



Iron Maiden mascot Eddie and guitarist Dave Murray enjoy an intimate moment in the shower, circa 1981. Here, the man behind the mask is Maiden manager Rod Smallwood.



# NEVER MIND THE BOLLOCKS

THREATENED BY PUNK, LED ZEP, SABBATH AND PURPLE  
CAME UNDER FIRE IN 1977. A YEAR LATER IRON MAIDEN,  
DEF LEPPARD AND SAXON LED A NEW WAVE OF BRITISH  
HEAVY METAL THAT TOOK PUNK ON. AND WON...

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UNDAY NIGHT. APRIL 1979. FIVE HUNDRED PEOPLE ARE CRAMMED INTO THE back room of the Prince of Wales pub in Kingsbury, north-west London. The air, hot and thick, smells of sweat, beer, cigarettes and the odd whiff of patchouli oil. The place is shaking with the sound of music which blasts at excessive volume from two giant speaker stacks at the far end of the long, narrow room. These speakers, part of a state-of-the-art, concert-spec rig, are at odds with the cheap wooden décor reminiscent of a spit-and-sawdust Mexican cantina. Between the PA towers, on a stage bedecked with flashing multi-coloured lights, stands an exceptionally hairy

moustachioed man, his blond mane bobbing excitedly, as he spins tracks by Rush, AC/DC, Black Sabbath and even a swift blast of Hocus Pocus by Dutch progsters Focus. Beneath him a packed dancefloor greets each track with a throaty roar. Two years after punk's Year Zero this should *not* be happening.

Unflatteringly described by journalist Garry Bushell as "a sawn-off Catweazle", Neal Kay, the DJ in question, is not a man affected by the trifles of fashion or what he terms "plastic people". Instead, the one-time soul aficionado is on a mission: a crusade, if you will, to repel the marauding punk unbelievers and recapture the spirit of what he views as *real* rock music – the heavier the better.

Tonight is a special occasion. Two VIP guests are present: Steve Harris and Paul Di'Anno, bassist and vocalist with Iron Maiden, the hottest young metal band in Britain. Kay is the only DJ in the UK to have received a copy of Maiden's very first demo tape, handed to him by Harris just a few weeks before. In that short space of time, he has played it so many times here at his enthusiastically named Bandwagon Heavy Metal Soundhouse that it has become a firm favourite with the regulars. Indeed, the current issue of rock weekly *Sounds* features a new Heavy Metal chart collated by Kay from Bandwagon requests and has Maiden at Number 1 with >



< Prowler, the demo's lead track – above such heavyweights as Judas Priest, Ted Nugent and even the mighty Led Zeppelin.

Flushed with this success, Steve and Paul are at the bar, pints in hand, playing it cool – especially the short-haired Di'Anno, all gezer-ish Cockney swagger. This affected nonchalance soon turns to wide-eyed astonishment when Kay plays Prowler. The song's opening staccato riff is greeted like an instant classic. The audience – mostly teenagers clad in denim and leather – are either punching the air or headbanging furiously. The floor becomes slippery with lager. And one lanky, slightly bedraggled figure is playing along to the riff on a fake guitar made out of hardboard.

Harris, an ex-architectural draftsman from Leytonstone who has just turned 24, grins at his singer and, through the volume, yells in Di'Anno's ear: "Fucking 'ell! This is a bit of all right!"

**I**N THE SUMMER OF '79 THE '80S BEGAN EARLY. JUST AS the Tory party led by the so-called Iron Lady, Margaret Thatcher, ousted 'old' Labour to begin a new era in British politics, so too a new British rock scene – coincidentally led by Iron Maiden – was emerging. Musically speaking, the change had been coming for some time.

As the '70s drew to a close the three iconic British bands of that decade were either defunct or on their last legs. Deep Purple's slow acrimonious break-up had yielded three successful splinter groups in Ritchie Blackmore's Rainbow, Gillan and Whitesnake. Led Zeppelin, meanwhile, were weakened by Jimmy Page's heroin addiction and John Bonham's alcoholism, the latter eventually proving fatal for both drummer and band. Black Sabbath, too, were undone by booze

diverse as Japan/Kiss-influenced Girl playing gigs alongside Purple devotees Samson and the burgeoning scene's progressive standard bearers Iron Maiden.

"It was a magical time," recalls Bruce Dickinson, the singer with Samson in '79 who would later join Maiden. "There were so many great bands, so much great music. There's never been a scene like it."

It was a scene that weekly musical bible Sounds dubbed The New Wave Of British Heavy Metal, or, to accord it its correct cumbersome acronym NWOBHM (pronounced: Ner-wob-um). A scene that, as we will see, would lead to the rebirth of rock.

