



After spending last year on the road as special guests for Kiss, Def Leppard will be back atop the bill this summer and taking Styx and Tesla along for the ride, with a stop at Jones Beach July 23!

The 48-date tour kicks off June 23 in Tampa, Fla., running through Oct. 4 in Bismarck, N.D. And Def Lep frontman Joe Elliott tells Billboard that it will be a band-of-brothers situation. "We've toured with both of these bands before," Elliott says. "Styx is a great bunch of guys and as American as mom's apple pie all the way through. And we had Tesla on board when we did the Hysteria tour back in '87; they were out for at least six or seven months with us before they went

off to do their own thing. So it'll be a great time on stage and backstage, I think."

#### Def Leppard Revisits Overlooked Album: 'It Went Against the Grain'

Elliott adds that, "We've always been keen on taking out bands that people know. It's done us a world of good to go out with a name on the poster that doesn't just say, 'Plus special guest...'. We've tried it; We had Tripping Daisy in the '90s, who were great people to work with but nobody knew who they were, and it didn't make for a great evening of anticipation, if you like. People would go, 'Who's this lot onstage?' Nobody's going to go see Tesla and Styx and not know who they are. They're going to say, 'I know all those guys and all those songs. That's a show I want to see.'"

But don't expect any three-band jams onstage. "We have to keep an extremely tight ship when there's three bands on," Elliott explains. "You go one-minute overtime and they're fining everybody \$25,000 a minute or something. And we're not gonna drop one of our songs to have a 10-minute blues jam with Styx or Tesla. I don't really see the appeal. There's been loads of times where we've had Lou Gramm or Robert Plant or Bryan Adams or Jon Bon Jovi or Steve Harris from Iron Maiden get up and jam with us because they're just in town and they fancied being there for three minutes. But (on tour) we've only got so much time and we've got plenty of songs that we'd like to play that we don't really need anybody's help on."

#### Def Leppard on Performing Without Vivian Campbell, Making a 'Big Push' in 2015

With guitarist Vivian Campbell "in great form and cancer-free, from what I'm told," according to Elliott, Def Leppard is hitting the road just as its finishing work on its next album, the still-untitled follow-up to 2008's *Songs From the Sparkle Lounge*. (The group tours Canada starting April 15 and has European dates beginning May 15 in Belarus.)

Elliott says there are 15 songs "on the go" for the set, which he considers "remarkably strong" and predicts will sound both familiar and fresh when it's finally out. "It's very varied," Elliott says. "It sounds like Def Leppard, but it sounds like Def Leppard stretching their wings a little bit. There are a couple of songs tied to our DNA, instantly recognizable as us, and some of the stuff that's not so much like that and represents who we are now, a band that's in their early- to mid-50s, the kind of music they should be making without it sounding old and farty. We're not trying to write 24-hour party songs at our age; that would be silly.

"The good thing," he adds, "is we're not tied down. Like, when you say AC/DC, you kinda know what you're gonna get. We're more in the Queen ballpark where you can have a slow thing and you can have a full-on rock song on the same record and they go side-by-side. That's where we're coming from on a lot of this stuff."

Elliott says the group thought about getting the album out during the spring, but it's likely to be later because of what he calls "an unprecedented amount of offers from various different people to release this record, which we weren't expecting and has changed the whole dynamic of how we want to put this record out." Elliott says Def Leppard is still "wedding through" the offers but is confidently the album will be out "absolutely this year."

“The important thing is we make a good record,” he says. “I don’t think people are queuing around the block to buy a Def Leppard release right now; if they’re doing it for anybody at all it’d be Taylor Swift and Katy Perry. But for us it’s really important that we keep the high quality we’ve always tried to deliver and we don’t let ourselves down. We’re never gonna be the kind of band that goes, ‘Well, it doesn’t matter, nobody buys records anymore so let’s jsut piss one out in a month.’ That’s not our style. It never will be.”