

On the road with Def Leppard: 'It was like a bomb going off'

One Bad Son gets on the big stage

BY KURT DAHL, THE STARPHOENIX APRIL 23, 2015



One Bad Son is opening for Def Leppard for 10 shows from Vancouver to Winnipeg this month.

Photograph by: Submitted photo, Facebook

One Bad Son is opening for Def Leppard for 10 shows from Vancouver to Winnipeg this month. Kurt Dahl, Adam Grant, Adam Hicks and Shane Volk are making their arena rock debut and playing for the biggest crowds of their lives. In part one of two, Dahl reflects on the band's early days and his chance to talk to drummer Richard Allen.

Def Lep Road Diary: Part 1

We played for 12,000 people last night. It's still hard for me to believe as I type this. We're 10 years in as a band, and always dreamt of playing arenas one day, but actually doing it is something else. It's surreal.

Last night's show was especially poignant: a sold out show at Rogers Arena in Vancouver. We lived in

Vancouver for four years and, despite our best efforts, it was still our weakest market in Canada as a band. That all changed last night. The seats were half full when we started, but by the time we ended with Satellite Hotel and Retribution Blues, the arena was packed, the rafters were rocking, and me and the boys were all smiles. I've never played to a crowd that loud in my life.

That was the third show of 10 for us with Def Leppard. I'd be lying if I said we weren't having the time of our lives. The Def Leppard guys have been so cool and down-to-earth. Last night, time was running tight so Def Leppard skipped their sound check so that we'd have time to set up and sound check ourselves.

I've been lucky enough to have late-night heart-to-hearts with singer Joe Elliott and drummer Rick Allen. Joe and I talked of our mutual love of the Kinks and Mott the Hoople, and how he feels blessed that he and his bandmates are still "best mates" - unlike so many of his peers who tour out of necessity and can't stand each other.

I told Rick Allen how inspiring it is that he re-taught himself to play the drums after losing his arm in a vehicle accident, and he made an interesting distinction. He said it wasn't his brain teaching his body, but the other way around. Any time he stopped to think about what he was doing, he'd mess up. Only when he turned off his brain and let his body/heart take over, could he start to learn again. What a story. Getting to watch him from backstage and see his one-of-a-kind setup is a pretty amazing experience. The whole arena thing itself is a bit mind-blowing. We show up every day in our Ford E350 van and trailer, and shimmy up next to Def Leppard's nine semi trailers of gear and five massive buses of crew and band.

It's a comical contrast, one that the crew makes fun of every day.

Walking on stage for the first time was really something. We've played big stages before, at festivals or opening for bigger bands, but sold-out arenas are different. The first time I set up my drums and hit the kick drum, it sounded like a bomb going off. Best sound check of my life. We've always felt like our songs and show were meant for the big stage, and now we're on it.

I saw Pearl Jam at Pacific Coliseum in Vancouver in 1998. It was the first time I'd ever flown, and the first time I'd seen the West Coast. I had just graduated high school and didn't know what

I wanted to do with my life (those that do know at that age shouldn't be trusted). In hindsight, seeing Pearl Jam on the big stage was what I would call a life-defining moment. I immediately grew my hair long, formed a band, and started chasing the rock and roll dream. I was a mediocre drummer for a long time. My ambition far exceeded my talent. But that's the beauty of rock and roll - it can bring out something inside of you that has been lying dormant, and once you tap in to that thing, it's like a dam bursting. Seventeen years and many ups and downs later, that life-defining moment is coming full circle here in Vancouver. I'm doing my best to soak it all in.

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