

'IRON MAIDEN' FROM PAGE 14
bit of a break and have some time to ourselves. We're thinking of about six months."

You've possibly been the hardest-working band in the world for the last few years haven't you?

"Yeah, probably the hardest-working rock 'n' roll band on the planet, I should think. But every band has to do that at one point in its career, because you've just got to go out and play to those people. You've just got to do it, there's no short cut or easy way. And the advantage of doing that is that you end up with fans for life — not just fans for one tour or something like that. Which is nice, because I enjoy touring. But I know at the beginning of this tour we all took a deep breath and went 'well, here we go.' It was definitely take the plunge chaps and let's hope it works out alright. I'm very pleased with the way it's gone. Obviously there's been the odd up-down thing, where people have gotten a bit depressed or homesick in the middle of it. But really, as soon as we hit Australia, everybody was going, 'oh, great.' Everybody was getting up for breakfast for a change — because it was worth eating."

I imagine trekking across America must have been hard at times.

"You do get to feel sometimes as though you're some kind of robot that gets up there and performs — and then they take you away and put you back in your box. You have to get the right mental approach to each individual country you tour, I think, to get the best out of it and enjoy it."

This must be very nearly the end of the tour for you, though?

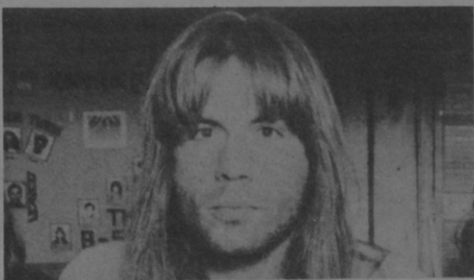
"Well, we've got another two and a half or three months to go yet. This tour's going to last for just over a year."

With the rise of video, it's becoming almost rare for bands to undertake major tours — yet you'd obviously contend that touring consolidates support a lot more.

"Yeah, you can't actually relate to a video. And furthermore, when you do everything with videos and people go and see the act live, they're generally disappointed. There's two reasons for that, one because they probably expect to see the video on the stage and the other reason is because bands who do a lot of videos don't generally do a lot of concerts and therefore they don't really know how to get and keep a crowd in a live environment. It's like the old sort of music hall days or the circus or something like that. You've got to know how to play an audience and it takes a lot of time to learn."

Are you conscious of trying to give the fans value for money, put on a show?

"Yeah, absolutely. If all we wanted to do was just go out and stand in front of people and collect the applause ... actually, if we did that then we'd make a lot more money! As it is, we always



go as far as is reasonably possible within the budget we've got. Actually, we usually overspend on touring every year — we're just lucky that more people come to see us each year so we get it back and the bank manager doesn't come screaming down on top of our heads. For this tour we borrowed a million dollars. That was to purchase this huge PA and light system we've got in America and also to put the stage production together. We've just about paid that back now — that would be all the profits from America and all round the world.

"But in the financial thing we've got to build in losses. Like the East European bit lost 35 grand and this Pacific jaunt — Honolulu, Japan, Australia, New Zealand — is losing us \$130,000. So again, it's a conscious decision, we want to do it. That's an enormous sum of money, but when you look at all the album sales in Australia, Japan and New Zealand and add them up, it probably comes to about the same. So, on balance, we don't lose anything in the long run. We don't actually make a loss at the end of the day, but then we don't make any profit either. But who cares? The reason you do it is because you want to do it. And because we've got a certain amount of pride in the fact that if we've got a big following of Iron Maiden fans somewhere and we've gone in there we've never lost one yet. The following that was there at the beginning is still there and is even bigger, in every country in the world. So we want to keep it like that."

Will you be bringing Eddie with you to this country?

"Oh yes, I'd say there's a very good chance that Eddie will put in an appearance ..."

I recall reading some time ago that he was no more and you were doing shows without him.

"No, no, we've never done a show without Eddie. We occasionally like to put rumours out about him, like that he's dead or something like that, just to make people go 'Oh no! You can't do that, you can't kill Eddie!'"

The band's had that strong image thing, with Eddie and the album covers, virtually right through. How did it come about — has it been a deliberate thing?

"Well, initially, obviously it was deliberate. We

had a rubber mask made up and stuck it on the manager and he used to wander round on stage with fire extinguishers, squirting dry ice at people. After that we thought we might as well make this thing a bit more sophisticated and then we thought, well, we could do all kinds of stuff with it. And now we can give free reign to our imaginations really."

Do you think the strong image thing has been an important part of the band's success?

"Well ... yes it has, but not in a way that it's overshadowed the music. The reason the band is successful is basically because of the music. You can have a strong image thing and lousy music and people will buy it for one album, but they won't buy it for five albums. I think it's just more a part of the whole Iron Maiden thing, that we never let anything go. As far as t-shirts are concerned, we want Iron Maiden t-shirts to be the best t-shirts, and it's the same with the show — we want people to get the best sound system and the best lights. The covers are the same — we want really high quality covers and value for money when people buy the records, because it reflects on us if it's not. It's not just a matter of good marketing and shit like that, it's just personal pride."

On 'Minutes To Midnight' on Powerslave you've taken a political stand on the nuclear issue. Are you aware of this country's ban on nuclear-armed ships?

"Yeah — it was a matter of the Americans refusing to say whether or not there were nuclear weapons on board, because it wasn't US policy, wasn't it? But I can't believe a nuclear-powered vessel wouldn't have nuclear weapons on board."

Is that an issue you feel strongly about?

"Well ... it goes beyond just the nuclear thing. I'm a bit of a cynic about all this, because I don't think it matters a damn whether you've got a nuclear-armed vessel in your port — because they're still going to nuke New Zealand. It doesn't matter if you haven't even got any guns in the damn place — if there's nobody else left in the world, New Zealand has won. If there's no America and no Russia and no Europe and New Zealand's left, then they've won. But if the Russians can blow up New Zealand as well ..."

