

# Ten to the Avocado:

## A statistical measure of the best Pearl Jam albums and a comparison of favorite songs across the fanbase

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### Introduction, or a brief word on the Method to the Madness

In the past 17 years, Pearl Jam have released eight studio albums, performed over 150 original songs (and just as many covers) at 853 shows (at last count)<sup>1</sup>. In order to ascertain which original Pearl Jam song is the best ever, the creators of the online Red Mosquito Forum devised an ingenious method, inspired by the NCAA basketball tournament, of pitting 128 individual songs against one another within a series of brackets, and having fans vote for their favorite songs within each matchup.

Pearl Jam March Madness premiered on the Red Mosquito message board in 2004, and after two successful years, the tournament was moved to the online fansite TheSkyIScrape.com in an effort to “refine the display and voting processes<sup>2</sup>.” On March 30<sup>th</sup>, *Corduroy* triumphed as the 2007 champion, defeating *Porch* 281 votes to 238, and ensuring that tournament produced a different winner in each of its four years of existence. It seems, just as the tournament organizers predicted, there simply cannot be a single best Pearl Jam song.

Though finding consensus on a strict numerical table of the best to worst Pearl Jam songs amongst the full complement of casual and diehard Pearl Jam fans is impossible, the results of four years of Pearl Jam March Madness has shown fans to be remarkably consistent in their opinions regarding the general groupings of the best songs, and those they are not as fond of. The seedings for each of the 128 songs in the tournament are assigned each year by the organizers who base their decisions on each song’s performance the year before. They create 8 brackets of 16 teams, each with a seeding of 1 to 16. In this year’s tournament, of 120 total matchups, there were only ten upsets that did not involve a song from *Pearl Jam*, and in not a single one of those was the difference between seeds greater than 3. Because *Pearl Jam* was only released after the 2006 tournament had finished, very few of the songs had competed and thus, when it came to ranking the songs, the organizers held a preliminary qualifying round, with the caveat that no song that competed in the preliminary rounds could be seeded higher than 9<sup>th</sup> in the main draw.

Of course, several songs from *Pearl Jam* have clearly established themselves as fan favorites, as evidenced by the fact that there were nine upsets involving songs from *Pearl Jam*. Three of those songs, *Life Wasted*, *Severed Hand*, and *Inside Job*, each won two games against higher seeds to make the semi-finals of their individual brackets. Excluding upsets involving *Pearl Jam* songs, the higher seed won nearly 92% of matchups, indicating that fans opinions of songs from the seven previous albums, and their relative merits when compared with all other songs, remains constant. (This

consistency far outstrips the rate of wins amongst higher seeds in the actual NCAA tournament, which even in 2007, considered a year dominated by a lack of upsets, was only 83%.) This evidence suggests that though hard core Pearl Jam fans cannot agree on which single song is the best, they do agree which songs are members of at least eight separate categories of quality from best to least favorite. The fact that the organizers of the tournament have been able to seed songs so accurately allows for an analysis of not only the best Pearl Jam album, but also, when combined with appearance statistics from concert setlists, an analysis of the similarity and differences amongst individual song preferences on the part of the band, the hard core fans, and the casual fans.

The most highly rated album can be determined by contrasting the collections of assigned seedings for each song on an album, in much the same way that the win-loss records of individual teams in the NCAA tournament lends itself to an analysis of the best basketball conferences. By adding together the seed values for each song within an album, and then dividing the total by the number of seeded songs on that album, a single value is generated that represents the average seed for each album.

Starting with *Vitalogy*, Pearl Jam began experimenting with different album structures, including the use of tracks that were not traditional songs so much as they were fillers or linking motifs. None of the ‘fillers’ (including *Bugs*, which may or may not be a traditional song) on any of the albums were ranked high enough to make the 128 song tournament, and because of their dubious ‘song’ status, I have eliminated them from the analysis so their lack of participation does not harm the album’s overall score.

This average seed value cannot, of course, be less than 1 nor greater than 16, and it is important to note that because this contest is only between Pearl Jam songs, the scores represent the values of the albums relative to all of Pearl Jam’s albums. The lower ranked albums therefore do not represent bad albums per say (and if you are reading this you most likely feel that there is no such thing as a bad Pearl Jam album), just albums that are not held in as high an esteem as other releases.

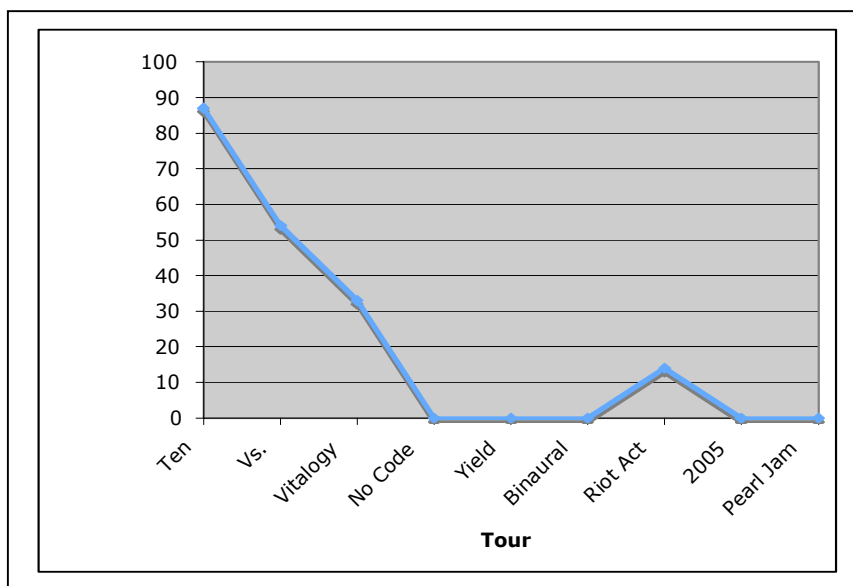
The number of fans who voted for each matchup over the course of the tournament varied daily between 400 and 700. These figures suggest that though a lot of people consider themselves Pearl Jam fans, and will happily buy a ticket to see them when Pearl Jam makes a local appearance, and though there are more than 10,000 fan club members who follow the band closely enough to pay annual (though nominal) dues to Ten Club, there are around 500 hard core fans for whom Pearl Jam is not so much a band as a, well, something of an obsession. The winners of each matchup over the past three years, and the subsequent seeding data derived from the March Madness tournament is therefore generated by the 500 or so hard core fans whose opinions about relative song merit surely differ from those of the casual fan who probably stopped buying Pearl Jam albums after *Vitalogy*.

