

BOOKINGS

Retiring Rockers Set Off Scramble

Venues Line Up For Last Helping of **Elton John, Ozzy Osbourne** and **Paul Simon**

BY GIL KAUFMAN

THE RANKS OF the rock stars who helped invent the concept of arena rock in the 1970s have been steadily thinning for much of the past decade. This year has brought news that three more of the giants of the

genre are ready for their final go-rounds. Within weeks of one another, folk icon Paul Simon, hard rock legend Ozzy Osbourne and piano pop superstar Elton John each announced what they are calling their final tours.

Each artist has forged a unique path into retirement from the road. Osbourne is mostly forgoing arenas in favor of his preferred outdoor amphitheater and festival plays on his tour's first leg. John, whose massive 300-show extravaganza called "Farewell Yellow Brick Road" will hit five continents and stretch through to 2021, is playing as many arenas as possible. Simon, for now, is seemingly picking and choosing a select group of venues.

Of the three, Simon has initially released the most modest string of dates for his Homeward Bound: The Farewell Tour, with just 21 North American arena stops announced, kicking off in Canada at Rogers Arena in Vancouver, British Columbia, on May 18 and stretching through a June 20 show at Bridgestone Arena in Nashville.

Osbourne's No More Tours 2 — a mix of festival gigs and mostly amphitheater shows mixed with a handful of arenas — will kick

into gear in North America at the PPL Center in Allentown, Pa., on Aug. 30. Current shows have been announced through Oct. 13 at the MGM Grand Garden Arena in Las Vegas, with more dates to be announced.

John will launch his final tour, like Osbourne, at the PPL Center in Allentown, on Sept. 8. North American arena dates have been booked through March 2019 at the BB&T Center in Sunrise, Fla., with many more shows to come.

With so many lucrative arena shows in the offing, Ed Rubinstein, CEO of the 32-venue Arena Network, said his organization's first move when these tours are announced is to try to find a carve-out date that might give one of his buildings a shot. "These tours are pretty well routed by AEG for Elton or, for Ozzy and Paul Simon, Live Nation, so we will always call the agent and see if there are some venues that didn't get a look and try to get included," said Rubinstein.

With John playing 300 shows, Rubinstein said he couldn't see how many more could be added, though the network has landed 13 announced gigs so far at venues including the Legacy Arena at BJCC in Birmingham, Ala.; TD Garden in Boston; and Colonial Life Arena in Columbia, S.C. Though the network has only two confirmed dates on the Simon tour, Rubinstein was confident that there might be more dates available in the future, which could mean more business for his arenas.

Even when he knows it might be the last shot at an act, Rubinstein said the approach is the same: "We don't press harder. With someone like Elton playing so many venues, the ones he's not playing are probably ones where he might not do as well or not as large as he needs," he said. "But we do have aggressive venues where even if they don't fit the profile, they will try to get on that list."

David Kells, vice president of booking for Bridgestone Arena in Nashville, has no complaints about how the last hurrah tours are shaping up, since both John and Simon are slated to hit his venue. And he knows exactly why. "Nashville has proven that we have the ability to sell tickets, and after a time when Nashville was sometimes skipped over by bigger tours or was included in second legs, Bridgestone especially has proven it can sell tickets and is on everyone's radar," he said.

Kells said he was especially proud of landing one of the rare Simon dates because it's proof that promoters, artists, agents and managers trust Bridgestone Arena with a big show.

Ozzy Osbourne is going on the road for the last time with his No More Tours 2 show kicking off at PPL Center, Allentown, Pa., on Aug. 30.



GETTY IMAGES

Other venues, like the Prudential Center in Newark, N.J., will have to make do with just one of the acts ... for now. John is slated to touch down for the first (and last) time in his career at Prudential, but so far Simon has not announced a single date in the area, though Prudential's executive vice president of entertainment programming, Sean Saadeh, hasn't given up hope. "We keep our eye on what's going out, we are proactive and we stay on things that we know are booked," said Saadeh, mirroring Kells' mantra about constantly reaching out and keeping strong communication with both AEG and Live Nation, as well as with their partners at MSG and the Oak View Group (OVG is the owner of *VenuesNow*).

