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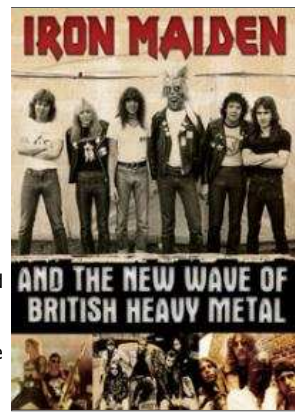
Iron Maiden and the New Wave of British Heavy Metal [DVD]

(Sexy Intellectual) Rated: N/A
US release date: 10 June 2008
UK release date: 12 May 2008

by [Adrien Begrand](#)

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The importance of the New Wave of British Heavy Metal, or NWOBHM as it's more commonly known, cannot be underestimated. Despite its somewhat comical moniker, the musical movement brought new life into a genre that needed it badly in the late 1970s. While metal progenitors like Black Sabbath, Deep Purple, and Uriah Heep started to lose steam in the mid-'70s, a second wave peaked up the slack in the form of Scorpions, Rainbow, UFO, Judas Priest, and Motorhead, but still, each of those bands was itself comprised of veteran musicians who had been playing since the 1960s. The new generation of heavy metal fans still didn't have a voice of its own. With punk rock on the rise, heavy metal was gradually going the way of the dinosaur, and were it not for a handful of ambitious, brash young bands in the UK who would inject the sound with more speed, more complexity, and more energy, the genre would never have exploded the way that it did in the 1980s.



AMAZON

Since the late '70s and early '80s, metal music has splintered enough times to confuse even Pete Frame. The various subgenres have become so complex that it's easy for some people, especially younger fans, to lose sight of the influence and diversity of NWOBHM, and how its bands played a major role in laying the foundation for everything from thrash metal to doom to death metal to black metal. Just as Tony Iommi's three-note riff on "Black Sabbath" turned heavy rock music on its ear, Diamond Head's "Am I Evil?" influenced American thrash. Def Leppard would conquer America in a way that UFO could only dream of. Iron Maiden would rise from the pubs of East London to become arguably the greatest metal band of all time. Hell, black metal wouldn't even have a name were it not for Venom.

As each year passes, the more we need thorough retrospectives and examinations of British metal's new wave, and despite boasting a title that comes off as a cheaply-made unauthorized biography, the two and a half hour documentary (take a deep breath, folks) *Iron Maiden and the New Wave of British Heavy Metal* (whew!) does an absolutely splendid job detailing the gradual rise and inevitable fall of one of the most exciting and fascinating musical eras of the last 30 years.

Focusing on a half dozen bands, it's impossible for the DVD to offer detailed histories of all the major bands (such stalwarts as Angel Witch, Tank, Witchfinder General, Venom, and Raven are passed over), but it does offer a very good cross-section of the genre. We get examinations of heavy hitters Iron Maiden and Def Leppard, favorites Girlschool, Saxon, and Tygers of Pan Tang, also-rans Samson and Praying Mantis, and of course, the genius but ineptly managed Diamond Head, and while the 157 minute running time might test the patience of those who don't get goosebumps upon hearing the opening riff to the Tygers' "Gangland", for those who do, the documentary just flies by.

We're treated to insight from such musicians as past Iron Maiden members Paul Di-Anno and Dennis Stratton, as well as Diamond Head guitarist Brian Tatler, Tygers guitarist Rob Weir, and Samson's irrepressible, balaclava-wearing drummer Barry "Thunderstick" Graham, but *Iron Maiden and the New Wave of British Heavy Metal* proves its worth when we hear from those who covered the scene. Neal Kay, the London DJ who almost single-handedly brought credibility to the burgeoning metal scene, offers tremendous insight, as does Geoff Barton, the *Sounds* magazine writer whose article on Kay's "metal disco" nights

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at Kingsbury's Soundhouse club broke the scene wide open. Veteran writers Malcolm Dome and Jerry Ewing get plenty of camera time, and their commentary and knowledge is invaluable. While the Tygers and Iron Maiden were adored early on, Def Leppard was slagged mercilessly by the record-buying public for pandering to American audiences. And while Praying Mantis was courted by soon-to-be-legendary manager Peter Mensch, and Diamond Head by the manager of Foreigner (whose album 4 was at the top of the charts), both bands bravely turned down the offers, the multi-vocalist Praying Mantis refusing to get a proper frontman, and Diamond Head opting to continue with their singer's mother as manager. Needless to say, both bands lived to greatly regret the decisions.

As for the extra features on the DVD, we do get a few extended interviews, a short clip on the origins of air guitar, which reached positively surreal levels of inanity around 1980 among British teens, and most interestingly, a simply laid-out but surprisingly difficult interactive quiz on NWOBHM history. *Iron Maiden and the New Wave of British Heavy Metal* might look tacky, right down to the disclaimer "This film is not authorized by the current lineup of Iron Maiden, etc...", but its contents are anything but. If the rich, complex history of heavy metal floats your boat, this DVD is absolutely essential.



Tygers of Pan Tang - "Gangland"

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

— 7 October 2008

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