

newsbites

A Ozzy Osbourne's longtime tour manager Bobby Thomson was found dead on 24 July, in his suburban Detroit hotel room. Scottish-born Thomson, who is 50 and had worked with the artiste for 23 years, appears to have died in his sleep. He had been battling throat cancer for 18 months.

ENLAND The new international format produced at Ruisrock festival (5-6 July) attracted a record overall sell-out crowd of 10,000. Promoter Juhani Pirimaa's change from an all-Nordic line-up (*Audience*, April 2003) was vindicated, with Manic Street Preachers selling a record 30,000 on the Saturday. The event's only setback was when the guitarist of local band Negative jumped off the stage and was subsequently hospitalised.

The failed reincarnation of London's legendary Marquee club, sold by administrators to multiple venue owner McKenzie Group (UK) last month for just over £1million (\$1.63m), has been renamed Carling Academy Islington. The new venue, set to open in September, will have 800 and 1,000-capacity rooms, and a 100-seat restaurant.

The Agency Group's new Nashville office (*Audience*, June 2003) has added agent Rick Cady, former vice-president of the mainstream division at Nashville-based Third Coast Artists. Cady, who brings with him artistes Darden Smith, Jim Lauderdale and Paul Thorn, says, "I never thought I'd be part of a large agency again, but The Agency's unique business model is ideal for my clients' aspirations and my entrepreneurial spirit."

Azoff returns full-time management

UNITED STATES Irving Azoff has resigned as co-chairman of promoter Concerts West (CW) to concentrate on his Azoff Music management company, which represents artistes such as the Eagles, Christina Aguilera, Steely Dan, Seal and Jewel.

Azoff will continue his association with CW's majority owner AEG Live, which will acquire his CW shareholding.

"Irving was not only instrumental in facilitating our acquisition of Concerts West, but also establishing AEG Live as one of the nation's top two live entertainment companies," says AEG president and CEO Tim Leiweke, who is also co-chairman of CW.

Azoff says, "Nearly three years ago I made a personal commitment to Tim that

together we would build a company that artistes, agents and managers would respect and support. I truly believe this goal has been achieved."

Further announcements from AEG are expected to include the arrival of former House of Blues president Jay Marciano, which has been much rumoured for months.

CW was acquired by AEG in December 2000 to establish a live entertainment division for the sports and entertainment company. Since then, tour promotions have included Britney Spears, Paul McCartney, Dixie Chicks, Christina Aguilera and Justin Timberlake.

Among AEG venues are the 20,000-capacity Staples Center and The Forum (cap. 17,505) in Los Angeles and the NextStage

at Grand Prairie (6,333) in Texas. The company is also building a 7,000-seat theatre adjacent to the Staples Center, a 26,000-capacity arena in London's Millennium Dome in the UK and an 18,000-capacity arena in Berlin, Germany.



Irving Azoff

Campaigners confident of tax victory, despite delays

GERMANY Campaigners for reform of the country's withholding tax say that, although they expect opposition from some sections of government, the European Court of Justice (EJ) ruling that taxes on foreign artistes were unlawful (*Audience* June 2003) will eventually be implemented.

The case of Dutch jazz drummer Arnoud Gerritse, whose appeal to the Berlin tax authorities resulted in last month's EJ decision, has set in motion an unstoppable process that will effect every European Union country, except the Netherlands and the UK, which already allow the deduction of production expenses before tax is charged.

"I have heard rumours that

there might be resistance, which is perhaps not surprising," says tax expert Harald Grams of Grams &



Harald Grams

Partner, who, with All Arts' Dick Molenaar in the Netherlands, represents Gerritse. "But I believe the government will eventually have no choice but to comply.

"In the meantime, artistes should start applying for refunds and the right to deduct costs before tax, as this will help the process," says Grams. "There will be delays at government and local level, but we believe the situation will be finally resolved by November."

Although a 25 August court hearing in Berlin looks like being postponed, while tax authorities continue to study the EJ ruling, Grams says officials have already acknowledged that Gerritse is due a refund.

Strong support is also coming from German promoters and agents' association IDKV, which has been lobbying MPs on the issue for several years.

IDKV executive director Jens Michow tells *Audience*, "We already have backing from the cultural politicians, but we have to keep pressing for the finance ministry to accept the ruling. In the end, they don't have a choice, it's EU law, but we also have to make sure it's implemented correctly, or it could go back to the court."



Jens Michow