The band’s own preferences are a bit more difficult to discern. Pearl Jam has said that they generate setlists for each night’s show the day of the performance, and though a quick glance at the setlist archive<sup>3</sup> reveals that there are a few patterns of song choice and

song order for each night (*Yellow Ledbetter* closed the final encore 50 out of 81 times in 2006, for example<sup>2</sup>), the band appears to pride itself on its lack of predictability.

Of course, Pearl Jam, like all bands, is at least partially bounded by the perceived tastes of the fans at each show, most of whom have never heard of Pearl Jam March Madness, and thus, probably despite themselves, Pearl Jam are obliged to play songs they may have tired of long ago. Even if every song was held in the same esteem by both the bands and the fans, each new album's worth of material would reduce the likelihood that older songs would appear on any given night's setlist, not only because there were more songs to choose from, but also because the band tends to focus on new material when touring in support of the most recently released album.

If every song was equally appreciated by the fans and the band, all songs would appear on numerous setlists during the tour of their first appearance, before then dropping off with each successive tour. This pattern is typically referred to as an exponential decay curve. Because the creators of March Madness have also uploaded the Pearl Jam Setlist Archive into a searchable online database, the actual trend of every song can be drawn by plotting the frequency of the song's appearance across consecutive tours. The song *Deep* is a good example of a standard exponential decay curve as demonstrated by the chart below.



In 1992, Pearl Jam played 78 shows in support of *Ten*, and did not have nearly as many original songs to choose from as they did in 2006. *Deep* appeared on 87% of setlists that year, and each year afterward, facing competition from newly penned songs, its number of appearances dropped. The song dropped off all the setlists for the *No Code* tour, and has only made a brief appearance since during the *Riot Act* tour. Most songs in the Pearl Jam catalogue follow this same pattern. Songs that violate this pattern, by remaining either a constant fixture in setlists across tours, or by increasing their

frequency are worth noting, and because several songs show a different trend, I will refer to any song's individual plot as an Erosion Profile (EP).

Higher seeded songs are expected to be played more frequently, and thus demonstrate an atypical EP. When this expectations is not borne out, as in the case of *Deep* for example, which hard core fans place within the top quarter of all Pearl Jam songs, even though it has not featured on a setlist for two consecutive tours, it seems to suggest a disconnect between the opinions of the hard core fans and the opinions of either the more casual fans, the band, or both. Contrasting song seedings from the March Madness tournament with the EPs can therefore reveal the similarities and discrepancies between the hard core fan, the casual fan, and the band's own tastes for the 150 or so original selections currently available in the Pearl Jam catalogue.

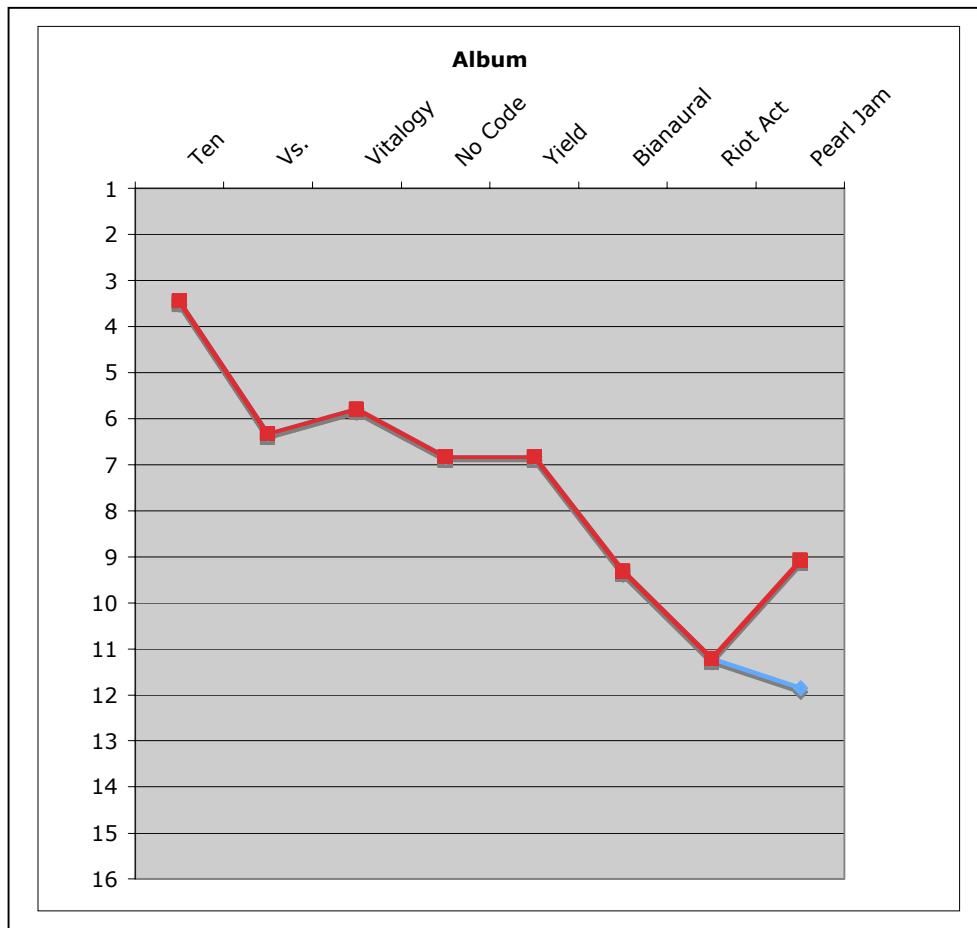
### **The Results, or how Pearl Jam and p-values go together**

