

Carnival of Madness promises night of hard rocking

By CHARLES RUNNELLS • crunnells@news-press.com • July 16, 2010

Five hard-rocking bands. Guitar giveaways. Trivia apps for your iPhone.

Shinedown frontman Brent Smith wants The Carnival of Madness to be unlike any other tour out there. The concert comes Wednesday to Germain Arena in Estero.

"This is really the biggest production we've ever had," Smith says. "We decided we really needed to step it up."

"We wanted to make it bigger, and we wanted to make it cooler for everybody."

The reason is obvious: the economy. Other summer tours are drawing anemic ticket sales, axing show dates or canceling altogether.

Smith doesn't want to become another statistic. So he's sweetening the pot with lots of extras.

"We went back to the drawing board for this show," he says. "We're going to be interacting with the audience a lot."

"This is really built around the concert-goer."

The concert features five of the top-selling hard-rock bands in the country: Shinedown, Puddle of Mudd, Chevelle, 10 Years and Sevendust - all for tickets that top out at \$39.50.

In the days before the concert, fans can follow the band's Twitter feeds or chat with them live online.

They can also video themselves playing air guitar (or real guitar) to one of the five bands' songs, and then enter a contest to win tickets, VIP passes or a custom guitar (including personal guitar lessons from one of the bands).

Fans also can download a Carnival of Madness app

IF YOU GO

to their smart phones. And during the show, they can use that app to buy discounted merchandise and play real-time trivia contests to win prizes such as backstage passes.

Smith won't give out all of the surprises in store for rock fans. But he promises it'll be fun.

"It's summer," he says. "You don't want to take yourself too seriously."

The online contests and apps make sense for Shinedown's increasingly Internet-connected audience, Smith says.

"Seventy percent of the United States uses some form of social networking," he says. "You have to move with times."

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Shinedown headlines the Carnival of Madness tour. Pictured, from left are, Eric Bass, Brent Smith, Barry Kerch and Zach Myers.

Shinedown's Brent Smith discusses:

- The massive success of the band's 2008 album, "The Sound of Madness," which has a No. 1 rock hit with the song with "The Crow & The Butterfly"

"It's definitely the most successful record we've had to date. It definitely changed the landscape for us."

- How the birth of his son sparked him to kick drugs and refocus on his music.

"It's kind of one of those wake-up calls. You're going to be a dad - you've got to get yourself together. That was a big moment for me."

"It really saved me from my vanity and made me realize it wasn't just about me anymore."

- His high hopes for The Carnival of Madness Tour.

"These are five of the most monstrous bands that are on rock radio, in my opinion. We basically have 40 top-five rock songs between us," he says.

"It's, quite frankly, the only concert that matters this summer."

-What: The Carnival of Madness Tour, featuring hard-rock bands Shinedown, Chevelle, Puddle of Mudd, Sevendust and 10 Years.

-When: 5 p.m. Wednesday (doors open at 4 p.m.)

-Where: Germain Arena, 11000 Everblades Parkway, Estero

-Tickets: \$29.50-39.50. Call 800-745-3000, go to ticketmaster.com or visit any Ticketmaster outlet.

-Contests and more: The Carnival of Madness Tour features online contests, smart phone apps and other fan-friendly perks. For more information, go online to carnivalofmadness.com

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