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Diamond Head

To the Devil His Due [DVD]

(MVD Visual)

US release date: 21 November 2006

UK release date: 21 August 2006

by **Adrien Begrand**

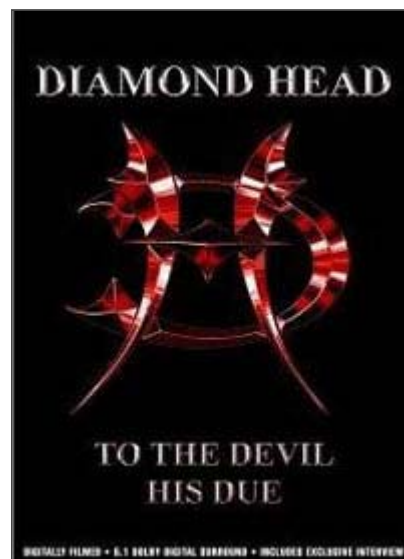
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While Iron Maiden and Def Leppard are the most renowned bands to have emerged from the New Wave of British Heavy Metal scene in the late '70s and early '80s, one could argue that, with just one album, Diamond Head had an even bigger influence on the development of the metal genre as a whole. That one album, '80's *Lightning to the Nations*, ranks as one of the greatest metal albums of the '80s, and although it didn't generate the kind of UK sales that rival discs like *Iron Maiden* and *On Through the Night* did around the same time, it benefited greatly from word of mouth among the metal underground, ultimately reaching the American West Coast, where a couple of teenagers named Ulrich and Hetfield discovered it for themselves and wound up basing the sound of their new band on what they were hearing on that record. Relentlessly fast songs like "Helpless" and "The Prince" helped pave the way for the thrash metal movement, and not only did the epic, doom-laden "Am I Evil" contain one of the most wicked metal intro riffs ever recorded, but Metallica's now-legendary 1984 cover of the tune brought new attention to Diamond Head's early work, the band collecting royalties from the cover for years.

Sadly, Diamond Head's career trajectory was bumpier than that of Iron Maiden and Def Leppard, as 1982's fascinating, yet horribly inconsistent *Borrowed Time* and 1983's pretentious *Canterbury* all but ended any hopes of cashing on the '80s metal wave. For a band that seemed to have all the right ingredients, from musicianship, to songwriting, to respect among metal fans, to a formidable lead singer in the smooth-voiced Sean Harris, to see it all fizzle in a matter of a couple years was devastating. Thanks to bands like Metallica and Megadeth, though, who helped turn a new generation of teens to Diamond Head's music, the band has gained respect over the years, eventually opening the door for a pair of reunion albums, 1993's *Death and Progress* and 2005's *All Will be Revealed*.

The 2006 incarnation of Diamond Head has only guitarist Brian Tatler as the sole original member remaining, after the firing of Harris in 2004, but the replacement musicians, for all their anonymity, do a capable job in a back-up role on this new live DVD, recorded at London's Astoria a year ago. Most impressive is new singer Nick Tart, whose vocal style bears a strong similarity to that of Harris, but delivers it with more enthusiasm and charisma, which plays a big role in why this performance is so appealing.

Diamond Head might valiantly try to keep the creative fires burning, but they remain primarily a retro act; the punters come to hear the classics, and while we do get sporadic plugs for the new CD and performances of such decent new fare as "Mine All Mine" and "Give it to Me" (from *All Will be Revealed*), the old material remains central to the set. And Tatler and company absolutely cook on the older material, such as on the cruising "It's Electric", the blues-drenched "Sucking My Love", and the anthemic "Lightning to the Nations", while the



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stupendous triumvirate of "The Prince", "Helpless", and "Am I Evil?" are bolstered by both Tatler's lithe, ageless lead fills and Tart's versatile singing. In total, all but one *Lightning to the Nations* track is performed, along with *Canterbury* obscurity "To the Devil His Due" and the *Borrowed Time* gem "In the Heat of the Night", which closes the set on a rousing note.

Professionally shot (not a cameraman in sight, which is always good), and neatly presented in both surround and stereo mixes, it's an enjoyable live document of an intimate concert, but if there's one gripe, it's that the crowd is a little too laid back, the majority of whom stand politely until the fantastic final 20 minutes. Despite the decided lack of atmosphere, the band does a good job making up for it, the music sounding much more youthful than Tatler's grizzled mug would let on, answering the question, "Am I evil?" with a resounding, "Yes, I am."

RATING: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

— 9 January 2007

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