The chart below lists the albums in chronological order of their release data, and their overall score as an average of the individual seedings. It is worth asking whether or not the differences between average seeding values are meaningful. In other words, does the 5.8 value generated for *Vitalogy* signify a real difference in quality when compared with the 6.3 value for *Vs.*? A simple way of answering this question is by running what is called a t-test, which compares the seedings for all the songs on each of two albums and asks if the different averages are statistically significant by generating a p-value. Traditionally, p values of less than 0.05 are interpreted to mean the two compared entities are significantly different.

The results of the unpaired t-tests revealed significant p-values for comparisons between *Ten* and all other albums, and between *Riot Act* and all other albums, though *Binaural's* score versus *No Code* was only just short of being significantly different at the  $p=0.05$  threshold. Though the individual albums are listed below in ranked order based upon average rank, they should therefore only be thought of as falling into three distinct categories: Best (*Ten*), Middle (*Vs.*, *Vitalogy*, *No Code*, *Yield*), and Least Favorite (*Binaural*, and *Riot Act*).

Plotting the raw seeding values for *Pearl Jam* places it in last place, though as discussed above, the methodology for assigning seeds this year ensured that *Pearl Jam* could not be ranked higher given its recent release. To correct for this bias, I took into account the actual performance of songs from *Pearl Jam* in the 2007 tournament and replaced each song's seeding with the seed of the highest ranked seed each song beat. Running the analysis again with these figures improved the album's score from 11.8 to 9.1, a move that demonstrated the hard core fan's approval of *Pearl Jam* and a signal that the band has reversed the general trend of decreasing enthusiasm for the more recent releases. The blue line leading to *Pearl Jam* thus represents the raw, though biased, average score the album received before the tournament started, and the red line represents the reappraisal of that score, and a more realistic impression of its impact in the hard core fan's mind. I suspect that *Pearl Jam* will eventually cluster with the Middle

category when next year's rankings are revealed, though for now there is not enough data to place it definitively into any one category.



Perhaps not surprisingly, the general trend is that more recent Pearl Jam albums are not as well received as their earlier work. Given the t-test results presented above, a more appropriate way to interpret the graph would be a recognition that *Ten* was a remarkable debut, ranked amongst the best rock albums of all time, and that subsequent albums have maintained a high degree of consistency. *Riot Act* is the only definitive exception to the quality standard set by the rest of the albums (though arguably *Binaural* also represented a slip), and the most recent disc is set to reassert Pearl Jam's ability to construct an entire album's worth of quality material.

### **A discussion of the best albums, or why No Code is better than you think**

#### **1<sup>st</sup> Place**

***Ten* (August 27, 1991)**

**Average Seed: 3.4**

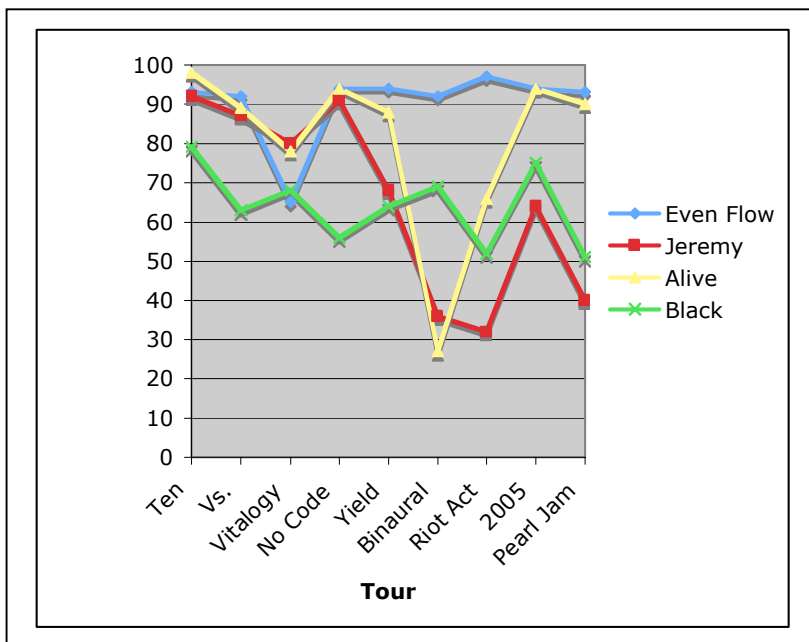
This is certainly the least surprising result of the analysis. There was a time in the

early 90s when it seemed every high school kid's wall had a picture of Eddie and every dorm room shelf had a copy of *Ten*. The album stayed on the billboard charts for over two years, has sold over 9.5 million copies<sup>5</sup>, and has been featured on numerous best album lists including, most recently, the 11th position on the Definitive 200 albums<sup>4</sup>. In short, *Ten* is universally perceived, by critics, hard core fans, and even non-music fans, to be a truly transcendent album. This is reflected in the analysis which shows that, of the eight number 1 seeds in the 2007 tournament, five of them come from *Ten*.