While every show is special, Saadeh said that, because it's John's final swing and his debut at Prudential, the plan is to make it a special night for the artist and the audience, though he's holding the details close to his vest for now. Though Osbourne is playing the amphitheater in nearby Allentown, Saadeh said he'd love to host Ozzy and has reached out with the knowledge that a future arena date could be in play.

What about fears from some that the thinning of the major rock act ranks could spell trouble down the line? "The good news is that our business is really healthy now, the touring business has never been stronger and it gives me hope that there are quite a few artists in the pipeline that will continue to fill our venues at the highest level," Saadeh said.

Live Nation's president of U.S. concerts, Bob Roux, said LN planned the final

swing for the rocker — who has been a reliable live draw as both a solo performer as well as with Black Sabbath and his OzzFest festival — the same way it always does: in coordination with Osbourne (and his wife and manager Sharon Osbourne), as well as their management. They sat down together to decipher what Osbourne wanted to do for this tour, what markets were spotlights for him and how he wanted it to unfold over time.

Elton John will make his Prudential Center debut on his coming farewell tour.

"Ozzy has a lot of experience playing outdoors at major festivals and then during the advent of amphitheaters with the OzzFest tour — he does a magnificent job of mixing up venues on tours, sometimes playing festivals, sometimes amphitheaters, sometimes arenas and with this tour it's a combination of many venues," Roux said. The tour will hit such Live Nation-owned venues as Northwell Health at Jones Beach Theater in Wantagh, N.Y.; the PNC Bank Arts Center in Holmdel, N.J.; and Jiffy Lube Live in Bristol, Va., among others.

Sharon Osbourne said the long-range plan

is to hit outdoor sheds and festivals, then hit arenas, especially the ones Ozzy has a particular fondness for. "When you've been doing this for over 50 years you know every building inside and out and backwards, and the arenas will definitely get a chance," said Osbourne, who noted that her husband used a similar strategy during his final tour with Black Sabbath during 2016-17.

"Sometimes you only have so long to tour so you cut out certain markets, but with

something like this we want to go everywhere, so we'll probably play markets we haven't in a long time," Osbourne added.

Roux said it was important for the Osbournes that they hit certain markets that they had either enjoyed in the past or that they got a great response in, with festivals taking priority because they have to be booked

so far in advance. Though he didn't have historical data on merch per caps, Roux fully expected sales to be even higher on Osbourne's final swing, with per show grosses running at more than \$1 million a night and expectations that the first 21-show leg will play to up to 400,000.

"It's the end of an era, and I wonder who will replace these people?" Osbourne said as she discussed her husband's coming retirement from touring. "There's nobody to replace these pioneers who've been doing this for over 50 years, so it's kind of bittersweet, but I think Ozzy's earned the right to do it." ▣

HOTTICKETS MORE THAN 15,000 CAPACITY

Ranked by gross. All data based on figures supplied to Pollstar. Date Range: 1/16/18-2/15/18

RANK	GROSS	EVENT	VENUE	TICKETS SOLD	PROMOTER	DATE	SHOWS
1	\$8,665,384	Bruno Mars	Foro Sol, Mexico City	115,147	OCESA / CIE	Feb. 2-3	2
2	\$3,982,647	Bruno Mars	Estadio Chivas, Zapopan, Mexico	36,289	OCESA / CIE	Feb. 5	1
3	\$3,686,603	Metallica	WiZink Center, Madrid	33,894	Live Nation Los Angeles	Feb. 3-5	2
4	\$3,435,070	George Strait	T-Mobile Arena, Las Vegas	30,108	In-House	Feb. 2-3	2
5	\$2,812,422	Bruno Mars	Estadio Universitario, Monterrey, Mexico	27,553	OCESA / CIE	Jan. 31	1
6	\$2,271,968	Billy Joel	Amalie Arena, Tampa, Fla.	18,462	Live Nation Los Angeles	Feb. 9	1
7	\$1,767,064	El Barrio	WiZink Center, Madrid	30,733	La Rock	Jan. 19-20	2
8	\$1,435,971	Lady Gaga	Ziggo Dome, Amsterdam	15,397	Live Nation Global Touring	Jan. 20	1
9	\$1,402,401	Lady Gaga	Antwerps Sportpaleis, Merksem, Belgium	15,533	Live Nation Global Touring	Jan. 22	1
10	\$1,373,755	For The Love Of Mrs. Brown	Qudos Bank Arena, Sydney	17,953	In-House	Jan. 25-27	4

