

RETROSPECTIVE

LOOKING BACK ON CLASSIC ALBUMS WITH THE ONES WHO MADE THEM

The Retrospective feature was set up originally to take a trip down memory lane to review an overlooked gem of an album. This issue, we expand it to incorporate a live film - originally released on VHS and the defunct Laserdisc format, Ozzy Osbourne's 'Speak Of The Devil' concert caught the ex-Black Sabbath vocalist in phenomenal form. After the tragic death of band mate and close friend, Randy Rhoads, Osbourne's tour was halted before resuming with ex-Gillan guitarist Bernie Tormé handling guitar duties. His stint was short lived, with the role of guitarist being fulfilled on the rest of the tour by Nightranger axeman Brad Gillis. Despite the loss of Rhoads, this line up did tremendous justice to the material. An album of the same name was released, containing nothing but Black Sabbath songs in a bid to rival Sabbath's first official live record 'Live Evil', featuring Ronnie James Dio. The video of 'Speak Of The Devil' gave a much more accurate example of Ozzy's setlist, drawing heavily from his first two solo albums. Now, digitally restored in 5.1 Dolby Surround Sound, the show is available for the first time outside of Japan on DVD. James Gaden caught up with Rudy Sarzo to hear about the tour first hand...

I'll start with a bit of background. You originally played with Randy Rhoads in Quiet Riot before he joined Ozzy. Was it your friendship with Randy that led you to joining Ozzy's band as well?

Yes, absolutely. I was a member of Quiet Riot right before Randy Rhoads joined Ozzy and when they were looking for a bass player, Randy recommended me. Yeah, he was 100% the reason I came aboard.

Were you a fan of Ozzy's work before that, or was your decision to join just to give you a chance to work with Randy again?

I think every musician of my generation were fans of what Black Sabbath had done with Ozzy. It was a tremendous honour to play that stuff and to do it with my good friend Randy made it an amazing situation to get involved in.

Did you have to go through an actual audition for Ozzy's band, or was Randy's recommendation enough? I don't picture Ozzy as being somebody who studies musicians when he's looking for band members...

Actually, I did do a kind of audition. I had to play 'I Don't Know', run through it twice. I'd met Ozzy the night before, so Ozzy could get a gut feeling or a vibe from an individual. It was basically yes or no right there, due to how he felt about you. He said that he really liked me and that was good enough for him, as long as I could play the songs properly. The next day, right before I had to play the songs in the audition, I got together with Randy and he gave me a crash course of the bass lines. Then I drove over to the audition - there were some other bass players there to try out but they were up before me. So I did my audition, Ozzy said at the end "Do you wanna be in the band?" I said "Yes, of course!" and that was it! I got the gig! (laughs)

With you mentioning you were a fan of Black Sabbath, I thought you looked extremely comfortable in that band, you looked at home there - was it a nerve wracking experience, having to play those songs with Ozzy, or because you were a fan did you really want to do it?

Being a fan of Black Sabbath, but also growing up in Miami like I did, I didn't get much of a chance to play that music live. Most of the clubs I used to play at wanted more of a dance thing. It was usually pop and R&B. Sometimes you'd play top 40 rock songs which was always Led Zeppelin and Deep Purple's 'Smoke On The Water', stuff like that. Black Sabbath were always considered a bit too heavy for the music scene in Miami. I'd play the stuff on my own because I was a fan of the band, but not professionally at that point.

Were there any songs in the set you had difficulty with, or were you a very natural fit for the material?

That's a really interesting question - playing with Ozzy was my first experience of playing with an arena band. Once you play in an arena band, your set is pretty much fixed for the whole tour - you have to factor in logistics such as the lighting, the sound, the actual production. When you play in a club, you can change your set at any point, take requests, somebody can come up and say "Hey, you know this one?" and you throw it in right there and then. This was my first experience of taking the philosophy that the set list

Tommy was doing. We weren't on those records as you know, so we had an interesting situation in finding out how to mesh with each other while keeping the tracks sounding as they should. Tommy uses a lot of body language when he performs so I'd learn the language which would tell me what kind of nuances might come up. I think it probably took us a couple of weeks to get that right.

On this DVD, Brad Gillis is playing guitar. Prior to that, after Randy's tragic passing, there was a delay before the tour continued with Bernie Tormé. What are your memories of working with those guys?