<b>Album</b>	<b>Songs</b>	<b>2007 Seeding</b>
<i>Ten</i>	1) Once	5
	2) Even Flow	1
	3) Alive	1
	4) Why Go	5
	5) Black – 2006 Winner	1
	6) Jeremy	7
	7) Oceans	6
	8) Porch	1
	9) Garden	6
	10) Deep	4
	11) Release	1
<b>Average</b>		<b>3.4</b>

Curiously, the lowest seeded song on *Ten* is *Jeremy*, possibly the 2<sup>nd</sup> most well-known Pearl Jam song among casual Pearl Jam fans after *Alive*. I suspect that whereas some oft-repeated songs such as *Even Flow*, *Alive* and *Black*, the top three most performed songs at Pearl Jam shows (played 598, 521, and 409 times respectively<sup>3</sup>) have proved remarkably resistant to the erosive effects of overexposure, *Jeremy* (played 406 times to date<sup>3</sup>), at least amongst the hard core Pearl Jam fans who participate in Pearl Jam March Madness, has been more prone to suffer from heavy rotation fatigue.

Every concert must of course have a complement of big hits for the casual fans, of which *Jeremy* is certainly one. The chart below of setlist frequencies for all of these songs reveals that though all four of these songs have atypical EPs, reflecting their long-term popularity, *Jeremy* has been dropping faster recently. Given this, and the fact that Pearl Jam played a mostly unrecognizable version of the song at a series of dates as early as 1995, I am not completely surprised by the relatively low seeding *Jeremy* has earned. In the 2007 tournament, though *Jeremy* initially beat  $\frac{1}{2}$  *Full* (a travesty in my mind) it was beaten by *Indifference* in the 2<sup>nd</sup> round, demonstrating that the song is only thought of a middle range song by both hard core fans and possibly the band as well, despite the fact that it appears significantly more frequently than many higher seeded songs.



A final interesting point to note is that though *Ten* is by far the best album according to this analysis and other measures, it has only generated a single winner of the March Madness tournament: *Black* in 2006.

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Place

***Vitalogy* (December 6, 1994 – on CD)**

**Average Seed: 5.8**

The 2<sup>nd</sup> best album is not Pearl Jam's 2<sup>nd</sup> release, but their 3<sup>rd</sup>. Though it only features a single number 1 seed, *Vitalogy* has the unique distinction of being the only album to have produced two winners: *Corduroy* this year, and *Immortality* in 2004. The release of *Vitalogy*, following on from their first two stellar discs, convinced fans and critics, many of whom feared that the band would suffer from a sophomore, or, after *Vs.*, a junior, slump, that the band had the legs, talent, and maturity to weather the hype and caustic effects of multi-platinum success. Every commercially successful album, however, must have at least one hit single, and perhaps ironically, given its conception in Eddie's *Bad Radio* days, the breakout single and casual fan favorite remains *Betterman*. Although it was released on Pearl Jam's 3<sup>rd</sup> album, *Betterman* has been played live 343 times, placing it in 8<sup>th</sup> position just after *Corduroy*<sup>3</sup>. Despite, or again, perhaps because of its ubiquity, the more hard core fans who participate in March Madness feel that *Betterman*, while decent, rests only about halfway down the pantheon of greatest Pearl Jam songs, and most interestingly, it actually lowers the average score of the entire album. Explaining that fact to a casual fan would prove a difficult task.

<b>Album</b>	<b>Songs</b>	<b>2007 Seeding</b>
<i>Vitalogy</i>	1) Last Exit	6
	2) Spin The Black Circle	9
	3) Not For You	4
	4) Tremor Christ	8
	5) Nothingman	3
	6) Whipping	9
	7) Pry, To	Not seeded
	8) Corduroy – 2007 Winner	1
	9) Bugs	Not seeded
	10) Satan's Bed	8
	11) Betterman	7
	12) Aye Davanita	Not seeded
	13) Immortality – 2004 Winner	3
	14) Stupid Mop	Not seeded
<b>Average</b>		<b>5.8</b>

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Place

*Vs.* (October 19, 1993)

