

STEVE HARRIS

Steve Harris is the living embodiment of **Iron Maiden**, the man who has successfully steered the band through an amazing 45-year career. Here he talks about his enduring passion for Maiden and why he's as mad for it as ever...

BASSIST STEVE HARRIS IS Iron Maiden's undisputed leader, the force behind the legendary British heavy metal band since its inception way back in 1975. His unique vision, coupled with an extraordinary personal drive, helped Maiden become one of the world's biggest rock acts and sustain a remarkable career spanning more than 45 years. At the age of 64 Harris is still fit and strong, and as passionate about his band as ever he was. But the first thing you notice when you meet him is just how unassuming he is. At first it's hard to equate the low-key fella standing chatting with you offstage with the dynamo who competes with vocalist Bruce Dickinson to dominate proceedings onstage whenever they perform. Band manager Rod Smallwood admits that Maiden's iconic Eddie character was invented precisely because Harris was so shy and so quiet. Smallwood needed something, as he put it, "that could roar for the band."

Don't be fooled by that, though. Never one to shout his mouth off and take over a room, 'Harry' is nevertheless incredibly headstrong wherever Maiden is concerned. He's always had that clarity of purpose and is never one for turning once his mind's made up. Then again, why would he be? Iron Maiden's incredible success is testament to Harris's intuitive understanding of what rock fans really want. These days nobody is in any doubt that it's Steve Harris who calls the shots. So finding out what really makes Mr Maiden tick is an interesting exercise...

STEVE, ANOTHER YEAR, ANOTHER HUGE MAIDEN TOUR. IS IT A SOURCE OF GREAT SATISFACTION THAT THE BAND IS STILL SO COMMERCIALY SUCCESSFUL FULLY 45 YEARS AFTER YOU FIRST STARTED?

"I think Rod gets excited about that kind of thing. He likes the figures. Bruce gets excited about all that too. When he's on stage he'll often say that there are so many thousand people in the hall that night. I don't really get all that excited about those kinds of things – but I'm not blasé about it either. It's fantastic that people still want to come and see us; it's brilliant and wonderful. But a few hundred more or a few hundred less at each gig wouldn't bother me. I'm not a bean counter. I never have been concerned about that. Of course everybody wants to sell out their gigs and with a band like Maiden people are amazed if we *don't* sell out a show. But does it really matter? I remember doing a gig in Oklahoma not that long ago where we did half of what we did in some of the other venues on the tour, and yet the reaction that night was fantastic, because the people who were there *really* wanted to be there. Some of those periphery people

perhaps come because they simply want to be part of a rock'n'roll show. And there's nothing wrong with that either. But sometimes it can make the gigs a little less intense. You can't change that, of course, so we still go out and give 110 per cent no matter what. But in a weird way perhaps you give that little bit more at the shows where there are fewer people, because you feel you've got a point to prove."

MAIDEN IS IN THAT LUCKY POSITION WHERE YOU'VE RETAINED A HUGE PROPORTION OF YOUR ORIGINAL DIEHARD FANS, WHILE AT THE SAME TIME ATTRACTING A LOT OF YOUNGER PEOPLE...

"That's right. We're very lucky, because that seems to happen naturally for us in most places. Funnily enough, the places where it doesn't happen quite as naturally are the UK and the US. So we consciously did something about that. We did the Ozzfest in the States back in 2005, because there were a lot of younger bands on the bill which meant there was a younger audience. We played before Sabbath, which was weird, because we hadn't gone on before someone else in the States since '82. But it worked really well. Then we did the same thing in the UK that same year when we did the Reading and Leeds Festivals. Those gigs tend to sell out no matter who's on the bill, so at Reading there were probably around 40,000 people, with maybe 8,000 to 10,000 Maiden fans. The rest of the crowd weren't. It was a challenge. You know you're not going to get the same reaction you normally do, even to the old stuff, because lots of people simply don't know it. But the trade off is that you're going to pick up new fans. So we did these things because they felt like the right thing to do at the time. And I find that if it feels right, then it usually *is* right."

WHAT DO YOU THINK THOSE YOUNGER FANS GET OUT OF COMING TO SEE IRON MAIDEN?

"I don't know – and I never try to second-guess those things. I remember being 11 or 12 and looking at the sixth formers in my school who were 16 and thinking they looked really old. So if I were 14 now looking at us – looking at us even 20 years ago – I'd be thinking, 'F*ck me, they look old.' But these days it's become much more acceptable for people to be old. A lot of rock musicians are still out there doing it and good luck to them. Years ago it was a young person's business, but it's not like that so much anymore. Maybe young people want to see older bands because it's a classic line-up, but I don't really know. It looks to me like our audience has regenerated ►

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