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INTERVIEW WITH THE IRON MAIDENS

Author: Hong Rui | Filed under: Interviews, The Iron Maidens, USA

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Perhaps the most famous Iron Maiden tribute band ever, The Iron Maidens consist of 4 hard rocking girls, constantly tearing down the stages that they perform on with their excellent covers of Maiden classics new and old. We talk to the band to learn more about their history and how they managed to get famed Maiden artist, Derek Riggs to help do their album artwork.



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HMT: Greetings, Maidens! You sure are a hardworking band, with performances every night! The band has gained the attention of many prominent figures, including Iron Maiden themselves. How does that feel?



The Iron Maidens with Steve Harris, 2004

Linda: It's a total honor to get recognition especially because it is not our own material we are playing. Iron Maiden fans are very critical and protective of this wonderful music and to know we are getting thumbs up means we are not butchering the songs. Yay! A good feeling indeed!

Kirsten: It feels awesome! Just having the opportunity to play this music in front of fellow Maiden fans is such a high, so catching the attention of the members of THE Iron Maiden is just icing on the cake!

Wanda: We feel very fortunate to be as successful as we are . :)

Courtney: Pretty extraordinary It still amazes me how big this project has gotten over the years every time we play....

When The Iron Maidens first started back in 2001, did it ever occur to the band that it will gain such popularity and notice from fans and media all over the world?

Linda: Never in our wildest thoughts did that occur to us. We knew it was going to catch on at least at a local level because there were always people watching us through the rehearsal room doors ever since our first rehearsal so we were aware that it was something people were interested in seeing. But, to think we would still be doing it nearly 10 years later and taking this show all over the world is truly something we did not expect.

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Kirsten: I wasn't with the band in the beginning days, but I imagine that worldwide recognition was probably not foremost on the girls' minds.

Wanda: No, I don't think so, because the band was started just for fun.

Courtney: Although i was not a member when the band first started, we are always grateful for the success we have received no matter how small or large.

Was there any particular reason that The Iron Maidens was formed as an all-female band?

Linda: Because there were no other all female tribute bands to Iron Maiden and we were 5 girls who wanted to just play Maiden all day long!

Kirsten: Again, my fellow band mates who are founding members can answer this better, but I say "why the hell not?! We all know that girls rock just as hard as guys, so it was about time!" And of course I'm grateful to them for having the vision as well as the balls to do so! :)

Wanda: We just wanted to be fun and different and show that girls can rock too.

Courtney: It is more impressive I think, there is more to prove and to conquer as an all female group.... but what do I know I'm just a girl! teehee haha ;)



Kirsten "Bruce Chickinson"

The metal scene is generally dominated by males. When The Iron Maidens started out, were there any difficulties that the band faced due to the gender of all the members?

Linda: The metal scene used to be dominated by males, but it is not such an oddity these days to see women playing sweaty, fast and aggressive metal in my opinion any more. Of course in the beginning we had to deal with people crossing their arms and expecting us to just plain suck and mutilate the songs, but it is our responsibility to remind them that we are all in the same venue to celebrate the music of Maiden and girls can rock it just as well as the boys can. ;-)

Kirsten: I can't speak about any difficulties before I joined the band, but I haven't personally felt or noticed the band being held back due to our gender. I do know that occasionally there are "doubters" who come to the show, expecting to see a bunch of girls suck at performing this type of music. Boy, are they surprised!

Wanda: Only at the beginning because there are always people who have this preconception that women can't play this type of music competently. However, after we finish a few songs and people see that we can really pull it off , preconceptions go out the window and everyone just starts having a good time.

Courtney: There will always be the battle between sexes At the end of the day, the gender of a player means nothing- it is how you perform the music and play. You can either do it or you can't period.

What do you think is the reason that The Iron Maidens managed to catch so many prominent figures' attention while so many other Iron Maiden tribute bands out there are not getting such attention?

