

Iron Maidens Will 'Rock the Block' This Saturday

All-Female Tribute to Seminal Heavy-Metal Band at Mateel

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"Sanctuary," "Run to the Hills," "Flight of Icarus," "Die With Your Boots On," Killer guitar riffs, supreme musicianship, and a whole lot of skintight black leather. Eddie and the Grim Reaper. More than 30 years after Iron Maiden was formed in East London, the group and its iconography are still going strong.

Just ask the Iron Maidens, "the world's only female tribute" to a band that helped define heavy metal — and was the stuff of many a parent's worst nightmare. Now middle-aged, a lot of the 80's kids who propelled Iron Maiden to international success still listen to metal, and an entirely new crop of fans has sprung up in places as diverse as Norway, Brazil, and Japan.

The Iron Maidens — who will be headlining the Rock the Block Party at the Mateel Community Center on Saturday — include singer Aja Kim, guitarists Sara Marsh and Heather Baker, bass guitarist Wanda Ortiz, and drummer Linda McDonald. The members of Iron Maiden that they stand in for are, respectively, Bruce Dickinson, Dave Murray, Adrian Smith, Steve Harris, and Nicko McBrain. "We come from quite a varied background," Kim last week told KMUD radio personality Dave Sky, who booked the band for the event.

"Wanda plays with the South Coast Symphony when she's not headbanging to Maiden, and I've done various types of singing in different styles — worked with some great R&B people, Tower of Power, Clarence Clemons. It's quite a mishmash."

Kim continued. "We have everything from the orchestra to jazz to blues, and I know Heather is a big fan of some of the electronica music that's out there." "And some of us are big fans of easy listening," added McDonald with a laugh. "Believe it or not!"

Formed in Los Angeles in 2001, the Iron Maidens cover material from most eras of the band's career, and have collected an armful of awards in Southern California. Their appeal isn't limited to L.A., though: they've toured all over the U.S., Canada, Japan, and northern Europe, and have been featured in a slew of publications, from industry standards such as "Guitar World" and "Metal Edge" to more mainstream fare including the "Portland Tribune" and the "Orange County Register." McDonald was interviewed for the May 2007 issue of "Drum!" magazine, and the band's website was recently translated into Japanese for metalheads across the Pacific.

Derek Riggs, who created the infamous, horror-movie inspired cover art for many of Iron Maiden's albums, has also done the art for the Maidens' CD's, and has appeared in radio interviews with the band. The ladies also played at an Iron Maiden CD re-issue party held by Columbia Records and Sony Music Distribution, and occasionally — when they're in the same city at the same time — the very musicians they emulate have joined them onstage.

Fans who come out to the show on Saturday can expect plenty of classic tunes: "Generally, we cover the stuff the real Maiden doesn't do much of anymore," Kim said. "We do a lot from the first two records. Those are really fun." "Well, the first half [of Iron Maiden's career]," McDonald corrected. "There's so much music ... and just to keep it fun for the fans, we do some of the bigger, more well-known songs, as well as the more obscure, hardcore ones. They almost never get to hear some of this stuff played live."

Kim and McDonald were excited to hear that "Run to the Hills" was — according to Sky — the most-requested song at KMUD, despite the fact that the station plays very little hard rock or heavy metal. "Then we're going to have to break that one out for you guys!" they said. "That was a

huge song for them [Iron Maiden]. It's so anthemic." As Sky pointed out, for many transplants to Southern Humboldt, the song's title could aptly describe their flight to the area, when they moved here from cities and suburbs in the 1960's and 1970's.

"For anyone who doesn't know if they want to go to the show," McDonald concluded, "go to our website — and maybe we can change your mind!" For more information or to hear audio clips, go to theironmaidens.com.