Y'know, I watched the DVD a couple of times since getting my preview copy and it's really interesting. I watch a lot of concert footage of many bands, I've been a fan way longer than I've been a musician. The fan in me always wants to keep up with what is going on. And what really separates this DVD from the others I've watched is the fact that rarely do you see, on a concert film, and I tell you this from being there, knowing what every single musician has to go through digging deep after Randy's crash... this is a celebration of Randy's music, what he meant to us. We went out there and really dug into our spirits and our souls to perform at that level. It was basically a miracle that we were able to continue.

There were two reasons we carried on - one was to continue celebrating Randy's music. The other was that I really dread to think what would have happened if we had cancelled the rest of the tour and Ozzy would have just been left alone. He'd have gone into drinking and all the other stuff he was doing then - I don't want to think about what would have happened if there was no tour to do. We had to keep him occupied, keep him moving. Emotionally he was incredibly fragile.

I thought the DVD was fantastic, and it was



a great collection of the classic Randy-era Ozzy tracks, with some Sabbath songs at the end. I remember there was an album out of the same name years back, which was this line up with Brad Gillis playing guitar, but the album was all Sabbath songs, issued, I believe, to compete with Sabbath's 'Live Evil' album. Did you go and play some shows just featuring Sabbath songs for that record, or did you collect them from different performances over many dates?

No, actually we had a week's rehearsal to learn those - we only had the 'Iron Man', 'Children Of The Grave' and 'Paranoid' medley in our regular set. We had to learn all the others like 'Black Sabbath', 'Snowblind', 'Fairies Wear Boots', 'The Wizard'... we had to learn all those because we performed for two nights at The Ritz... with NO overdubs! (laughs) Nothing. On the way to the stage, Sharon said "Boys, you'd better play good tonight because there's no overdubs on these." No pressure! (laughs)

When you have so many songs to learn like that in such a short period of time, how are you given the material? Are you given sheet music, charts, do you learn by ear?

It depends on what you prefer, for me it's all about a lot of concentration. Whether it's going to be recorded or not, people will be there to listen to you so any performance on any stage is very sacred to me. It's not just your performance that night, it's being a part of that venue with all those people who have played there before you, everyone who will play there after you, you are measured against everything. You have to be at your best every single night, that's what you want the audience to remember and that's what drives me to get it right.

Watching the DVD, even though it was a long time ago now, the visual aspect of the show still stands up, it still looks really good with the lasers and everything. Was it pretty much cutting edge back then?

Yeah, that was thirty years ago. You can watch it now and there's an element of "Yeah, I've seen that before..." - but back then, taking that castle on stage every night, that was really something. To me, that was the tour that really established Ozzy as a real artist, cemented him, put him on the map to get him the status he has today. That tour proved Ozzy Osbourne was going to be an act to be reckoned with for years to come. He was still making the transition of breaking away from the Sabbath connection and becoming a true solo artist. When we started the 'Blizzard Of Oz' tour, sometimes we'd be billed as 'Ozzy Osbourne & The Blizzard Of Oz', stuff like that. It was on that 'Diary Of A Madman' tour that he just started becoming 'Ozzy'.

One thing that did amuse me, watching it - you referred to the castle backdrop, and there's Don Airey in the tower, playing keyboards dressed as a monk, you and Brad Gillis are both clad in black leather... then Ozzy walks out wearing lycra pants with knee pads and his frizzy blonde hair - he looked like a wrestler!

(Laughs) Originally, we all had costumes and his was more medieval and it was created to fit in with the whole production, the castle and everything, that's the sort of stuff Brad and I are wearing. As the tour



progressed, he started refusing to wear the codpiece, then the studded pads... by the end, he was basically in a leotard! (laughs) But he was more about "Let's just get there and rock out", he wasn't bothered about being constrained by the clothing. With Ozzy, it's not about what he wears, he's all attitude. Once he hits the stage, you never know what he is going to do next. I don't think he knows! He just moves with kinetic energy, there's no script, he just moves with it. If he doesn't feel the audience is into it, within thirty seconds he will do something and the audience will be into it. He's just incredible.

You left Ozzy's band shortly after that tour - had you just had enough of that period, or was Randy's absence a factor?

Yeah, to be honest it was very painful for everybody without Randy. We just wanted to finish the tour with dignity, one of the things Brad Gillis' arrival allowed us to accomplish. He did justice to Randy's memory by performing the songs the way they should be performed. At the end of the day, every time we did stuff it was painful. But without that, I'd never have met Ozzy otherwise. They took wonderful care of me, there was a real family atmosphere there. We'd all travel in the bus together, when we were off the road I'd live with them. Basically I was there 24/7. But it all became so sad without Randy. Remember, on that DVD, except for those three Sabbath songs at the end, every song was from 'Blizzard Of Oz' or 'Diary Of A Madman'. There was a huge part of Randy in that show, and him not being there for it made it very tough.