No one wins ...

"Yeah — but then that's the whole fucking idea. Mutually Assured Destruction — it's ridiculous."

You've made the odd political comment before — 'Run To the Hills' comes to mind.

"Yeah, 'Run To the Hills' was, sort of, but it was a bit diluted in the final instance. I always take a very ambivalent point of view of the video — because it went 'ha ha ha, look at all the Indians getting shot,' y'know. And it was all very funny with Buster Keaton and all — but the song was actually quite serious, that was what the song was complaining about. I don't know whether people really got that."

And there was the stabbed Maggie Thatcher on the cover of the 'Sanctuary' single ...

"Yeah, that wasn't actually designed to be a political point — it got interpreted as that. It was more a caricature than designed to establish that the band was left wing or right wing or anything else like that. Probably a bit of a publicity stunt really (laughs)."

You seem to have avoided a lot of the blatant sexist imagery associated with other metal bands. Has that been a deliberate thing on your part?

"I find it pretty boring to be perfectly honest. What goes on between the sheets is much more fun to do than to write about, so I just keep it like that. Also, I don't think that heavy metal people or rock people or musicians in general are anything special. People like to think they are, just because they're in the public glare all the time. Obviously they get a lot of attention from women — just people who want to somehow be part of the success. People's attitude is 'well maybe if I could go to bed with him, maybe I could be just a little bit as famous as he is' — I think that's probably what goes on in peoples' heads. Of course some people don't, maybe I'm being a bit too cynical — maybe it's just that people get on (laughs) — it does happen."

Do you think there's a danger of getting too detached when you're touring all the time? Is it something you have to watch against?

"It's something that happens inevitably in some situations, especially in America. In America, I think it's probably a good thing. Because we just, y'know, get out of our little bubble, walk on stage, then go back into the cocoon again. Because we've got about 40 people on the road with us in America — it's like a big gang really. Everybody knows everybody else and everybody gets on and that keeps you entertained and that's like your family when you're on the road. I don't

really like to get too close to America. But I have some friends in America and I have hobbies that I pursue when I'm on the road that get me out to people who know nothing about rock 'n' roll at all — which I find very refreshing."

Something else that seems to have been happening in America is the consternation over the black magic and occult thing in metal. It's not something you've really dwelt on — but have you had trouble from people who've seen, say 'Number Of the Beast'?

"Yeah, one or two people. In America there's always the odd nutcase. They go over the top over there, on anything. They can't have a diet to lose a little bit of weight, they have to change their entire life in order to lose about five pounds. And they can't have a couple of beers a day — they have to sit there and measure themselves to see whether they're becoming alcoholics. It's such an obsessive country and they're obsessed with everything. You can find obsessive people in America, if you look, about virtually every subject from ingrown toenails to wanting to be a mercenary. And the black magic, devil worshipping thing, there are people in America who are obsessed with that, on both sides. There are people who really do go round with upside crosses, writing pentagrams on walls, and they're just as looney as the people who stand there in white suits thumping the pulpit and saying how Kiss stands for 'Knights In Satan's Service' and if you play Iron Maiden backwards you get this, that and the other ... We're all English and we just treat the whole thing as a bit of a joke — I think most of the rest of the Anglo-Saxon population of the world does so too."

So if Iron Maiden isn't about all those things, what is the band about?

"Ah, the \$64,000 question. I suppose at the root, the band's about energy. Which is what all music's about really, because you have to start off with some source of energy in order to create the music, create the atmosphere. And that's what we're about — taking the collective five of us, what we feel and the things that happen between us when we play instruments and trying to communicate that to the audience."

Another musical movement that hangs itself on capital-E Energy is the American hardcore scene — and there's a degree of crossover, fan-wise, between that and metal. Did you have any contact with the hardcore scene while you were in America?

"Not really, no. I've got a girlfriend in America who's sort of halfway into Iron Maiden and used to disappear now and again and go and watch people doing this ridiculous thing they've got over there called slam dancing. Which strikes me as being a really good way of reducing the number of people in your audience, have them carried out in coffins. What they do is, they climb onto the balcony or the PA at these punk concerts and then they jump off — absolutely flat! And they just slam into the floor — it's the most brainless thing I've ever seen!"

Back to the live album — why has it taken so long to do one? There's been the Maiden Japan EP but no album.

"Well, we did Maiden Japan and then we did Number Of the Beast and that was such a successful album we thought, well we'd better do another one before we do a live album. And we did Piece of Mind, then we really started to crack it in the States, so we thought well we'd better do another one before we do a live album — and it just kept getting better and better. We didn't want to do a live album too early and regret it, but we had to do it this time because we've got five albums to get onto it."

So what happens when the tour's over and the live album's mixed and it's time for a rest?

"I'm going to go back to England and play sport for six months — fencing."

And then there'll be another album and tour?

"Er, yeah."

How long do you think you can sustain that kind of touring? Or is it easy?

"Well, the next tour will be shorter than this one — we're not going to do any more 13 month tours. I think six months is about right for us. I think you have to review the situation every couple of albums; 'How we standing up to touring chaps? Still got two arms and two legs?'"

You think you'll always enjoy it?

"Yeah, you always enjoy it. Even if you think you're getting a bit jaded, a week off the road, just a change of environment is enough. Before you know it you're up on stage in some tiny little pub somewhere, singing 'House of the Rising Sun' with the local band. And you really get off on it and you go 'Yeah, that's great — now let me go back to Madison Square Garden please!'"

Scorcher Laidlaw

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