home.

Sunday night, she flipped through the square, glossy pages of her CD booklet, and she pointed out an old picture taken in Lincoln of her grandmother, then a child sitting in a cart drawn through the snow by a long-haired goat.

Before the concert Sunday, McClain will take time to greet her audience and thank those who supported her in Lincoln, including her parents and family members who still live here.

Then all of her music, even the sad songs, will give the audience hope — the same intense hope she felt the night she clung to her daughter while her car flipped into the dark Tennessee countryside.

"A lot of songs you hear are kind of hopeless. I didn't want to express being a victim or jaded unless there's some hope there. All my songs, I think, have hope.

"People need hope right now." Tonight's all-ages show begins at 8. After 9 p.m., minors must be accompanied by parents or a legal guardian. All ages at McClain's concert are welcome free of charge.

For a copy of the CD, send \$16.50 to Kindred Voices Music, P.O. Box 23963, Nashville, Tenn., 37202-3963.

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