Linda: Boobies. Ha ha - I'm just kidding! I don't really know. We do know a lot of people collectively within the band and that never hurts to know the right people and invite them up for a jam when we are in their neighborhood or on the road in the same city I suppose.

Kirsten: Well, certainly the fact that we're women in a

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Linda "Nikki McBURRain"

male-dominated music genre plays a big part in getting noticed, but the band would have been dismissed long ago or treated as a joke if we didn't have the chops to pull it off. I'm very proud to be playing with such excellent musicians as my band mates! And another factor is our attention to the stage show—we've got Eddie, exploding CO2 canisters, and iconic props and costuming to really give people as much of the Iron Maiden experience as we can!

Wanda: Well, we're the only all-girl Maiden tribute so that makes us different. I guess you could say we're a novelty act.

Courtney: I believe we go the extra mile sometimes with our stage show (not to mention the hard work we put into making the songs sound as perfect as possible)... instead of just playing the songs we incorporate the key aspects of the iron maiden live performance such as the Co2 cannons and monsters.... you cant have maiden without an eddie or two or three... maybe 5? haha

It was recently announced that Sara Marsh has departed from the band due to personal and medical issues. Out of curiosity, would it be possible to elaborate on the reason why she split with the band?

Linda: When the time comes that people just cannot work together in harmony as a unit any longer then it is time to be let go. We wish Sara all the best and nothing but success in whatever she does next.

Kirsten: The band decided that it was time to part company with Sara for the sake of everyone's best interests. But we wish her well.

Wanda: During her time with us, she had a lot of medical problems and it seemed like we were always having to look for pharmacies or doctors while on the road. She also seemed to be having a run of bad luck with personal issues which were not easy to deal with. These issues made it difficult for the band to operate smoothly and, after we almost all got sent home from our last Japanese tour as a result, we decided it would be best to part ways. We haven't talked to her since she left but we wish her the best.

Courtney: The band decided to let her go for numerous reasons that i care not to get into as that period of time has passed and is over and will never be relived nor revived again. The future is bright for us. Though She is missed.

The Iron Maidens have covered a lot of songs from Iron Maiden's classic era. Have there been covers from their more recent albums, and if so, how are the fan reactions?

Linda: Yes, we've done a couple from Dance of Death and they seem to go over very well with the audiences mixed in with the classics. Though we like to stick with the older classics that don't get played much anymore by Maiden themselves, I would love to add a few more just to change it up every now and then!

Kirsten: Well, I guess it depends what is considered "recent" but I notice the strongest fan reactions to songs from the "classic" era.

Wanda: Yes, we do more recent Maiden songs. Quite honestly, we don't get the same reaction that we get when we play the older favorites but people still seem happy to hear them.

Courtney: We recently added a tune off of dance of death (rainmaker) and the fans loved it.



Courtney "Adriana Smith"

Will there ever come a day when The Iron Maidens decide to write Iron Maiden-inspired originals?

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Linda: I'd never say never. We are all heavily influenced by Maiden so it would be a natural inspiration I would think.

Kirsten: Hmm... Interesting... Well, as a tribute band I see us sticking to Iron Maiden's material. And all the members are also involved in various side projects. But who knows what the future holds...

Wanda: We've talked about it but, since we all have busy schedules, it's been hard to find the time to get something else going. It would be fun though. :)

Courtney: I don't know as a band...but we all have or have had our own side projects.. Originals are definitely in my future when i get to the point in my life where i have something to say and express but I'm not going to specifically try to write songs that sound like Maiden... what ever comes out comes out.... Id personally like to write a thrash album one day.

We see that The Iron Maiden's first album artwork was done by original Iron Maiden artist, Derek Riggs. How did the collaboration with him come about?

Linda: Wanda contacted him via the internet. Gotta love the power of www!!

Kirsten: You know, I'd like to know the answer to that question, too! (haha :) I don't know how it came about but I'm sure happy that it did. Not only does the band benefit from his tremendous talent, but Derek and his wife Kim are absolutely lovely people.

