

# RETRO ROCKIN'

## 2007 MARKED A BIG YEAR FOR CLASSIC-ROCK REUNION TOURS



ABOVE: STING TAKES A CUE FROM DAVID LEE ROTH: MIGHT AS WELL JUMP PHOTOGRAPH BY JEFF KRAVITZ  
BELOW: GENESIS

BY KIM JEFFRIES

Most 23-year-old classic rock fans are more familiar with Van Hagar than they are with Van Halen. Growing up, this younger generation heard the likes of “Right Now” on the radio more so than “Panama” and “Jump.” So when it was announced in August that David Lee Roth would grin and bear it with Eddie and Alex for a national tour—their first together since 1984—it became clear that Van Halen proper would make a huge splash in the touring world this year.

Or would they? Considering the Police and Genesis were also on the road (also after decades-long absences) and Led Zeppelin is reuniting for a benefit concert in London on Dec. 10, Van Halen seems to be just one of many classic rock acts to take it to the streets in 2007. For many of the younger fans who never thought they’d get the chance to see these acts live, this year marks what is perhaps a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. “Everything goes in cycles, so this happened to be one of those years that worked in the fans’ favor,” says

Jerry Mickelson, founder and president of Jam Productions.

For the older fans and collectors who have been blasting bootlegs and unreleased demos on stereos for years, these reunions capitalize on the nostalgia they’ve cherished for so long, giving them the chance to truly experience their favorite songs live. “People do want that nostalgia trip, and they aren’t getting that with a new studio album—they



get that in a concert hall,” says Dave Negrin, founder of fan site and online community World of Genesis ([worldofgenesis.com](http://worldofgenesis.com), which received 125,000 unique hits a month during the band’s global tour), who has seen Phil Collins and Co. five times on their current tour, including a trip across the pond to see them perform in London in July.

And despite tepid reviews from critics (the Police’s opening night gig at Wrigley Field in July got panned by most Chicago journalists) and expensive tickets that sometimes surpass the \$1,000 mark, the majority of these bands’ shows are selling out. According to *Billboard*, the Police tour alone has grossed more than \$171 million in 53 shows attended by more than 1.5 million fans, and the Van Halen tour is going so well they decided to continue into early 2008. It’s a testament to the value placed on the live experience—and to the assurance that, these days, touring is the only way for bands to make a living in the industry. “The concert business isn’t anywhere near as bad off as the record business. Most artists today realize that that’s where they’re making their real money—in touring and merchandise sales, not off recorded music sales,” says Gary Bongiovanni, Pollstar’s editor in chief. “One of the reasons you see the ticket prices so high is that these acts tend to be older, so their fans, presumably, are a little more well-heeled and can afford to pay for something that they thought they’d never get a chance to see.”

In the end, the demand will always be there: More than 25 million people around the world registered for a lottery to even be granted access to purchase Led Zeppelin tickets. And even though the tween market continues to be a hot ticket (Disney’s insanely popular *Hannah Montana* star Miley Cyrus is outselling most of the reunion shows), it’s ultimately the older demographic wielding the power. “When these classic bands do put out new studio albums, they don’t sell anywhere near the sales they used to have,” Negrin muses. “That being said, many of them—at least the big ones—can still sell out a football arena. These bands don’t need hit singles or music videos or radio airplay anymore. The fan base is so strong, and their momentum is so powerful, that it seems that the Internet is enough to drive a reasonably successful world tour, which is incredible when you think about it.”