

IRON MAIDEN

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Bruce

My heart pounds as my editor and I enter the still-under-construction Sanctuary offices, just off the beach on a windy, blustery evening in Santa Monica. Never had I thought I'd get to meet Bruce Dickinson in person; unfortunately, the closest I'd gotten was a nightmare years ago in which the entire band kicked my ass in the frozen food section of some grocery store. But after a casual handshake, I find the real demeanor of the charming British frontman is anything but unfriendly, adding to the already relaxed and stress-free atmosphere. To my surprise, he's dressed less like the denim and leather-clad lead singer for Iron Maiden and more like my Dad when he goes jogging: New Balance tennis, gray shorts, and a green tank top. I was among about five reporters, all of whom had already circled around Bruce and been encouraged to speak their inquiries in no orderly fashion. Bruce disclosed the

general information first-tour dates, live album release dates, etc., before allowing the rest of us to pick the brain of one of Heavy Metal's greatest singers of all time. Just so you know: The interview jumps around a lot, because I wanted to get some personal history and information in addition to the usual promotional banter-and with the constraints that come with publishing a magazine, other things had to be cut out. Right. On with the interview then!

On the Rock In Rio live CD and DVD release dates, Bruce reports that: "The Rock In Rio album is coming out March 25th (This interview with Bruce Dickinson was done right before the Iron Maiden mascot Eddie figure was scheduled to hit store shelves.) The DVD is nearly done, but we don't have a release date yet". Concerning the Iron Maiden Eddie figure produced by McFarlane toys,

Bruce reports that a multi-city radio interview with Todd McFarlane is finished. He is very pleased with the outcome of the toy's design! You can purchase the figure now at Tower Records stores, certain comic book shops, and other outlets.

E.I: Do you think "Rock In Rio" and "17 Numbers By the Beast" (new Iron Maiden compilation) will help reach younger audiences?

Iron Maiden: "The demand for ...Maiden has hardly diminished at all outside the US. But it's here that that drop-off has happened most. But coming back with "Brave New World", that sold 350,000 albums in the U.S.- which is, I think, a really amazing achievement. So much of America is geared towards an older audience. It's like they deliberately want to put ...Maiden in a situation where a younger audience has no access, which is really bloody annoying to us, because we don't like a bunch of people our age drinking coke and munching on hamburgers, like they're watching a TV baseball game. In Europe we pull a pretty young audience. This live album is a big step on the way, because it's a fierce record. It's not fucked with in any way, and that's so rare-nobody does that".

E.I: What made you decide to re-release The Soundhouse Tapes (the original demos recorded with Paul Di'anno before the first Iron Maiden album)?

Iron Maiden: "Everybody wants one. And rather than have people download shitty versions on the net, you might as well have (the CD). And again, it's a way of thanking our fans for buying all this stuff".

E.I: Let's get psychological for a moment. I'm curious as to what inspired you in your youth to become a singer...



Iron Maiden: "Well, I originally wanted to be a drummer. But there was this kid I knew who had a guitar and would play all these B.B. King songs and stuff. And I used to go in and help him out with singing. I had also done a lot of kind of "amateur dramatics", both in and out of the classroom (laughs). I really loved being on stage. And I thought this kind of ties the two things together-I love being on stage, but I could never be an actor, because they took everything far too seriously. So the idea of being a rock n' roll singer that combined the two things together-one or two little techniques, having audiences and stuff-but basically rock n' roll drives you crazy! The music grabs hold of you. I got chucked out of boarding school when I was 17. So I went back to regular high school for about

opportunity to join ...Maiden came up when suddenly Steve Harris (...Maiden bassist) showed up on my doorstep, and I was like 'I wanna be in this new thing'. And that was it. It was so obvious to go do it".

E.I: **You've been performing in front of audiences for over 20 years now, then. Do you find you're used to being on stage, or do you still get anxious before a show?**

Iron Maiden: "Oh, I get absolutely nervous before starting a tour. I'm liable to go off on my own, be a miserable git, really-until I've got that first week of shows out of the way. And in a way it's my way of psyching myself up. I guess the thing that scares me most is that I go out on

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half a year and joined another garage band. Later I answered an advert in the back of the classified section of a paper. I phoned (this other) band up and they said, 'Send us a tape'. I went, 'I haven't got a tape'. 'Well, send us anything you've got'. So I just yelled into a cassette recorder I had. No identifiable song, just a lot of notes. I phoned 'em back a week later and I said 'How did you like the voice?' And they liked it. So we went into the studio, and recorded it. And that was a band called Shock. And we did some gigs and demo tapes. This band got me noticed by Samson, and the guys in Samson came up to me after a show and said: 'You're just the type of singer we want'. And they had management and a record deal already".

E.I: **So what made you want to leave Samson and go to Iron Maiden?**

Iron Maiden: "Samson was an incredibly eccentric band. It was a miracle how it all held together. It was largely fueled by various chemicals floating around, and everyone had their own separate chemicals. Paul was always in big clouds of ganja smoke; the bass player would do a line of speed before rehearsal; and Thunderstick had the big mask and was very fond of dropping downers every now and then. And I was usually down at the pub. So at rehearsals you'd have somebody who's drunk, somebody who's stoned, somebody on downers, and somebody on speed (laughs hysterically)! And most of the next two years were spent in various states of insanity or madness. There was a possibility of something serious happening at the rate things were going. I'd seen ...Maiden about two years before I joined them, playing with Samson in a show called the Heavy Metal Crusade. It was mad! People were rammed in there to see ...Maiden. And I got the same feel from them that I got from Deep Purple. This was the modern day fire-breathing dragon of English music. I thought: 'I need to sing for this band! Shit!' I found (Samson) very conventional. And I didn't like being in a conventional band, I didn't like sounding like anyone else. Then the

stage and suddenly it doesn't happen for me. There's all kinds of trepidation about it, that it's not gonna work".

E.I: **One thing that people don't know about you is that you're actually a champion fencer.**

Iron Maiden: "Yeah. When I'm not running around talking about records, I fence a couple days a week. I used to do a lot (more) of training, international stuff".

E.I: **As far as side projects, what about the movie "The Chemical Wedding," which you were working on with Monty Python alumni Terry Jones?**

Iron Maiden: "It's dormant at the moment until somebody gives it some money. It's at the point now where there's a script ready to go, and a director. It's down to money. We're still hoping to get some. It's all about Allister Crowley".

E.I: **And it's perhaps a bit premature to ask, but are there any plans as far as a new studio album?**

Iron Maiden: "What we've said is that around September we're gonna get together and we're gonna start writing. We should have it done by the end of December, January at the latest, for a spring release and the big tour. That's the plot!"

Jeff Nau

