

TO RUN

circuit with Geezer Butler in tow

bassist Geezer Butler.

"The best part of Sabbath are together again," says Ozzy of the reunion. "I'm thrilled to have him back".

The band also includes 21-year-old New Jersey guitarist Zakk Wylde, who joined last year and made his debut at an "inside" gig at London's Wormwood Scrubs prison. The line-up is completed by Randy Castillo on drums – a survivor from Ozzy's last band – and John Sinclair on keyboards.

They've finished work on a new studio album – the first since 'Ultimate Sin' over two years ago – provisionally called 'Son Of A Nun', which is scheduled for release in September.

But they'll preview the new songs on the tour, which starts with two nights at Dublin Olympic Ballroom on June 23 and 24 and then moves to Belfast Negent Hall 25, Leeds University 27, Glasgow Barrowlands 28, Manchester Ritz 29, Newcastle Mayfair July 1, Leicester Polytechnic 2, Hull City Hall 3, Redcar Coatham Bowl 5, Nottingham Rock City 6, Folkestone Leas Cliffe Hall 7, Cambridge Corn Exchange 9, Bristol Studio 10, London Kentish Town Town And Country Club 13-14.

Tickets are £7.50 everywhere except Dublin (IR 8.50), Belfast (£8) and London (£8.50) on sale now from box offices and agencies.

WIZARD OF OZ

OZZY OSBOURNE 'Tribute' (Epic EPC 450475)*****
THE CRUX of the matter is, this *isn't* an Ozzy Osbourne album, it's a Randy Rhoads album. First and foremost, 'Tribute' is just that; but it also fills a convenient gap, the last live Ozzy album comprising mainly of Sabbath classics, only three of which are included here.

Released on May 11 in honour of Ozzy's guitarist Randy Rhoads – who was snuffed out just over five years ago when the pilot of a light plane he was in got too cheeky and flew into a house – 'Tribute' features 13 songs recorded on Ozzy's 1981 Canadian tour plus a studio out-take, 'Dee'.

So, it gets five stars. There's no point in judging this album as a new Ozzy release; whatever you think of the High Queen of Rock-As-Pantomime, 'Tribute' is here to show just what we've been missing in terms of Rhoads' playing.

Randy was the best guitarist in any of Ozzy's myriad band line-ups and one of the best of the genre, period. If he doesn't sound *too* incredible now remember this was recorded six years ago, and an awful lot of desperate guitarists have passed by since then, eager to join the school initiated by the likes of Randy and Eddie Van Halen.

Were Randy Rhoads alive today, he would be an undoubted master. 'Suicide Solution' says it all: what Rhoads doesn't do on this song is not worth doing, and the breath-taking mixture of clean precision riffing and howling white noise is a sound that many have tried to imitate but few have equalled. If that doesn't convince you, then perhaps the way he manages to breathe new life into such a hoary old rocker as 'Paranoid' will.

Of course, this is all for the most diehard Ozzy fans, of which I'm sure there are plenty. It's a case of open that closed mind (or, in some cases, the other way round), sit back and enjoy.

NEIL PERRY

OZZY OSBOURNE 'No Rest For The Wicked'

(Epic 462581/CD)**1/2

CARTOON LOON, sozzled superhero, Ozzyman cometh! And co-orchestrating these eight comic book metal blow-outs is a new sidekick; Zakk Wylde, guitar-handed, no umlauts but plenty of gurgling licks and big, wheezing riffs.

The fifth chapter of Ozzy's post-Sabbath solo career is a glossed, ordered kind of mayhem. The riff on 'Crazy Babies' rips telephone directories in half with one hand, its rhythm like Godzilla's footsteps. But this isn't full-tilt mania, merely loud and playful toying with classic heavy metal shapes. 'Bloodbath In Paradise' even echoes the ham quaking of the old 'Black Sabbath' signature.

Empty vessels make the most noise and this record is no exception. It's all dazzle, blast, pyrotechnics and no real weight.

"Some say I'm another devil's child," he cackles, but Oz's outsize persona isn't the evil thing it once was. Boasting all the menace of Grape Ape, Ozzy hardly qualifies as the 'Wicked' of the LP's title.

Where Slayer bruise and shock, Ozzy's notion of outrage stops at pissing in airliner aisles.

He has mellowed and wears it as well as he can. Ozzy's a gold old pro.

PAUL ELLIOTT