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HOTTICKETS 10,001-15,000 CAPACITY

Ranked by gross. All data based on figures supplied to Pollstar. Date Range: 1/16/18-2/15/18

RANK	GROSS	EVENT	VENUE	TICKETS SOLD	PROMOTER	DATE	SHOWS
1	\$2,745,747	Sandy Lam	Mercedes-Benz Arena, Shanghai	22,314	Shanghai Pujie Culture Broadcasting	Jan. 27-28	2
2	\$1,842,623	Lady Gaga	Arena Birmingham, Birmingham, England	21,978	Live Nation Global Touring	Jan. 31-Feb. 1	2
3	\$1,634,785	Andrea Bocelli	Antwerps Sportpaleis, Merksem, Belgium	12,767	Gracia Live	Jan. 20	1
4	\$1,314,814	One Ok Rock	Mercedes-Benz Arena, Shanghai	10,493	Shanghai Zhenyi Culture Communication Co.	Jan. 23	1
5	\$1,285,921	Imagine Dragons	Mercedes-Benz Arena, Shanghai	12,184	Live Nation - Los Angeles	Jan. 17	1
6	\$1,230,517	Katy Perry	T-Mobile Arena, Las Vegas	12,944	AEG Presents / Concerts West / Goldenvoice	Jan. 20	1
7	\$1,144,786	Katy Perry	Moda Center, Portland, Ore.	11,756	AEG Presents / Concerts West / Goldenvoice	Feb. 2	1
8	\$1,089,763	Rod Stewart	Konig-Pilsener Arena, Oberhausen, Germany	9,840	Lars Berndt Events	Jan. 27	1
9	\$1,085,812	Lady Gaga	Mediolanum Forum, Assago, Italy	11,170	Live Nation Global Touring	Jan. 18	1
10	\$1,024,809	Blake Shelton	BOK Center, Tulsa, Okla.	13,578	AEG Presents / Concerts West / Goldenvoice, Messina	Feb. 15	1

HOTTICKETS 5,001-10,000 CAPACITY

Ranked by gross. All data based on figures supplied to Pollstar. Date Range: 1/16/18-2/15/18

RANK	GROSS	EVENT	VENUE	TICKETS SOLD	PROMOTER	DATE	SHOWS
1	\$3,268,489	Bruno Mars	Park Theater At Monte Carlo Resort & Casino, Las Vegas	15,450	Live Nation - Los Angeles	Feb. 14-17	3
2	\$2,086,028	Roger Waters	Qudos Bank Arena, Sydney	16,608	Live Nation - Los Angeles	Feb. 2-3	2
3	\$1,202,673	Timbiriche	Auditorio Nacional, Mexico City	19,240	OCESA / CIE	Jan. 19-20	2
4	\$759,931	Disney On Ice	Allstate Arena, Rosemont, Ill.	35,004	Feld Entertainment	Jan. 25-28	7
4	\$759,931	Disney On Ice	Valley View Casino Center, San Diego	35,004	Feld Entertainment	Jan. 25-28	7
6	\$624,906	A-ha	Mercedes-Benz Arena, Berlin	7,818	Peter Rieger Konzertagentur & Co. KG, Semmel Concerts	Jan. 29	1
7	\$612,061	Alanis Morissette	ICC Sydney Theatre, Sydney	7,723	Chugg Entertainment	Jan. 24	1
8	\$610,163	Dropkick Murphys	AFAS Live, Amsterdam	11,972	Live Nation - Los Angeles	Feb. 10-18	2
9	\$606,228	Miranda Lambert	Infinite Energy Center, Duluth, Ga.	9,770	In-House	Jan. 20	1
10	\$599,085	A-ha	Olympic Hall, Munich, Germany	7,094	Peter Rieger Konzertagentur & Co. KG	Feb. 3	1