You ended up joining Whitesnake during their most successful period. How did that compare to touring with Ozzy?

The similarities were basically on the success level - Whitesnake enjoyed a global level of success where I toured England, Europe, Japan, America... in between I had gone back to Quiet Riot but we never had that level of success. We had spent more time touring just in America. Because of MTV, that helped us become successful there, so management wanted us to cultivate that market. It was a huge mistake, but there you go!

After your time in Whitesnake, yourself and Tommy joined Adrian Vandenberg in Manic Eden, a band I loved. It was a great album - was it always intended as just a one off, or were there plans to be a full time band?

We had a deal in Japan, that was like 1993, right? There was still a record industry then. In order for any band to survive, you have to have at least a domestic American deal, or some sort of European deal. We really didn't have any of that, just Japan. It did get a release in France I believe, but not a fully fledged European deal. Therefore we had no real label support, which you need in order to maintain the band. On top of that, right around the album being released, Coverdale asked Adrian and myself to come back to Whitesnake to do the 1994 'Greatest Hits' tour. That sort of put the band on hold... and after that the bottom fell out of the music industry and that was it for Manic Eden! (laughs)

One thing I did want to ask you is, with Sabbath there are a lot of fans who were

RELEASE DETAILS

1. **Over The Mountain**
(Osbourne, Rhoads, Daisley, Kerslake)
2. **Mr Crowley**
(Osbourne, Rhoads, Daisley)
3. **Crazy Train**
(Osbourne, Rhoads, Daisley)
4. **Revelation (Mother Earth)**
(Osbourne, Rhoads, Daisley)
5. **Steal Away (The Night)**
(Osbourne, Rhoads, Daisley)
6. **Suicide Solution**
(Osbourne, Rhoads, Daisley)
7. **Guitar / Drum Solo**
8. **Goodbye To Romance**
(Osbourne, Rhoads, Daisley)
9. **I Don't Know**
(Osbourne, Rhoads, Daisley)
10. **Believer**
(Osbourne, Rhoads, Daisley)
11. **Flying High Again**
(Osbourne, Rhoads, Daisley, Kerslake)
12. **Iron Man**
(Butler, Iommi, Osbourne, Ward)
13. **Children Of The Grave**
(Butler, Iommi, Osbourne, Ward)
14. **Paranoid**
(Butler, Iommi, Osbourne, Ward)

BAND LINE UP

Ozzy Osbourne - lead vocals
Brad Gillis - guitar
Rudy Sarzo - bass
Tommy Aldridge - drums
Don Airey - keyboards

Filed at Irvine Meadows,
California on June 12, 1982

very pro Ozzy and anti-Dio, and vice versa. Personally I liked both eras - and you are one of the few people who has been in both Ozzy's band and Ronnie's. You clearly have a lot of time for Ozzy, so how did Ronnie compare as an employer?

To be truthfully honest, the best periods of my career were in Ozzy's band, and Ronnie's band. With Ronnie, it was another big experience - he's very different from Ozzy, we all know that, but there's a lot of magic. Ronnie and Ozzy had some similarities actually, you could never take Black Sabbath to the heights those two took that band to. They both brought qualities which lifted the band, different ingredients undoubtedly, but very significant and outstanding contributions. Ozzy was a founding member and he brought the original sound, what Ronnie brought was his influence and a specific compositional style which could be traced back to Rainbow.

I thought it was a really good idea when Sabbath got back with Ronnie and called themselves Heaven And Hell - that for me really separated the two eras, the Ozzy era and the Ronnie era. It was no longer about who did what, it was just about great music.

What can we expect from you in the future, Rudy? Another book like the one you wrote about your time in Ozzy's band, or more music?

I'm working on new music, I'm going to Japan with a group called Animal USA which is based around the anime art form. I'm rehearsing for that, and I have a band called Tred with Mike Orlando from Adrenaline Mob and Dan Nelson from Anthrax. We've also got A. J. Pero from Twisted Sister. That's a sort of tribal, very modern sounding metal band. We're gonna have an album out in a few months, and I'm still touring with Blue Oyster Cult. I'm always very busy and active!