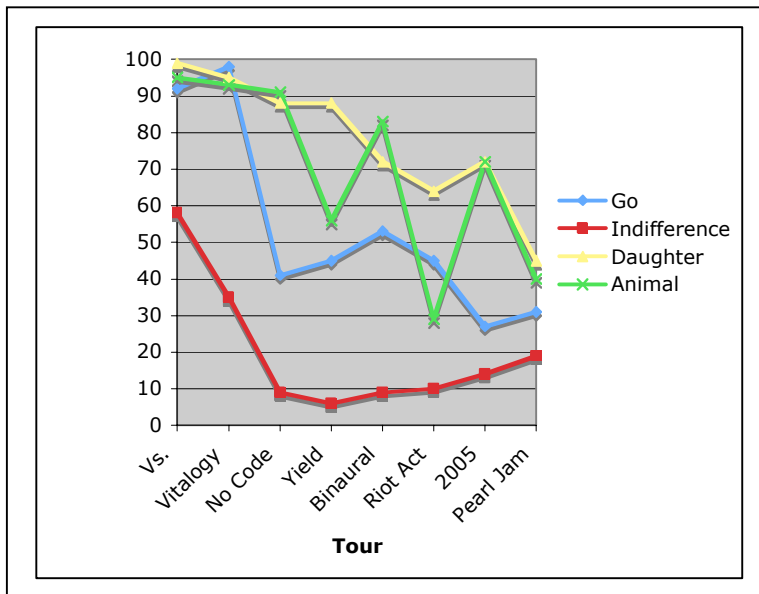
Average Seed: 6.3

Whereas *Ten* climbed the charts in a classic, word of mouth, slowburn fashion, *Vs.* screamed off the shelves and sold 950,000 copies in its first week to establish, what was at the time, a record for copies sold in one week<sup>6</sup>.

*Vs.* is remarkable in its diversity. Between *Blood* and *Indifference*, Pearl Jam crafted what remain their hardest rocking and most subdued songs, both on the same album. Though *Comatose* (from *Pearl Jam*) mimics some of *Blood*'s intensity, nothing rips the air like a live performance of a bombastic, guttural *Blood*, and though Pearl Jam have crafted numerous additional ballads, they have yet to release a song that matches the sparseness of *Indifference*.

Despite the overall strength of this album, Pearl Jam have allowed some of the songs such as *Indifference* and *Leash* to decrease significantly over successive tours. Though *Indifference* is a 2 seed, and though it has increased slightly over the last few tours, the song has been played far less frequently than *Go* (a 5 seed), *Daughter* (also a 5 seed), and *Animal* (a 2 seed, see the chart below). *Indifference*'s high seeding clearly indicates that hard core fans would prefer it performed more regularly. Fans can sometimes influence the band's choices on setlists, as demonstrated by recent mass calls for *Leash* which prompted the Pearl Jam to start playing it again after an 11 year absence<sup>2</sup>.





Lastly, *Rearviewmirror*, the only number 1 ranked song on the album, deserves its reputation as it is one of the few original Pearl Jam songs on which the band consistently jams. The concert additions of staccato lights and an extended, hyperactive climax have made it the band's favorite main set closer over the past several years<sup>2</sup>.

Album	Songs	2007 Seeding
Vs.	1) Go	5
	2) Animal	2
	3) Daughter	5
	4) Glorified G	11
	5) Dissident	7
	6) W.M.A.	7
	7) Blood	9
	8) Rearviewmirror	1
	9) Rats	10
	10) Elderly Woman	8
	11) Leash	9
	12) Indifference	2
<b>Average</b>		<b>6.3</b>

#### 4<sup>th</sup> Place - Tie

*No Code* (August 27, 1996)

Average Seed: 6.8

*Yield* (February 3, 1998)

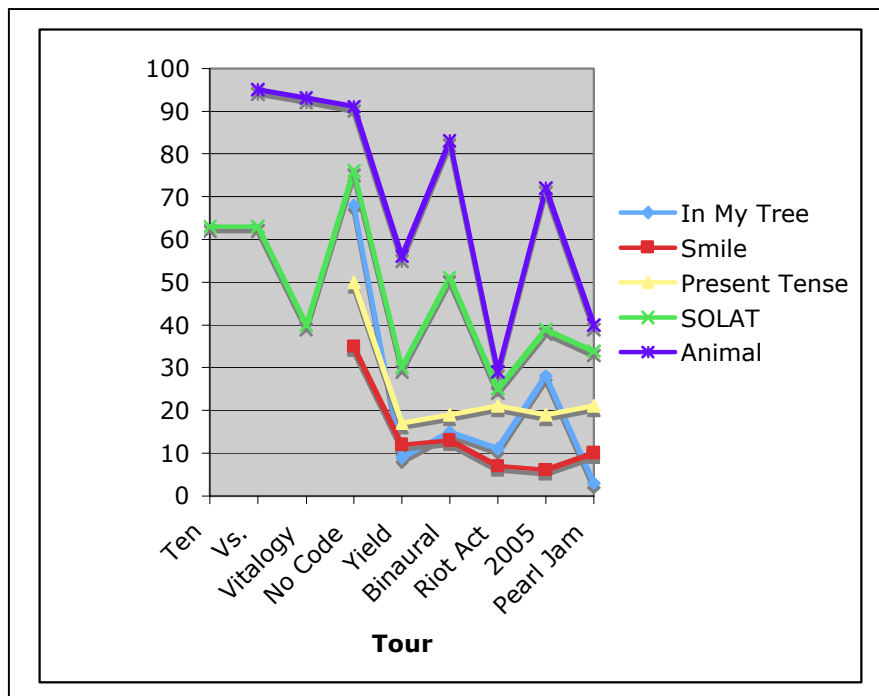
Average Seed: 6.8

The 4<sup>th</sup> place tie between Pearl Jam's 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> releases is appropriate given the two albums other shared qualities. Both have 13 total songs, and both possess one song

each which is not a ‘song’ in the traditional sense (*I’m Open* and *The Red Color*, also known as *Red Spot*).