Wanda: I went to his website (www.derekriggs.com) and e-mailed him about our doing artwork and luckily, he was able to help us out.

Courtney: Not exactly sure as i was not in the band at the time.



Wanda "Steph Harris"

It seems that with the rising popularity of The Iron Maidens, more all-female tribute bands have started sprouting. How does it feel to be one who leads the trend?

Linda: Really awesome! :) I am happy that we can influence and encourage more females to just do it and get out there and play!! We get a lot of young girls at our all-ages shows that come and tell us that we inspired them to start playing an instrument and, to me, that is what it is all about; sharing the love of music and playing music.

Kirsten: It feels great to see other all-female bands out there, whether they're tributes or original projects. And I'm just grateful to be a part of this whole experience!

Wanda: It feels great because we've always hoped to inspire more women to play.

Courtney: Don't really think about it too much ...I just love playing live with the girls and if other girls want to play out too then why the hell not! Power to them.

Is there pressure among the band members while performing live, to live up to the standards of the original songs performed by the original band? Age may be catching up with Iron Maiden but they still seem active and are definitely still one of the best bands to watch live.

Linda: Always! We are a tribute band and that's what we are supposed to do - emulate the original as closely as possible without looking like a cheap and cheesy imitation hack wannabe! Ha ha ha!

Kirsten: Everyone is encouraged to act natural and have a good time, yet certain signature moves (i.e., Bruce's foot on the monitor) are also given consideration. Yeah, you're right, Iron Maiden really haven't slowed down at all and especially Bruce (who I've got my eye on the most, naturally) is still incredibly athletic. Now, please understand the stages we play are generally smaller than the one at an Iron Maiden concert so there's not as much room for running and leaping—at least that's my excuse! (haha)

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Wanda: Of course there is: a good tribute band tries to emulate the original as closely as possible and doing Maiden isn't easy!

Courtney: There is always pressure but when you have five girls who love what they do and love the music they are playing, the songs are easy to master and perform live... If I am too sore to move the next day after playing live at a show- I know I did my job. haha



So when performing live do The Iron Maidens stick to the original sound as much as possible or do you try to add in your own touch?

Linda: As a rule of being a tribute band you must stick to the original as much as possible, but, as a rule of a 10-year old tribute band, we are allowed to put a little individual personal stamp on it as long as it does not take away from the original feel of the song.

Kirsten: We do try to capture the nuances as much as possible and be true to the material, but it's inevitable that we'll also put our own thumbprint on the performance. After all, we're not trying to merely imitate, but rather pay homage to Iron Maiden.

Wanda: We try to stick to the original sound as closely as possible.

Courtney: We try to stick to the sound as much as possible but it is more about the feel.... anyone can pick up a guitar and play the notes but it's the feeling behind those notes that brings the song to life and transforms maiden into the musical beast that they've become.... I put a little Courtney flare into my performance when I can but it is a natural thing because even though I cover Adrian Smith, I am myself.

Is The Iron Maidens a full time job for the band members? Do any of the band members hold a job outside of The Iron Maidens?

Linda: I play with a couple other bands with Courtney and Kirsten and am a hired gun for bands in need of a fill in drummer. I also provide pet care aside from drumming. Dogs are my other big love in life along with drums.

Kirsten: We are incredibly fortunate to get to tour all over the U.S. as well as the world with this band—especially in an industry that is extremely difficult to earn a living—but some of us still hold down outside jobs, too.

Wanda: No, we all have other jobs.

Courtney: It is a full time job for me for now... I tried holding a nine to five job at a Victoria's Secret store in a local mall recently but it only lasted a few months, as I had to take off every other day it seemed like for the band! haha

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The Iron Maidens' answer to Iron Maiden's Eddie

Would it be possible for the band to describe your live set up? We see that you are endorsing brands such as Jackson guitars, Paiste cymbals and Drum Workshop drums.

