

Iron Maiden - Iron Maiden (1980)

Written by bluesever

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01. *Prowler* - 3:53 02. *Remember Tomorrow* (Steve Harris, Paul Di'Anno) - 5:25 03. *Running Free* (Steve Harris, Paul Di'Anno) - 3:14 04. *Phantom Of The Opera* - 7:19 05. *Transylvania* - 4:05 06. *Strange World* - 5:43 07. *Charlotte The Harlot* (Dave Murray) - 4:11 08. *Iron Maiden* - 3:32 Personnel: - Paul Di'Anno – lead vocals - Dave Murray – guitar - Dennis Stratton – guitar, backing vocals - Steve Harris – bass, backing vocals - Clive Burr – drums + - Will Malone – producer

There may be no better place to hear how both punk and prog rock informed the New Wave of British Heavy Metal than Iron Maiden's self-titled debut. Often overlooked and overshadowed by the glorious Bruce Dickinson years, it's easy to forget that Iron Maiden was itself a game-changer when it appeared on the scene in 1980. That year also saw important albums from Motörhead, Saxon, and Angel Witch, but Iron Maiden vaulted its creators to the head of the NWOBHM pack, reaching the U.K. Top Five and establishing them as an outfit with the talent to build on Judas Priest's late-'70s innovations. On the one hand, Maiden was clearly drawing from elements of punk rock -- the raw D.I.Y. production, the revved-up velocities, and the vocals of rough-and-ready growler Paul Di'Anno, who looked and sounded not like a metal god, but rather a short-haired street tough. On the other hand, Maiden had all the creative ambition of a prog rock band. Compositionally, even their shortest and most straightforward songs featured abrupt changes in tempo and feel. Their musicianship was already light years beyond punk, with complicated instrumental passages between guitarists Dave Murray and Dennis Stratton and bassist Steve Harris. When Murray and Stratton harmonize their leads, they outdo even Priest's legendary tandem in terms of pure speed. The lyrics have similarly high-flying aspirations, spinning first-person stories and character sketches with a flair for the seedy and the grotesque. Add it all up, and Iron Maiden performs the neat trick of reconciling two genres seemingly antithetical to one another, using post-Priest heavy metal as the meeting ground. The seven-minute "Phantom of the Opera" is a landmark, the band's earliest progressive epic and still among its best; with its ambitious fusion of musical styles, its multi-sectioned construction, and the literary retelling of the lyrics, it seemed to encapsulate all the promise of both the band and the NWOBHM. Two of the simpler, punkier rockers, "Running Free" and "Sanctuary" (the latter left off the U.K. version but added to subsequent reissues),

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made the lower reaches of the British singles charts. The flasher tale "Prowler," one of the band's more enduring numbers, is in the same vein, but ups the instrumental complexity, while the title track still remains a concert staple. Elsewhere, the band offers the first of many instrumentals with "Transylvania," introduces the recurring title character of "Charlotte the Harlot," and reimagines Judas Priest's "Beyond the Realms of Death" with the "ballad" "Remember Tomorrow," which starts out soft but closes with a speed-freak guitar section. Perhaps the only hint of a misstep comes on the more restrained ballad "Strange World," the only song from this album that was never re-recorded in a live or alternate version by the Dickinson lineup. Nonetheless, the whole project explodes with energy and ideas, and while the band would certainly go on to refine much of what's here (including the cover painting of mascot Eddie), Iron Maiden would still rank as a landmark even if the Dickinson years had never happened. --- Steve Huey, Rovi

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