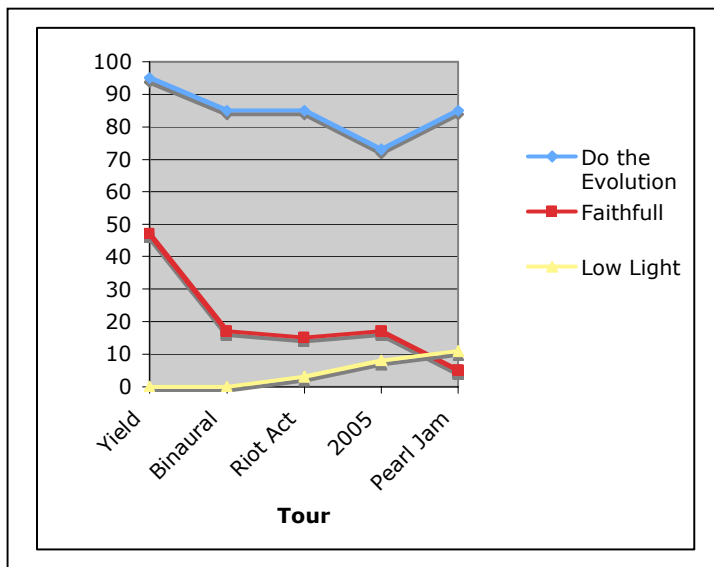
*No Code* represented a significant departure for the band on numerous levels. Firstly, no previous album had opened with a ballad. Fans accustomed to the frenetic opening tracks *Once*, *Go*, and *Last Exit* were treated to low key, whispering vocals and a complete absence of distortion pedals. The album’s lack of, what a friend of mine called ‘Eddie going off’, and any obvious radio hits made a lot of casual fans head into the waiting arms of Matchbox 20. There is no *Betterman* on *No Code*. Others who stuck with the album and ignored the dearth of stadium friendly accessibility, however, were rewarded by the numerous tracks on *No Code* which, though slow to get to know, eventually settled easily into the pantheon of greatest Pearl Jam songs.

I highly doubt that even the most insatiable Pearl Jam fan would have guessed upon a first listen to *No Code* that *In My Tree*, *Smile*, and *Present Tense* would all eventually rank inside the top 16 of all Pearl Jam songs. Despite their number 2 seedings, the three songs possess fairly standard EPs, much to the frustration of hard core fans, and in sharp contrast to two other number 2 seeds (*Animal* and *State of Love and Trust*) whose EPs more truly reflect their seeding positions and whose frequency has outstripped the *No Code* songs on every tour, including the *No Code* tour. This evidence suggests that at least the hard core fans would prefer the three number 2 seeds from *No Code* were played much more regularly.



Album	Songs	2007 Seeding
<i>No Code</i>	1) Sometimes	8
	2) Hail Hail	3
	3) Who You Are	10
	4) In My Tree	2
	5) Smile	2
	6) Off He Goes	3
	7) Habit	7
	8) Red Mosquito	4
	9) Lukin	13
	10) Present Tense	2
	11) Mankind	16
	12) I'm Open	Not seeded
	13) Around The Bend	12
<b>Average</b>		<b>6.8</b>

In contrast to *No Code*, *Yield* does have at least one anthemic, hook-laden stadium filler in *Given to Fly*, a number 2 seed. The real success of the album, however, is *Yield's* only number 1 seed, *Do the Evolution*. From Eddie's wolf howl at the beginning, to the assertive, even furious guitar riff, to the evocative, fuming lyrics, this song represents the best of what Pearl Jam are capable of. It has also clearly one of the band's favorites, as evidenced by the song's atypical EP. In fact, it was the performance of this song at Madison Square Garden in 2003 that actually shook the Garden and prompted the staff at the venue to inform Eddie that only three previous bands, Grateful Dead, Iron Maiden, and Bruce Springsteen, had ever made the stage physically move<sup>7</sup>.



*Faithfull* and *Low Light* (the two number 4 seeds), like *In My Tree* and *Present Tense*, were probably not noticed or remarked upon by fans during their first listens to the full album. Both songs are currently ranked in the top quarter of all Pearl Jam songs, however, though they are rarely played live. Perhaps the band has experienced a similar

trajectory of appreciation for these songs as well. In the case of *Low Light*, the band did not play the song once when they toured in support of *Yield* in 1998. It took them three years to play the first live version, and since 2003, the song has actually increased in frequency every year reaching 11% on the *Pearl Jam* tour<sup>2</sup>.

<b>Album</b>	<b>Songs</b>	<b>2007 Seeding</b>
<i>Yield</i>	1) Brain Of J	6
	2) Faithfull	4
	3) No Way	9
	4) Given To Fly	2
	5) Wish List	10
	6) Pilate	14
	7) Do The Evolution	1
	8) The Red Color	Not seeded
	9) MFC	8
	10) Low Light	4
	11) In Hiding	3
	12) Push Me Pull Me	16
	13) All Those Yesterdays	5
<b>Average</b>		<b>6.8</b>

#### **6<sup>th</sup> Place**

*Binaural* (May 16, 2000)

Average Seed: 9.3

#### **7<sup>th</sup> Place**

*Riot Act* (November 12, 2002)

Average Seed: 11.2

#### **8<sup>th</sup> Place**

*Pearl Jam* (May 2, 2006)

