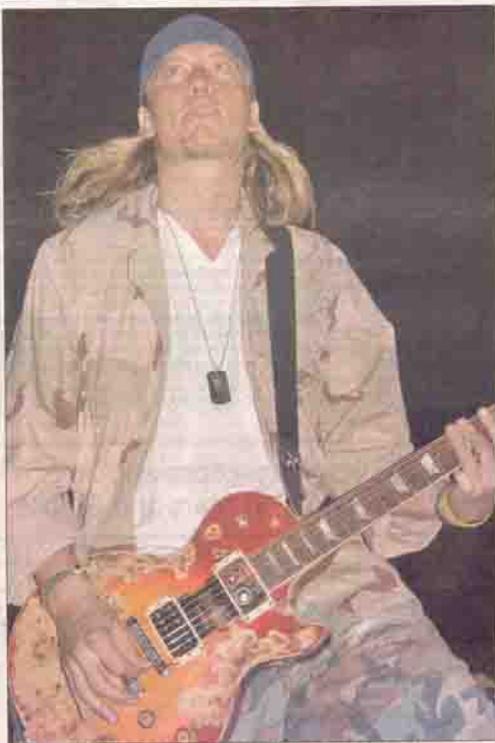


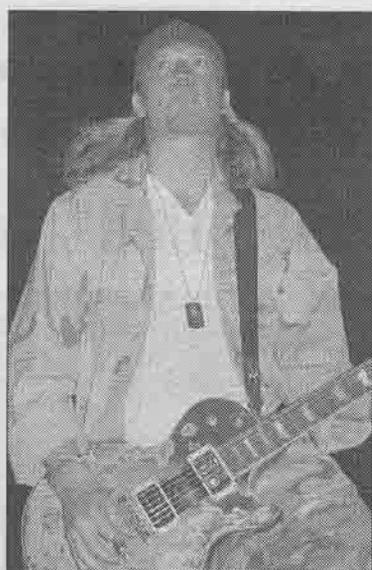
## Puddle of Mudd covers 1st ID soldiers with music

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Left: Wesley Scantlin, Puddle of Mudd's singer and guitarist, rocks the crowd at Camp Speicher, Iraq, on Sunday night. The band came downrange after playing at a 1st Armored Division welcome home ceremony in Baumholder, Germany, last week. Above: First Infantry Division soldiers enjoy the music concert. Before returning to the States, the band will play for soldiers in Friedburg, Germany, on Wednesday.



Puddle of Mudd's singer and guitarist, Wesley Scantlin, rocks the crowd at Camp Speicher.

# Puddle of Mudd wade into Iraq to entertain GIs at Camp Speicher

BY LISA BURGESS  
*Stars and Stripes*

CAMP SPEICHER, Iraq — Amid Iraq's scorching, dry desert, fans of rock music were knee-deep in a Puddle of Mudd on Sunday night as the alternative rock group performed for troops at Camp Speicher.

At least 1,500 troops attended the concert, according to event coordinator Sgt. 1st Class Shane Podraza, liaison officer to the mayor's cell at the camp. The show included a rousing opening session by the 1st Infantry Division's own rock band.

Puddle of Mudd had played in Baumholder, Germany, on Friday as part of welcome home ceremonies for the 1st Armored Division before flying into Iraq for the Speicher concert and a meet-and-greet with Task Force Danger soldiers Monday.

The band went to Iraq when few big-name performers dare to venture into the active combat zone.

"The soldiers here are working really hard," the band's singer and guitarist, Wesley Scantlin, said. "They are keeping our nation safe. It seemed like the least we could do was to come out and play some music for them."

Douglas Ardito, the group's bass player, agreed.

"These are our buddies," he said of the soldiers who were eagerly waiting to meet him Monday. "They are from the same towns we grew up in. They take risks with their lives; I figured we could take a risk, too."

"I felt we owed them."

Besides, Scantlin added between signing autographs, "It's something that most people in their lives will never be able to do."

In addition to Scantlin and Ardito, Puddle of Mudd, which released its debut album in 2001, includes Paul Phillips on guitar and Greg Upchurch on drums.

There have been five concerts at Speicher's stadium this summer, but Puddle of Mudd, whose trip was sponsored by Morale, Welfare and Recreation, AKA Productions, of Upland, Calif.; and Armed Forces Entertainment, "is by far the largest marquee name we've had," said Podraza, 40, of Lincoln, Neb.

In fact, "it took me weeks to convince people [that such a popular band] was coming," Podraza said Sunday as he prepared for the concert. "They thought it was a hoax."

Spc. Braxton Cope, 43, of Mulberry Grove, Ill., said he could think of little else since he heard the band was coming to play.

"We've been looking forward to [the concert] ever since we heard about it two weeks ago," said Cope, assigned to the 1st ID's 454 Transport Company.

"They are so honest," Cope said, holding a poster he hoped to have autographed. "There's a lot of feeling in their music."

The group will play one more concert for soldiers, in Friedburg, Germany, on Wednesday before returning to the United States.

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PHOTOS BY LISA BURGESS/Stars and Stripes

A crowd of between 1,200 and 1,500 troops turned out at Camp Speicher on Sunday night to see Puddle of Mudd perform for U.S. troops, according to event coordinator Sgt. 1st Class Shane Podraza.