HOTTICKETS 2,001-5,000 CAPACITY

Ranked by gross. All data based on figures supplied to Pollstar. Date Range: 1/16/18-2/15/18

RANK	GROSS	EVENT	VENUE	TICKETS SOLD	PROMOTER	DATE	SHOWS
1	\$3,234,968	The Lion King	Fox Theatre, Atlanta	38,397	Broadway Across America	Jan. 23-28	9
2	\$2,498,073	The Lion King	Fox Theatre, Atlanta	29,616	Broadway Across America	Jan. 16-21	7
3	\$1,934,794	Wicked	Broward Ctr. Au-Rene Theater, Fort Lauderdale, Fla.	19,555	In-House, Broadway Across America	Feb. 14-18	8
4	\$1,744,762	Backstreet Boys	The Axis At Planet Hollywood, Las Vegas	10,916	Caesars Entertainment, Live Nation - Los Angeles	Feb. 14-17	3
5	\$1,665,335	Cirque du Soleil - Crystal	H-E-B Center At Cedar Park, Cedar Park, Texas	22,580	Cirque du Soleil	Feb. 14-18	8
6	\$1,639,674	Backstreet Boys	The Axis At Planet Hollywood, Las Vegas	10,600	Caesars Entertainment, Live Nation - Los Angeles	Feb. 7-10	3
7	\$1,632,156	Les Misérables	Salle Wilfrid-Pelletier, Montreal	23,104	Broadway Across Canada, Evenko	Feb. 7-11	8
8	\$1,402,471	Backstreet Boys	The Axis At Planet Hollywood, Las Vegas	9,429	Caesars Entertainment, Live Nation - Los Angeles	Jan. 31-Feb. 3	3
9	\$1,268,337	Rent	The Smith Center / Reynolds Hall, Las Vegas	16,008	In-House	Jan. 30-Feb. 4	8
10	\$1,252,059	For The Love Of Mrs. Brown	Perth Arena, Perth, Australia	14,196	In-House, Live Nation Los Angeles	Feb. 15-17	4

HOTTICKETS 2,000 OR LESS CAPACITY

Ranked by gross. All data based on figures supplied to Pollstar. Date Range: 1/16/18-2/15/18

RANK	GROSS	EVENT	VENUE	TICKETS SOLD	PROMOTER	DATE	SHOWS
1	\$1,203,926	The Book Of Mormon	Velma V. Morrison Center For The Performing Arts, Boise, Idaho	15,505	Broadway Across America	Jan. 30-Feb. 4	8
2	\$814,400	Motown The Musical	McCallum Theatre, Palm Desert, Calif.	8,278	In-House	Jan. 16-21	8
3	\$625,615	Pink Martini	McCallum Theatre, Palm Desert, Calif.	8,699	In-House	Feb. 9-15	8
4	\$509,475	Kinky Boots	McCallum Theatre, Palm Desert, Calif.	5,227	In-House	Feb. 4	5
5	\$505,295	Something Rotten	Hershey Theatre, Hershey, Pa.	7,101	In-House	Jan. 24-28	7
6	\$450,642	A Chorus Line	McCallum Theatre, Palm Desert, Calif.	5,249	In-House	Jan. 26-28	5
7	\$423,500	Fuerza Bruta	Citibank Hall, Sao Paulo	11,302	T4F - Time For Fun	Feb. 1-25	27
8	\$329,960	Diana Krall	Schermerhorn Symphony Center, Nashville, Tenn.	3,395	In-House	Feb. 13-14	2
9	\$298,765	Jerry Seinfeld	Sangamon Auditorium, Springfield, Ill.	3,461	JS Touring LLC	Jan. 18	2
10	\$264,879	Billy Elliot - The Musical	Auditorio Pabellón M, Monterrey, Mexico	5,985	In-House	Jan. 27-28	4