

There With You” give a nod to the Heartbreakers’ Mike Campbell and California pickers like Glenn Frey. Catchy originals like “Walk Away” also bring to mind the Heartbreakers, but its thumping mid-tempo rhythm and one of the albums’ several impressive turns from fiddler Scott Joss land the song squarely on the honky tonk side of town. In fact, that tune and “You Got Me Singing The Blues” are so honky tonk it’s hard to believe there’s no one in the band named “Smokey,” “Lefty,” or “Tex.”

The competent touch of the Rhythm Kings’ Ducky Carlisle in the producer’s chair keeps *Distilled Influences* uncompromisingly country without being either retro or artificially modern. The result of the equation is an album that’s 100% on the money.

This album has it all: solid material, excellent singing, a great band, and best of all, killer country guitar.

— Rick Allen



Johnny Cash

The Greatest Number Ones
The Greatest Duets
The Greatest Country Classics
The Greatest Gospel Songs

Legacy

At least 15 reissues have appeared to commemorate Cash’s 80th birthday, nearly all drawing from his 1955-1985 Sun and Columbia material, as these four packages do. But thanks to the superlative sound and packaging, these are among the best.

The Greatest Number Ones compiles Cash’s 19 chart-toppers from 1956-’85 (as rated by *Billboard* and *Cash Box*) beginning with “I Walk The Line” for Sun and ending with 1985’s “Highwayman,” his ensemble recording with Willie Nelson, Kris Kristofferson, and Waylon Jennings. The Deluxe edition of this collection adds a bonus DVD with 10 hits from ABC’s 1969-’71 *Johnny Cash Show* with the Tennessee Three (Bob Wootton on guitar), Carl Perkins, the Carter Family, and the Statler Brothers. None of these appeared on Legacy’s earlier *Cash Show* DVD set.

Duets includes ’70s and ’80s material teaming Cash with Ray Charles, Bob Dylan, Nelson, Billy Joe Shaver, Jennings, brother Tommy Cash, and three hit duets with June Carter, including “Jackson” and “Long-Legged Guitar Pickin’ Man.”

Country Classics showcases his spins on standards from the Carter Family’s “Wildwood Flower” and Hank Thompson’s “Honky Tonk Girl” to Kenny Rogers’ “The Gambler.” *Gospel Songs* focuses on sacred material associated with Cash, beginning at Sun

Beast of a Book

Not only is heavy metal *not* dead, it’s being celebrated as never before. Known for bombast, scorching guitar work, high-pitched vocals, and dark lyrics, this genre of rock music has survived being pigeonholed for more than 40 years. It forms enduring and telling images at the centerpiece of this new illustrated retrospective of the seminal metal band Iron Maiden.

Rather than compose a narrative history, music journalist and author Neil Daniels serves as more of an editor and employs the talents of respected heavy metal music and Iron Maiden experts to develop the necessary documentation. The stories behind the band’s formation, roster changes, recordings, and tours are complemented with a plethora of 500 images, including live

performance and candid off-stage photographs, as well as memorabilia such as handbills, gig posters, concert tees, backstage passes, buttons, ticket stubs, and the evolution of the band’s mascot, Eddie.

The graphics pepper every page, and the narrative is laid out in a more scattershot than linear way. But rather than a bother, this presents an opportunity to digest the words in smaller bites and focus on the colorful images. Obviously, some collectors dug very deep into their closets for some of the material presented here, especially from the band’s early days of the 1970s when they played every pub and cellar dance stage from Stratford to Plumstead across England.

Although a British band,

Iron Maiden developed its image and fan base in the



Iron Maiden: The Ultimate Unauthorized History of the Beast

By Neil Daniels

Voyageur Press

U.S. during the early MTV years of the 1980s as the band’s videos were in heavy rotation and telegenic frontman Bruce Dick-

inson caught the attention of both lads and ladies.

But no pointy headstocks for these guys, at least on their concert tours. In front of their banks of Marshall amps, the three lead guitarists sported Stratocasters nearly all the time. As captured in the photos, the occasional Les Paul or other guitar might get used. The Strats were usually well-modded with different pickups and the locking tremolos that were popular at the time. Although novel, the three-lead attack was not really original and may have begun in earnest with southern rockers Black Oak Arkansas back in 1965, but by the MTV period became a musical focal point developed by a number of bands in a variety of rock genres.

Two things separated Iron Maiden from the other talented metalists who coalesced in the ’80s.

Maiden was an intelligent group of guys who were, for the most part, sober and extremely professional when it came to recording and concert production. They were also among the more articulate of the genre. Second, the strength of their recorded output was such that it became the driving force of the band. Looking at the book, this is less clear given the focus on the visuals of the group.

What is clear is that the rabid passion of the band’s fan base, multi-decade history, and several dozen successful tours were achieved thanks to songs that resonate with listeners and endure over time.

The book successfully brings together the graphic reproductions in a high-quality format with a hard-cover binding, heavy paper, and a die-cut cover that draws attention and closer scrutiny. The early days of the band are covered equally to the later years, and with good detail, and an index is useful for access to text. Clearly this is a book for Maiden fans, but will appeal to metal fans in general. — Eric C. Shoaf

