

# There's no mad bite to Osbourne's sound

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**H**EAVY METAL'S SELF-proclaimed madman, Ozzy Osbourne, has seen hard times during the past few years. He's undergone treatment for alcohol dependency, been faced with legal battles, and has had to put a new band together since the departure of guitarist Jake E. Lee in 1987.

However, as Osbourne demonstrated before 9,000 fans at Arco Arena Monday night, he still hasn't lost his knack for rock 'n' roll.

Since his days as vocalist for Black Sabbath in the '70s, Osbourne has been labeled a satanic villain by his detractors. His diabolical image was enhanced when he bit into a live bat (he thought it was rubber) during a performance in the early '80s.

Well, no animals died Monday night. The character that Osbourne played on stage was a gentle man driven "mad" by the evil in the society around him. Osbourne sang about mankind's struggle between good and evil, and lamented the world's ugliness with songs such as the anti-alcohol "Suicide Solution" and the anti-war "War Pigs" and "Fire in the Sky."

Pacing across the stage like a melancholy court jester, the paunchy Osbourne seemed an unlikely rock star. This unlikeliness is part of his appeal — Osbourne is so different from other rock stars that his presence is magnetic. During the opening number, "I Don't Know," Osbourne begged his fans not to take him too seriously with the lyrics: "Don't look at me for answers/Don't ask me/I don't know." Further in the song, Osbourne told the audience that he wasn't in charge of their destinies: "It's up to you!" Later, he joked and bit a rubber bat that a fan had thrown on stage.

Guitarist Lee has been replaced with the 21-year-old Zakk Wylde, whose aggressive, '70s-oriented gui-

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tar playing gave Osbourne's music a raunchiness that it lacked with Lee. Although Wylde wasn't nearly the technical player that Lee or Lee's predecessor, the late Randy Rhoads, was, he still was a driving force behind Osbourne's sound.

**T**HE ON-STAGE relationship between Wylde and Osbourne was not as close as Osbourne has shown with his other guitarists. One reason for this was the presence of former Black Sabbath bassist Terry "Geezer" Butler. With Butler and Osbourne on the same stage together, Osbourne's band seemed like a weird incarnation of Black Sabbath.

Osbourne played a few choice Black Sabbath numbers ("Sweet Leaf" and "War Pigs") during his 100-minute, 15-song set. His obligatory readings of the Sabbath classics "Iron Man" and "Paranoid" were heavier than they had been on previous tours.

One would have liked to have heard Osbourne's new material take on the slow, heavy, progressive-metal traits of the older Sabbath material. Unfortunately, the new songs are typical Osbourne solo material. The four new songs, especially the mediocre "Tattooed Dancer," sounded better and rougher live than the studio versions, however. In 1986, Osbourne started to move in a more commercial direction with songs such as "Shot in the Dark." The songs show Osbourne's move back into a harder rocking direction.

The opening act, the thrash-metal band Anthrax, was almost inaudible under the echo and the bad sound mix. Ironically of Black Sabbath's best songs, "Sabbath Bloody Sabbath," was performed by Anthrax rather than Osbourne.