

Ozzy's Free Experiment

Hanging out with Ozzy and Sharon at the first free Ozzfest
By Steve Knopper

WITH THE AIR CONDITIONING set to sixty-one degrees in the rear cabin of their tour bus, Ozzy and Sharon Osbourne are lounging on a bed beneath a widescreen TV, talking about the need to economize. For the first time in its twelve years, Ozzfest is free. All fifteen acts on the bill—from costumed Finnish rockers Lordi to Ozzy himself—are playing for nothing; sponsors, merch sales, parking and beer cover the show's costs. "We're taking a huge, huge loss," says Sharon. "But I believe if we can pull it off in the end, then next year we'll get bigger sponsors

and it'll be profitable for everybody."

About 15,000 black-clad fans attended the opening day, on July 12th at White River Amphitheatre near Seattle. Onstage, Lamb of God singer Randy Blythe declared Ozzfest "the biggest fucking traveling free event in the history of music." All 428,000 tickets for the tour were snapped up online in four days in June (more were made available in mid-July), although not every fan got in for free. On StubHub, tickets are averaging anywhere from \$25 to \$57—with prime seats going for as much as \$600—depending on the city. Sharon calls the scalping "despicable": "If anyone has any ideas on how to stop this from happening, I'm all ears."

Although Ozzfest was one of the tour industry's greatest financial successes in the late 1990s, it

grossed just \$18.7 million last summer, not even enough to crack Pollstar's top twenty-five. The free concept came up during January negotiations between Sharon and the tour's promoter, Live Nation. After hammering out the details, she drummed up sponsors—Jägermeister, Monster Energy drink and F.Y.E. signed on.

"It's not easy to say yes to spending your summer not making any money," says Lamb of God drummer Chris Adler backstage. "But we hope that the people that come to see us tonight enjoy the show enough to maybe go buy a T-shirt,

and we get to keep putting gas in the tank to get to tomorrow."

One band, Static-X, only agreed to play after securing a sponsor: Singer Wayne Static displays a Monster logo on his guitar. "You gotta do what you gotta do," he says. "I don't really give a shit. I'll drink piss if there's money. Plus, Ozzfest is an institution."

So was Ozzy immediately psyched about the free idea? "I remember saying to Sharon, 'You sure you know what you're doing with this?'" he says. "And she said, 'Yeah, it'll work out fine.' She hasn't done me wrong so far."



IT'S HIS PARTY Ozzy kicks off the tour in Auburn, Washington.

WEDNESDAY SPOTLIGHT

By ERIC KOHANIK AND JEANETTE NEWTON



Walters, Osbourne: fascinating folks

BABA MEETS OZZY

Barbara Walters sets out on her annual quest to chat up some of this year's most interesting personalities in an hourlong special called *Barbara Walters Presents: The 10 Most Fascinating People of 2002*. Among the celebs on the Walters' honour roll this year: *Die Another Day's* Halle Berry, *Spider-Man's* Tobey Maguire and off-the-wall rocker Ozzy Osbourne. — E.K.



EXCLUSIVE SHARON OSBOURNE
TAKES US INTO THEIR L.A. HOME



Ozzy tells what he can remember of his life

Ozzy Osbourne has written the story of his life, the bits he can remember. "What you read here is what dribbled out of the jelly I call my brain when I asked it for my life story," he says in *I Am Ozzy*, which will be out Jan. 25. It's kind of promising, according to the taste the *N.Y. Post* got. For example, he confirms the story about biting the head off a dove, but did it only because he thought it was rubber. Classy guy.



OSBOURNE

