

Legendary Rock Icon Ozzy Osbourne Passes Away at 76 After Final Hometown Farewell

July 23, 2025

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Ozzy Osbourne, the iconic frontman of Black Sabbath and a towering figure in the history of rock music, has died at the age of 76, just weeks after performing a final farewell concert in his Birmingham hometown. Known for his trailblazing influence on heavy metal, Osbourne leaves behind a legacy unmatched in intensity, innovation, and endurance.

Born John Michael Osbourne in Aston, Birmingham, Ozzy's path to music began humbly. After leaving school at 15 and working a series of low-wage jobs, he spent time in jail for burglary before turning to music, a decision that would reshape the sound of a generation. In the late 1960s, he joined guitarist Tony Iommi, bassist Terence "Geezer" Butler, and drummer Bill Ward to form Black Sabbath. Their self-titled debut in 1970 introduced a darker, heavier sound inspired by blues but intensified with ominous tones and occult themes. Albums like *Paranoid* and *Master of Reality* soon followed, earning platinum status and cementing Sabbath's role as pioneers of heavy metal.

Osbourne's time with Black Sabbath ended in 1978, but his solo career soared. His debut solo record, *Blizzard of Ozz* (1980), included the enduring hit *Crazy Train* and set the stage for a series of commercially successful albums. *Diary of a Madman* (1981) went on to sell over five million copies. Yet, Osbourne's career was as notorious for excess as it was for artistry. Known for unpredictable on-stage antics, most infamously biting the head off a bat during a show, his behavior often mirrored the chaos of his personal life. Stories of substance abuse became legend, including one tale from the band Mötley Crüe, who recalled Osbourne snorting a line of ants in a moment of rock-infused bravado.

That darker side came to a head in 1989 when Osbourne was arrested for attempting to strangle his wife Sharon. After court-ordered rehabilitation, she chose to stay with him, convinced of his remorse. In a 2020 documentary, *The Nine Lives of Ozzy Osbourne*, Sharon candidly described their struggles, underscoring the challenges of addiction behind the scenes of fame.

By the 1990s, Osbourne had reinvented himself once again. *The Osbournes*, a reality television series on MTV, gave fans a more intimate and often humorous look at his family life. The show portrayed him not as a devilish icon, but as a well-meaning, slightly bewildered father, often out of step with the chaos of daily life. Osbourne himself was quick to note the contrast between stage persona and real life: "All the stuff onstage, the craziness, it's all just a role that I play, my work," he told *The New York Times* in 1992. "I am not the Antichrist. I am a family man."

Despite numerous injuries, including a serious spinal injury from an all-terrain vehicle (ATV) crash in 2003 and a damaging fall in 2019, Osbourne remained committed to performing. In 2020, he revealed a diagnosis of Parkinson's disease, stepping back from touring while continuing to record and make select appearances.

His final live performance came on July 5 at Villa Park in Birmingham, just steps from where he grew up. Surrounded by fellow rock legends including members of Metallica, Guns N' Roses, and Pantera, Osbourne performed seated on a black throne. He delivered renditions of *Crazy Train*, *Mr. Crowley*, and *War Pigs* to an audience of thousands in person and millions more online. "You have no idea how I feel. Thank you from the bottom of my heart," he told the crowd, overwhelmed with emotion.

Tributes have poured in from across the music world. Tony Iommi, co-founder of Black Sabbath, said he was struggling to find the words: "We've lost our brother." Geezer Butler added, "Goodbye dear friend, we had some great fun." Rolling Stones guitarist Ronnie Wood and Queen's Brian May also paid tribute, the latter noting, "The world will miss Ozzie's unique presence and fearless talent." Elton John, Rod Stewart, Sammy Hagar, and younger artists like Yungblud and Billie Joe Armstrong echoed the same sentiment: rock has lost one of its true originals.

Osbourne is survived by his wife Sharon, three children from their marriage, Aimee, Kelly, and Jack, as well as three children from a previous marriage: Jessica, Louis, and Elliot. He also leaves behind a growing number of grandchildren.

Ozzy Osbourne wasn't just a rock star; he was a cultural force who challenged norms, pushed boundaries, and redefined what it meant to be a performer. His music inspired generations, and his resilience showed the power of redemption. In the words of Pantera frontman Phil Anselmo at Osbourne's final concert: "We would all be different people without Ozzy and Black Sabbath. The greatest of all time."