**Joe Elliott (Def Leppard, singer):** "The New Wave Of British Heavy Metal was born out of a couple of Sounds articles. Leppard got a double-page spread when we were still unsigned. We had the energy, the youthfulness, the spandex! Uriah Heep weren't the future. Listen to the first Van Halen album – it was time for a clean sweep, a tighter version of rock. The NWOBHM was the logical next step."

**Steve Harris (Iron Maiden, bassist):** "When Sounds started doing all these features on the NWOBHM, it was obvious that something big was happening, and that was great for us, being right in the thick of it."

**Geoff Barton (Sounds, deputy editor):** "The entire music press back then was obsessed with inventing musical movements, from punk to new wave. The NWOBHM was that week's thing. In May 1979 I reviewed a show at the Music Machine in Camden, featuring Maiden, Samson and Angel Witch, and that was the first time the term 'New Wave Of British Heavy Metal' was used. It was about a certain energy and attitude."

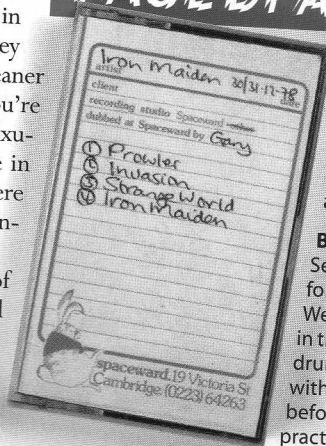
## "THE SOUNDHOUSE REGULARS MADE OUR DEMO TAPE FAMOUS. THEY WERE THE HARDEST."

### PAUL DI'ANNO, IRON MAIDEN

and drugs, and would sack singer Ozzy Osbourne in 1979 following a disastrous UK tour on which they were routinely blown off stage by their younger, leaner LA-based support act, Van Halen. "Lewisham! You're the rock'n'roll capital of the world!" exorted over-exuberant frontman David Lee Roth while on-stage in south London. Foolish this may have been, but there was no disputing the impact of Van Halen's showmanship and fresh musical attitude on UK audiences.

If Van Halen were hungry, so too were a number of acts ready to step into the breach as the old guard waned. AC/DC, Thin Lizzy, Rush, UFO, Scorpions, Judas Priest and Motörhead were among the second generation of rising stars. These acts, however, already possessed a certain pedigree. Some even boasted band members in their thirties, as in the case of Motörhead's Lemmy Kilmister and AC/DC's Bon Scott, both 33 by 1979. And while metal's teenage audience admired outlaw qualities of typified by Lemmy and Bon, at a time when musical tribalism ranged from Mods to skinheads to punks and on to rockabillies, they also sought a scene that was truly theirs.

The result was a nationwide grass-roots movement buoyed up by naïve enthusiasm and informed by punk's Do-It-Yourself spirit, each town boasting local heroes with their own individual sound born in garages, bedrooms and, in some cases, garden sheds. The far north, for instance, begat the devilish 'black metal' thrash of Newcastle trio Venom; Yorkshire spawned Sheffield's glam-inspired classicists Def Leppard while Barnsley five-piece Saxon fused AC/DC-styled riffs with earthier biker sensibilities; the Midlands glass-blowing town of Stourbridge was home to Diamond Head, a band later described as boasting "more great riffs in a single song than Sabbath had on their first four albums"; while the capital saw acts as



**Cronos (Venom, bassist/vocalist):** "I didn't like metal bands with socks down their spandex – I liked punk bands that gave you the middle finger, the Pistols and Sham 69. Venom was a Judas Priest covers band before I joined in 1979. I wanted to add some spit and snot to it."

**Brian Tatler (Diamond Head, guitarist):** "Hearing the Sex Pistols in 1977 was a revelation. Diamond Head formed the year before, when we were still at school. We wrote songs in my bedroom, all four of us crammed in there, with Duncan [Scott] using biscuit tins for drums – with biscuits in, because it sounded too clangy without them! We loved Zeppelin, Sabbath, Purple, but before punk I thought, Are we going to be stuck practising in my bedroom for 15 years before we can go on stage? Then I saw the Pistols with that have-a-go attitude, and it was so inspiring."

**Graham Oliver (Saxon, guitarist):** "In 1977, a band like Saxon was so unfashionable. We supported The Clash at the Belle Vue in Manchester. They all talked about anarchy but they arrived in limos! Their audience didn't know what to make of us but we had so much energy, we'd really stick it to them. And we could play!"

**Joe Elliott:** "Leppard had more of a punk influence than anybody who's heard our music might ever believe. We played Pretty Vacant in our set. We rarely had long guitar solos: we cut all the fat off the songs. We were cleverly influenced by punk."

**Kim McAuliffe (Girlschool, guitarist/vocalist):** "Punk gave everybody the idea that they could just get up and do it. We were playing for free in our local pubs around Tooting when we got our first record deal."

**Geoff Barton:** "All these homegrown indie singles were turning up that weren't by punk bands. To assimilate what was going on, I wrote a singles column in Sounds called 'WOOOARGH!'"

