

## PAGE

To tour or not to tour? That was the question confronting David Coverdale and Jimmy Page virtually from the moment their debut album was released last spring. Months passed, and rumors proliferated, first indicating that the pair would kick off a world tour in Japan, then that they wouldn't tour at all, then that they'd begin an American tour in the fall of '93, then again that they wouldn't tour at all. It became almost an industry joke trying to predict what these two tempestuous, talented and obviously unpredictable legends would do. Finally,

and not necessarily just for the fans. The two aging legends felt deep in their bones that this tour could have well been their final shot at enjoying the touring frills of superstardom, and it became apparent quite early on that if they couldn't fill arenas from coast to coast, the whole tour package was in jeopardy. If the two were really only concerned about pleasing their fans and having some fun by playing great music on stage, why wouldn't they just have scheduled a theater tour where perhaps three to four thousand lucky people would have gotten the chance to see them each night? The clamor from those *not* able to get tickets to such a performance in each city would have seemed to guarantee making each concert a true "event."

"It's always been a question of ego with them," a spokesperson at the band's record label said. "Let's face it. They don't need the money. They don't need the fame. I think it was just a question of wanting to show that they could still do it. I think

## TOIL AND TROUBLE



David Coverdale and Jimmy Page: "The road was always quite paramount in our thoughts."

early in the fall word filtered that the tour was officially *off*, leaving fans, promoters and the media to try and put the derring-do antics of Coverdale/Page in some kind of perspective.

"We always had the idea of going on the road quite paramount in our thoughts," Coverdale stated. "We knew we wanted to play not only the new material that Jimmy and I had written and performed together, but also some of the classic material we've been lucky to be involved with throughout our careers. We wanted to make it a memorable evening for everyone. If that couldn't be guaranteed, we wanted no part of it."

If truth be known, the fact is that the ones who most wanted to make each and every performance memorable were Coverdale and Page themselves—

**"Quite simply, Jimmy was not going to play any place smaller than an arena—it was a question of ego."**

that was especially true in Jimmy's case. *He* was not going to play any place smaller than an arena. That would have been a blow to his ego. That's where all the delays and questions came in."

Indeed the band's demands to play only arenas did cause innumerable delays. At first, soon after the release of the **Coverdale/Page** album, when promoters across the nation were approached about booking the tour, they scoffed at the notion of a "new" act playing arenas. They stated that in these harsh economic times, even the biggest acts with the best track records were having trouble on the road. How could they take on the huge financial risk of underwriting a major arena tour for an untested road property? Then, some five months later, in a move smacking of desperation, the band announced the

start of the tour in Florida, putting tickets for three arena shows in the Sunshine State on sale. When only about 3,000 tickets for each show were sold during the first week, the tour's future again fell into severe jeopardy.

"What did they expect us to do?" one promoter bellowed. "They acted like they were Led Zeppelin. The fact is they're not. If this was a Led Zeppelin reunion I would have been the first to say 'to hell with theaters, to hell with arenas. Let's go straight to stadiums!' But the fact is that we can't operate at a loss just because these guys don't understand the economic realities out there. If they want to take the loss, then let them book their own tour. But when they want to get us involved, we've got to be reasonable."

Being reasonable has never been the key operative phrase for any rock superstar—especially ones who helped shape the sound and style of the music we all know and love. For both Coverdale and Page, sitting around waiting for tour opportunities to come has been a most difficult time. They both had read their voluminous press clippings (which, in fact, had been limited by their egomaniacal initial stance that they wouldn't even consider talking to a writer unless it was for a magazine cover story) and they obviously believed all the good things that had been written. Yes, their debut album was excellent, a stark and gripping hard rock presentation that recalled the halcyon days of both Zeppelin and Whitesnake. And yes, there was apparent fan interest in seeing these legends on stage once again—especially since they stated that they'd be per-

forming classic Zep and Snake material. But somehow those reviews and that interest got parlayed into a misguided belief that the rock world was waiting for the

**Coverdale: "We wanted to make sure it would have been a memorable evening for everyone."**



**C & P "live": a sight not likely to happen in the near future—if ever.**



return of Coverdale/Page, and in this era of alternative metal, grunge and new-age hard music, that just wasn't the case.

"We've been very heartened by the

response fans have had to our efforts," Coverdale said. "No matter how much confidence you may have in yourself, your fellow musicians, and in the material, it is always wonderful when that kind of confirmation comes forward."

While fans did indeed respond with gusto to the band's album, shooting it past the 700,000 sales level, there are those who know much greater expectation were held for the disc in many industry circles. Thus, when the band's tour plans appeared to be in a constant state of flux, wavering with the group's perception of audience strength, many knew right away that seeing Coverdale and Page on the road was not a guaranteed happenstance. In addition, continued reports of Page's ill-health often filtered through the rock rumor mill indicating that while the guitarist had completely kicked his various past dependencies, he was still far from a pillar of strength. Those people wondered how a six-month road sojourn (Page's first in over five years) would affect the maestro's delicate condition.

"Jimmy is fine," Coverdale stated. "In fact it's been an incredible experience to work with him. He is always so creative, and so willing to work with you on any ideas that he naturally brings all your best instincts to the fore. Quite honestly I can't wait to share the kind of magic we felt in the recording studio with each and every fan when we're on stage."