

MAIDENS

By Humberto J. Vergara

El Paso Times

Aja Kim puts on her black bikini top and her sleeveless jean jacket just like any other lead singer of a metal band.

Only thing is, Kim's band, The Iron Maidens, is not like any other metal band.

The Iron Maidens are the world's only female tribute band to Iron Maiden.

The band, which launched its Route 66 Southwest Tour on Friday in Flagstaff, Ariz., will perform today at Lucky Devils Bar, 1510 Bengal.

"Every good musician knows when a band has triumphed on a technical and lyrical level," Kim said during a telephone interview from Los Angeles. "Iron Maiden's style is very intricate, their composition is challenging. ... It's almost as if every instrument in the band has a voice of its own."

For her, Iron Maiden's songs — including "The Trooper" and "Rime of the Ancient Mariner" — are timeless.

"The band boasts songs mostly about history and fantasy," said Kim, whose stage name is Bruce Lee Chickinson in honor of Maiden's lead singer, Bruce Dickinson. "They should be called a classical heavy metal band. They are really freakin' hard, but very complex and fun musicians."

Which is one of the reasons Kim decided to take on the challenge of walking in Dickinson's shoes.

"I always feel the pressure of matching up to Dickinson," she said. "His voice is one of the greatest ever. No one else sounds like him. All I try to do is nail the vocals and bring out the feeling."

The Iron Maidens will cover Iron Maiden material from all decades of the band's career.

"We are highly trained professionals with various musical backgrounds, and we think we do Iron Maiden justice," said Linda "Nikki McBURrain" McDonald, the band's drummer.

The show will also feature Iron Maiden mascot Eddie — the monsterlike figure who is on all the studio albums.

The Iron Maidens, who formed in 2001, paid the ultimate tribute to Iron Maiden by recording a self-titled, full-length

Tribute band to come to El Paso

studio CD with all-Maiden covers in 2006 on DRZ Records. The CD features new original artwork of a "female monster" by none other than Derek Riggs, creator of Eddie. El Pasoan Gilbert Barrera is responsible for bringing the Iron Maidens to El Paso.

"Iron Maiden is my favorite band, and I thought it would be interesting to have an all-female tribute band perform for our die-hard Maiden fans," Barrera said. "It's not something you see every day."

Barrera is the vocalist and guitarist for a local heavy metal band, Innocent Exile. He said that while Maiden's music was heavy and loud, the lyrics boasted positive messages of hope and perseverance.

"I think Iron Maiden has a lot of great guitar harmonies, and I think they do leave a positive impact on audiences," said Barrera, referring to such legendary Maiden songs as "Be Quick or Be Dead" and "The Clansman."

Innocent Exile released a self-titled seven-track CD in 2002 with the hope of spreading that positive attitude.

Innocent Exile's "Lords of All Creation" pays homage to the 1994 Oscar-nominated film "The Shawshank Redemption." "The title of the song is actually a line from a powerful movie with a powerful message of hope," Barrera said. "It's about a man's struggle with persistence and not giving up."

The Iron Maidens are excited to bring their signature Maiden tribute act to El Paso, their first venture into Texas. "We hear the Texas crowds go crazy over heavy metal," Kim said. "We are going to rock you hard."

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Make plans

▶ **What:** The Iron Maidens, the world's only female tribute to Iron Maiden. Innocent Exile will open.

▶ **When, where:** 9 p.m. today. Doors will open at 8 p.m. Lucky Devils Bar, 1510 Bengal.

▶ **How much:** \$10. All-ages event.

▶ **Web site:** www.theironmaidens.com and www.devilbar.com.

▶ **Information:** 633-1636.