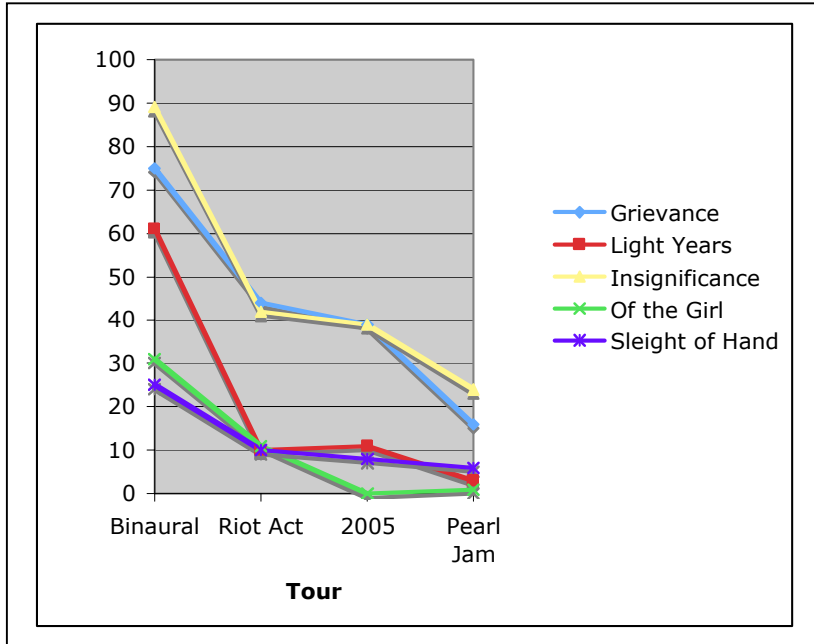
Average Seed: 11.8

Average revised Seed: 9.1

It is possible that the relatively low overall seedings given to songs from *Binaural* and *Riot Act* reflect only the fact that not enough time has yet passed for these albums to be full appreciated. Of the 13 songs on *Binaural*, for example, only five rank in the top half of all Pearl Jam songs, and of those, only *Grievance* ranks in the top quarter. The statistics for *Riot Act* are worse. Of 14 songs, only four rank in the top half and none are in the top quarter. *Save You* is the highest ranked song on the album with a 5 seed. I suspect that songs like *½ Full* and *You Are* (the latter of which increased in frequency from 2005 to 2006<sup>2</sup>) might begin accruing value over the next few years, but I'm disinclined to believe that the reason for these two albums low scores has to do with time alone. The performance of songs from *Pearl Jam* in the 2007 tournament speaks to the

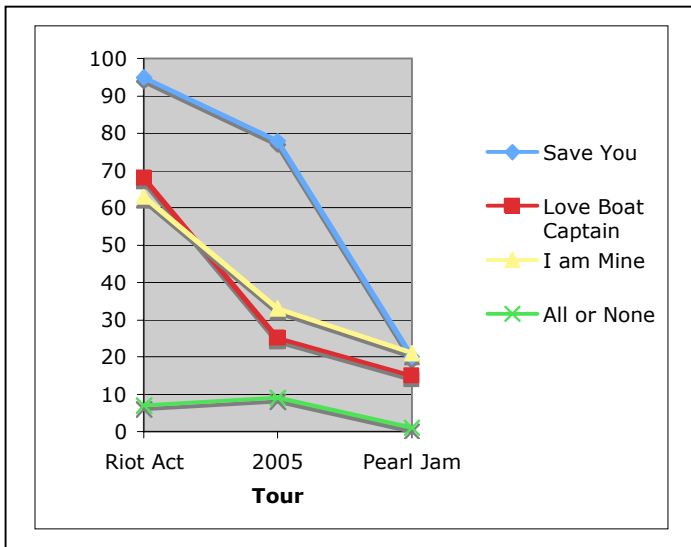
ability of newer songs to ingratiate themselves in the minds of hard core fans and overcome more established higher seeds.

The failure of songs on these albums to capture either the fans' or the band's imagination is evident by looking at the EPs of the top ranked songs from Binaural. The setlist frequencies of *Grievance*, *Light Years*, *Insignificance*, *Of the Girl*, and *Sleight of Hand* have all degraded significantly since the *Binaural* tour, and the fact that even the highest seeded songs have not resisted the general EP to become staples on subsequent tours speaks to the relative mediocrity of the album.



Album	Songs	2007 Seeding
<i>Binaural</i>	1) Breakerfall	10
	2) God's Dice	13
	3) Evacuation	16
	4) Light Years	5
	5) Nothing As It Seems	9
	6) Thin Air	11
	7) Insignificance	6
	8) Of The Girl	6
	9) Grievance	4
	10) Rival	12
	11) Sleight Of Hand	6
	12) Soon Forget	14
	13) Parting Ways	9
<b>Average</b>		<b>9.3</b>

The same pattern is also evident for the highest rated songs from *Riot Act*. EPs for *Save You*, *Love Boat Captain*, *I am Mine*, and *All or None*, all show the typical pattern of high initial frequency, followed by a rapid drop off, and in the case of these songs the drop off appears even more drastic than previous albums. Lastly, as discussed above, it is difficult to know what the relative patterns for songs from *Pearl Jam* will be, but if their performances in the 2007 tournament are any indication, it appears at least a few of the songs from *Pearl Jam* will resist the general trend, and, like *Do the Evolution*, they will become high frequency additions to future setlists.



