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Lady Killers

Meet all-female tribute band The Iron Maidens, the beasts whose number you want.

by [Randy Harward](#)



Chew on this scenario: Iron Maiden is onstage kicking ass. You're in the front row, sweaty and drunk on heavy metal and five-dollar beers, voice hoarse from trying to hit the lofty notes in "Run to the Hills." Flash forward to singer Bruce Dickinson centerstage waving a Union Jack over the first three rows. He's close enough to touch; you think if you only could, that some of his rock virility would osmose into you. You reach out, the hair on Dickinson's arms and chest retracts. His cheekbones climb and his eyes soften, the lashes lengthen. His laced leather vest bows outward and you mouth the words ...

"Bruce Dickinson has boobs?"

Now contemplate the magnitude of such a concept. Iron Maiden, a band whom so many males hail, plus sex. It's the ultimate male fantasy—religions have been founded on less compelling premises.

"For male hardcore Maiden fans, yes," laughs Jen "Bruce Chickinson" Warren, frontwoman of The Iron Maidens, the world's only all-female Iron Maiden tribute band. She's agreeing, somewhat, to the ultimate fantasy thing. It's different, she reasons, because not every male is an Iron Maiden fan. There are men out there who *don't* bow down to Maiden's majestic, horror-themed metal? That's a bit much to absorb, as well.

But let's not quibble; the point is simple. Iron Maiden is almost a universal household name, and The Iron Maidens are onto something. Warren concedes to the rock-plus-sex alchemy, likening it to her childhood idol, Wonder Woman.

"Most men just look at that body and say, 'Wow-wah-wah.' But I looked up to her. I thought, 'Wow, she's so great. She looks great and she's a just person, fighting for what she believes in.' I've kinda tried to mix that concept with The Iron Maidens, to dress like Maiden, but try to feminize it."

The germ for The Iron Maidens was planted when Warren was 14. Already performing in "competitive groups of little girls," she heard Maiden's classic *Number of the Beast* and was forever changed.

“I played that album every day for months! It was just the most incredible thing I’d heard in my life—it was metal, but it wasn’t. As opposed to other bands that were mostly chord-based, they used all these dual-guitar leads. And the vocals of Bruce Dickinson ... incredible.”

Henceforth, she picked up a guitar and every Maiden album she could get her hands on, playing with garage bands until she went to college and became absorbed in other performing arts. Music fell aside until 1998, when she endeavored to form a cover band, performing songs by Iron Maiden, Queensryche and Heart.

“I didn’t know what a tribute band was,” she says. “I just wanted to meet some people that are cool, and I could get along with, and we can do songs by bands I was into, that I thought would sound OK with my voice.”

Shortly into the band’s creation, Warren stumbled across Revelations, an Iron Maiden tribute band. Since Dickinson’s style had molded her own, Warren figured a Maiden tribute band with a female singer might be a smash; the band’s direction was summarily diverted. Taking their name, as tribute bands are wont to do, from an Iron Maiden song, Wrathchild gigged with semi-success for over a year. That is, until Warren and Wrathchild bassist Melanie Sisneros (later replaced by Wanda “Steph Harris” Ortiz) met guitarists Sara “MiniMurray” Marsh and Josephine “Adrienne Smith” Draven and drummer Linda “Nicki McBurrain” McDonald and Wrathchild went all-female. Guess what happened?

“We made the changeover and our fan base got a lot bigger. People would come see one Wrathchild show, or two. But a lot of people, since we’re all female, they come to every single Iron Maidens show.”

The Iron Maidens recreate their heroes at what Warren considers their peak: the 1985 *Live After Death* World Slavery Tour, which featured the band’s most elaborate staging and what has come to encompass their greatest hits, among them “Run to the Hills,” “The Trooper,” “Number of the Beast” and “Die With Your Boots On.” Granted, the Maidens can’t replicate it exactly, but through props (including their own version of Maiden’s monster-puppet mascot, Eddie) and chops, they get it pretty damn close. Close enough, anyway, to win over stalwart fans of the original, as well as the men of Iron Maiden themselves, who’ve passed on kudos and free use of their infamous logo.

“We have one guy that’s been to 18 of our shows now. He’s the kind of guy who would see Maiden every tour a zillion times. We’ve had grabbers, gropers, people who just—I don’t think they’re trying to cause us harm—they’re just *so* excited. They’ll grab your hand to shake your hand and practically pull your arm out of your socket. We always have a little bit of that. Everybody just gets very excited.”

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