



Bon Jovi, Eagles to tour Australia

Christmas is coming early for music fans with Bon Jovi and The Eagles set to tour Australia in December.

Rock legends Bon Jovi will play stadium shows in Sydney, Melbourne, Perth and Brisbane, as part of The Circle world tour.

The Circle is the New Jersey band's 11th studio album, released in November last year.

Australia is one of 30 countries the band will visit during their latest tour, a two-year undertaking which began in the US in February.

Promoter Dainty Consolidated Entertainment is promising "one of the biggest sets ever to be seen" in Australia.

In a career spanning almost three decades, Bon Jovi have sold more than 120 million albums and performed more than 2,600 concerts around the world. They were last in Australia in 2008. It's been a longer wait for Eagles fans, with the band, led by Glenn Frey and Don Henley, returning to Australia after more than six years.

The '70s rock icons, best known for their hit Hotel California, will perform three-hour showcases of their work in Sydney, Perth, Brisbane and Melbourne.

The band holds the US record for best selling album of all time, for Their Greatest Hits 71-75, and their 2007 release, Long Road Out of Eden, their first studio offering in 28 years, went gold in Australia after just one week.

Tickets for The Eagles go on general sale on Monday, June 28, while Bon Jovi tickets go on sale on Thursday, July 8.

Bon Jovi tour dates:

- * Subiaco Oval, Perth - Wednesday, December 8
- * Etihad Stadium, Melbourne - Saturday, December 11
- * Suncorp Stadium, Brisbane - Tuesday, December 14
- * Sydney Football Stadium - Friday, December 17

The Eagles tour dates:

- * Sydney Entertainment Centre - Thursday, December 2
- * Acer Arena, Sydney - Monday, December 6
- * nib Stadium, Perth - Friday, December 10
- * Brisbane Entertainment Centre - Monday, December 13
- * Rod Laver Arena, Melbourne - Friday and Saturday, December 17 and 18

Yusuf 'Cat Stevens' returns to Oz to mend wounds

Yusuf Islam has returned to Australia after 36 years not only to wow adoring fans but to mend old wounds.

The artist formerly known as Cat Stevens offered his perspective on The Ten Commandments and told of how he found his Lord during his only speech in Australia outside his concert tour.

"I feel so at home. I've got family here and it's great," he told the packed Great Hall at the National Gallery of Victoria late on Saturday.

"The reason I am actually back in Australia is really to try and mend a few roads which got broken along the way.

"That happens, one can't predict when or why but it happens, but most of it is probably the result of a lack of communication ... and letting other people write your stories or your headlines."

He converted to Islam in 1977, changing his name to Yusuf Islam. He said he withdrew from music because he felt there was nothing more for him to do.

"And then, of course, the press have their own way of interpreting what you do," he said.

"So now I was the 'Cat on the Mat'"

"Australia is guilty of a lot of all this, you know that," he told the chuckling audience.

"Australian journalism? Boy, it's trouble -- not all the time."

Yusuf has had a difficult relationship with the media at some points of his career.

He has denied reports he called for author Salman Rushdie's death or supported the fatwa against The Satanic Verses author issued by Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini in 1989.



Yusuf Islam, formerly known as Cat Stevens

Victorian upper house MP Peter Kavanagh wrote to Immigration Minister Chris Evans last month asking him to refuse Yusuf a visa unless he repudiated threats against Rushdie.

Born Steven Georgiou, Yusuf grew up in London, the son of a Greek Cypriot father and Swedish mother.

He changed his name to Cat Stevens in the mid-1960s.

When he eventually read the Koran it was the story of Joseph that knocked him over.

"When I came to the end ... I start-

ed weeping," he said.

"This was something divine.

"That is the moment of unity in a way because I had found my Lord and I don't think anybody can find unity unless you find your Lord."

Yusuf, now 61, delighted the crowd with several songs from his current Roadsinger album, including All Kinds of Roses, and also performed Peace Train from his 1971 album Teaser and the Fire Cat.

He played two shows in Melbourne at the Rod Laver Arena and his next stop is Sydney.

Greece on track with reforms, IMF

Debt-ridden Greece is on track with the reforms required as part of the rescue package that saved it from bankruptcy, a delegation from the International Monetary Fund, European Central Bank and the European Commission said on Thursday.

The delegation was in Athens to review progress in the austerity measures the government has been implementing in order to pull the country out of a financial crisis that brought it to the brink of default last month.

"The program is on track on all the dimensions, the main dimensions of the program," the European Commission's Servaas Deroose said during a news conference in the Greek capital, adding that progress had been made in the budget, structural reform and financial sector requirements.

The delegation said the deficit was lower than had been projected and the government was adhering to firm spending control.

"Fiscal developments are positive with central government revenues coming in closely as expected and with firm expenditure control in the state budget," the delegation said in a joint statement, adding that based on preliminary data to the end of May, "the state budget deficit was lower than was projected in the program."

The team, which arrived in Athens on Monday and

was leaving on Thursday, is to return in late July for a full review of Greece's progress in the three-year euro 110 billion (\$A156.85 billion) package of rescue loans from the IMF and other EU countries that use the euro as their currency.

Greece received the first installment of loans in May, just in time to prevent default and repay government bonds that were maturing. It is to receive the next in September if the July review - the first formal review - shows it is still meeting its targets.

The team's preliminary assessment "suggests that when we come back ... and undertake a comprehensive analysis, that we will find that program is on track," said Poul Thomsen, the IMF's mission chief for Greece.

To secure the funds, the centre-left government has taken austerity measures that aim to make its bloated public sector less wasteful and its shrinking economy more competitive. It has pledged to cut its massive budget deficit from 13.6 per cent of gross domestic product in 2009 to 2.6 per cent in 2014.

The reforms, which include overhauling the pension system, raising retirement ages, cutting civil servants' pay and raising consumer taxes, have met with a backlash from labour unions, who have staged a series of strikes and demonstrations.