Album	Songs	2007 Seeding
<i>Riot Act</i>	1) Can't Keep	11
	2) Save You	5
	3) Love Boat Captain	7
	4) Cropduster	13
	5) Ghost	15
	6) I Am Mine	8
	7) Thumbing My Way	11
	8) You Are	12
	9) Get Right	16
	10) Green Disease	11
	11) Help Help	16
	12) Bu\$hleaguer	14
	13) 1/2 Full	10
	14) Arc	Not seeded
	15) All or None	8
<b>Average</b>		<b>11.2</b>

<b>Album</b>	<b>Songs</b>	<b>2007 Seeding</b>	<b>Revised Seeding</b>
<i>Pearl Jam</i>	1) Life Wasted	12	4
	2) World Wide Suicide	11	6
	3) Comatose	11	11
	4) Severed Hand	12	4
	5) Marker In The Sand	12	5
	6) Parachutes	10	10
	7) Unemployable	10	10
	8) Big Wave	13	13
	9) Gone	13	13
	10) Wasted Reprise	16	16
	11) Army Reserve	10	10
	12) Come Back	12	12
	13) Inside Job	12	4
<b>Average</b>		<b>11.8</b>	<b>9.1</b>

### **The best non-album tracks, or how do Lost Dogs and movie tunes rank**

The best Pearl Jam song in 2005 March Madness tournament was *I Got Shit*, a song released as an EP alongside *Long Road* that emerged from the collaborative *Mirrorball* sessions between Pearl Jam and Neil Young. It is significant when the hard core fans of a band choose, as their favorite song, a track that was never released as part of a full album. In total, of the 128 seeded teams, 32 non-album tracks were seeded for the 2007 tournament, many of which are ranked in the top 25% of all Pearl Jam songs, and I suspect that if Pearl Jam ever polished and recorded a number of the improves they have performed over the years, the number would be even higher. Those in the top quarter of all Pearl Jam songs are: *Sad*, *Yellow Ledbetter*, *Hard to Imagine*, *I Got Shit*, *Long Road*, *State of Love and Trust*, and *Breath*. Curiously, three of those songs were originally released on movie soundtracks. The fourth original song Pearl Jam wrote for a film, *Man of the Hour*, received a 7 seed and thus, if you are writing a film and you ask Pearl Jam to participate, you can bet the song they produce will rank as one of the best of all time amongst their most dedicated fans.

Many of these non-album songs were written during sessions for various albums, but for one reason or another, did not make the final cut. The fact that so many of these songs received low seeds indicates that the band probably made the right call. In some cases, however, I wonder if the band now feels they might have made a few mistakes. In the liner notes from *Lost Dogs*, Eddie explained away one song by saying that the song was dropped from consideration simply because “one of these things is not like the other.” That seems like a rational argument, though in the cases of *Fatal*, *Down*, *Sad*, and *Footsteps*, for example, I would like to know if the band still feels as if they made the right decision.

Few other bands can match Pearl Jam for the sheer consistency in the quality of their art, and no other band has been as generous to their fans (I still cannot believe that the band makes every live show available to download for less than 10 dollars). As a result of their generosity and song-writing consistency, I suspect no other band has

inspired so many people to create such things as online tournaments to decide the best ever song, or to write 5,000 word articles exploring the results of those tournaments. I would like to thank all the people whose efforts made this study possible. I hope to meet some of you on the 2007 tour, and I look forward to the 2008 Pearl Jam March Madness tournament.

<b>Album</b>	<b>Songs</b>	<b>2007 Seeding</b>
<i>Lost Dogs</i>	1) All Night	15
	2) Sad	4
	3) Down	7
	4) Hitchhiker	Not ranked
	5) Don' t Gimme No Lip	16
	6) Alone	9
	7) In The Moonlight	16
	8) Education	14
	9) Black Red Yellow	14
	10) U	15
	11) Leavin' Here	Cover
	12) Gremmie Out Of Control	Not ranked
	13) Whale Song	
	14) Undone	11
	15) Hold On	13
	16) Yellow Ledbetter	3
	1) Fatal	8
	2) Other Side	14
	3) Hard To Imagine	3
	4) Footsteps	5
	5) Wash	6
	6) Dead Man	13
	7) Strangest Tribe	15
	8) Drifting	13
	9) Let Me Sleep	15
	10) Last Kiss	Not ranked
	11) Sweet Lew	Not ranked
	12) Dirty Frank	14
	13) Brother	15
	14) Bee Girl	Not ranked
15) 04/20/2002	Not ranked	
<b>Average</b>		<b>11.2</b>



<b>Album</b>	<b>Songs</b>	<b>2007 Seeding</b>
Other songs	Out Of My Mind	Not ranked
	I Got Shit	2
	Long Road	4
	Leatherman	15
	State Of Love And Trust	2
	Breath	3
	Poor Girl	Not ranked
	Driftin'	13
	Angel	14
	Untitled	Not ranked
	Last Soldier	15
	Man Of The Hour	7
	<b>Average</b>	

## References

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- 3 - <http://www.tenclub.net>
- 4 - <http://www.definitive200.com/index.html>
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## Appendix – Speculations as to the reason why, or how Bush is the slayer and revitalizer of Pearl Jam

It is worth speculating that perhaps the Bush Administration is partially responsible for both Pearl Jam's blip and its recent resurgence. The band clearly is not a fan of the current president. I imagine that finding inspiration for songs and lyrics gets increasing difficult as obvious themes and memories get used up by earlier material. A number of songs from *Ten* are roughly autobiographical, but Eddie only had so much family history to retread before the muse channelling his childhood vanished. *Vitalogy's* inspiration (most notably on *Not For You* and *Corduroy*) seems to derive from the band's frustration with the media and the pressures they experienced during their rise to fame. By the time Bush came to office, the more obvious veins of inspiration were exhausted, and it is possible that Bush's policies and personality were so infuriating that the band's level of piss-off-ed-ness prevented their usually efficient song-writing skills from congealing. There was simply too much energy. Four years later, and with Bush still in office, Pearl Jam focused the Bush-fuelled chaos that dominated *Riot Act* and the resulting album sparkles with a tightness, an edginess, and such nuanced song-writing that I almost wish, despite myself, that Bush could win a third term so that I could see how far the band can ride the big wave of their surely most incongruous muse.