Linda: I am happy and proud to endorse Paiste Cymbals; DW Drums, Hardware and Pedals; and Vic Firth Drum Sticks. My live setup is a most wonderful combination of DW Collectors Series Birch drums (oooh, they are soooooo beautiful and sound even more gorgeous than they look!!) with a Burnt Toast fade over a Mapa Burl exotic wrap. My live cymbal setup is 14" 2002 Heavy Hi-hat, 22" Powerslave Ride, 17" Singature Power Crash, 17" RUDE Thin Crash, 18" RUDE Thin Crash, 20" 2002 Novo China, 18" RUDE Crash/Ride. DW 9002 Pedals and Vic Firth 5b wood tip sticks.

Kirsten: Ah, my set-up is the easiest of all! I have my wireless SHURE SM58 mic (although I always love it when I get the chance to use a SHURE Beta 87) and I use Senheisser in-ear monitors.

Wanda: Everyone in the band has endorsements and their own unique set up. The band's endorsements include BBE Sound, Coffin Case, DW Drums, G&L guitars, Jackson guitars, Paiste, Peavey amps, Rotosound strings, Schroeder Superior Sound cabinets, and Vic Firth drum sticks. As far as my gear goes, I use G&L basses, Schroeder cabinets, a BBE B-Max T Pre amp, Rotosound strings, and a QSC power amp.

Courtney: I endorse Jackson guitars, Peavey amplifiers, Dimarzio pickups., Dunlop picks and Accessories, Floyd upgrades, BBE effects, and Ghs strings. Live I use my Custom Adrian Smith San Dimas from Jackson guitars, a Valve King Half Stack from Peavey and a few different pedals such as a delay and a boost pedal etc. from my endorsers.



Nicko McBrain once mentioned that he hardly, if ever, uses double bass pedals. When playing the songs, does the band emulate the band's methods of playing or do you have your own styles?

Linda: I don't possess a speedy right foot like Nicko has so I do use a double pedal for the spots I need to emulate his fast foot and also for splashes of my own style here and there and big endings at the end of some songs.

Kirsten: I think it's a combination of both, but for each member it's different.

Wanda: We try to emulate the band's style as closely as possible but sometimes this doesn't always come naturally. Since I started on upright bass, and not bass guitar, Steve's fingerings don't come naturally for me. I have a different musical background, so I got comfortable playing in positions other than what Steve would use. As a result, I'll play the right notes but in a different position than what Steve would do ..and a few audience members have actually noticed! Oftentimes, I need to watch videos to see what he's doing to get everything right.

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Courtney: We try to get as close as we can but personally I don't use the exact equipment that Adrian uses, other than his guitar... I use what works for me and I make it sound as close to Smith as possible.

One final question: any advices for aspiring musicians out there?

Linda: Yes – practice practice, practice, and be confident but not cocky. Also do NOT use drugs – they don't help anyone or anything sound better ever!!

Kirsten: Well, I don't have any advice that I'm sure most aspiring musicians haven't already heard. You know, "have fun, believe in yourself, and DON'T BE A JERK." Also, do it because you love making/performing music—not because you expect to "make it" or get rich.

Wanda: Keep practicing and don't get discouraged. If you practice enough, you can play anything. :)

Courtney: Stay true to yourself and know that no matter how good you may be- there will ALWAYS be someone who is better so don't let an ego consume you. Long live rock and roll.

Once again, thank you for taking the time off for this interview. We look forward to hear more material from the band, and wish you all the best for any upcoming endeavours!

Linda: Cheers!! Thank you so much!!! Up the Bloody Irons!!!! And don't forget to visit us online at www.theironmaidens.com We hope to see you in a town near you soon!!!

Kirsten: The pleasure is mine. Thank YOU very much and—UP THE IRONS!

Courtney: UP THE IRONS!



The Iron Maidens' official website.

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