

MAIDEN CHICAGO

HISTORICAL BIOGRAPHY

www.maidenchicago.com

Maiden Chicago started as an idea that crept into the head of singer/guitarist Eric Babcock, who would eventually fill the role of Adrian Smith in Chicago's newest Iron Maiden tribute. Less than a month later, that idea transformed into a collection of four very dedicated and experienced musicians united in their passion to deliver the ultimate Iron Maiden experience to Chicago.

Motivated by recent Iron Maiden releases such as "Flight 666" and "The Final Frontier", Eric developed an unyielding desire to contribute his efforts to a substantial Iron Maiden tribute band. After catching a blistering set from the iconic heavy metal band at the First Midwest Bank Amphitheater in the summer of 2010, Eric had sufficient drive to pursue that desire. Eric sought out an existing band initially, hoping to discover a somewhat established group in Chicago that was in the market for a guitar player. Coming up surprisingly empty, Eric posted a general inquiry on the Iron Maiden Fan Club Forum simply asking if there was any interest in a Maiden tribute for Chicagoland. After a minimal and relatively moderate response became a bit discouraging, Eric soon received a My Space message from bass player and two-time Iron Maiden tribute veteran Gary Ingram. Gary came across Eric's inquiry on the forum and explained in his message that he had played bass both in "Revelations" and "Powerslave". Thinking that he may have just scored one of the most difficult positions in an Iron Maiden tribute, Eric asked Gary if he would consider doing another. Gary replied that he "might" consider it, provided that all the other pieces were in place. Reading the reply and realizing that he still possessed nothing more than some enthusiasm and a basic idea, Eric thought to himself "ok" and figured he was back to square one. Eventually, that situation would change, and Gary would end up being instrumental in the efforts to form Maiden Chicago.

In a somewhat unexplainable set of circumstances which transpired for unidentifiable reasons, Eric and Gary had somehow decided to form a band, gave it a name, established a presence on six different websites and had a battle plan within a few days time. Having mutually contemplated the exact same band name in their own minds prior to even discussing it, "Maiden Chicago" became the face of the new collaboration. Within a week of its inception, the Maiden Chicago Facebook page had over 200 fans, due largely to the man who would become their newest acquisition; guitarist and former Judas Beast member Ralph Circelli. Ralph immediately posted a comment on the page asking if the band was looking for a "Dave Murray", which of course they were. Knowing Gary from previous music-related associations, Ralph was on board within a few days, further strengthening the unit. Maiden Chicago was now three strong and on the hunt for the final two pieces.

The infant Facebook page was already proving to be an especially effective vehicle in getting the word out about the band and its search for the remaining members. Drummer interest was flowing in from all sides, to such a degree that it was becoming difficult to track. In the midst of this mass correspondence with “Nicko McBrain” hopefuls, Gary spoke to former “Bravo” drummer Dan Driskill about the opportunity. Gary was aware of Dan’s abilities through a mutual friend and believed he would be a good fit. Dan was up for the challenge and in short order was scheduled to host the first drummer audition for Maiden Chicago. On October 9, 2010, the Maiden Chicago trio traveled to Dan Driskill’s Bourbonnais home for what would be the first live jam in their existence. Although the session was organized to be Dan’s audition for the band; in reality, it was an audition for everyone present, given the fact that they had not played a single note with each other as a cohesive unit.

What transpired at Dan’s home that evening was the stuff of legend. The four men started into Iron Maiden’s classic song entitled “The Trooper”, and before the first vocal passage was scheduled to begin, each of them knew they had something very special in their grasp. Charged by the raw energy of how amazingly powerful and authentic the sound was, they tore through nine additional Iron Maiden classics before taking a short break and ultimately doing it all over again. Dan’s performance and obvious attention to detail within the Iron Maiden catalog was exemplary. This fact, combined with the overwhelming satisfaction everyone had as a result of the evening’s festivities left little cause for extended discussion or tough decision making; this was “the band”, Dan was “the guy” and he was a member of Maiden Chicago. It was literally that simple.

Having established the instrumental core of the band rather expediently, Maiden Chicago was motivated to complete the lineup and get things moving forward. They embarked on a massive promotional campaign and spent the next five months in a relentless search for the ultimate "Air Raid Siren", while expanding their catalog of Iron Maiden classics. The trend of seemingly effortless progression appeared as if it might continue, as the band very nearly struck gold right out of the gate. Three short weeks into the search, former "Revelations" vocalist Bill Swanson joined Maiden Chicago for a jam session. Sonically, the experience was excellent, but the intangible elements were absent and the timing wasn't right for either party, so; the search pressed onward...

In the weeks following Bill's audition, the running set list was expanding beautifully, the band was getting tighter and they were sounding better than ever. The acknowledgment of these advancements provided essential sustenance for the quartet in enduring the hardship that would follow. Maiden Chicago was getting nowhere fast in their search efforts as they came up empty week after disappointing week for the next four straight months. Being fully cognizant of the fact that they could not compromise with respect to their frontman, frustration began to settle in. The men were also concerned that their tireless promotional efforts would lose steam without the benefit of measureable progress they could report to the public. Maiden Chicago's resolution to this problem was to record and release a live medley of the band performing a small selection of songs from the running set list. Although his availability remained unchanged from the perspective of being a permanent member of the band, Bill Swanson agreed to assist Maiden Chicago with the recording. On Saturday, February 12, 2011, Maiden Chicago recorded seven songs with Bill Swanson and began preparing it for release.

On the morning of February 26, 2011, Gary Ingram sent a text out to the other members of the band, informing them that Bill Swanson would be joining them for rehearsal that

afternoon. Maintaining some trepidation regarding the longevity and health of his voice during the seven song recording session only two weeks before, Bill masterfully belted out twenty one songs with Maiden Chicago during this particular session; and the band as a whole was on cloud nine because of it. During a short debrief following the session, Bill began explaining certain strategies and ideas he had for the band's future. Interpreting Bill's rhetoric as an indication of interest in joining the band, Eric Babcock contacted him on his drive home that evening to inquire about it. Eric asked Bill what it was going to take to get him involved on a permanent basis, and while his interest was sincere, it was also important to Bill that the condition of his voice be optimal prior to making any commitments. Following that phone conversation, there was an agreement that Bill participate in regularly scheduled rehearsal sessions to provide him the best means in which to evaluate his voice. Everything that transpired after that was gravy; Bill's voice was increasingly powerful, seemingly unwavering, amazingly consistent and most importantly, he felt good and confident about it. At 2 Minutes to Midnight on Thursday, March 31, 2011, Maiden Chicago officially announced that Bill Swanson was the frontman for the band. To celebrate the announcement and conclusion of an exhausting search, Maiden Chicago released the aforementioned live medley of their recording session in conjunction with the exciting news.

Besides the obvious musical proficiency of its four members or even the undeniable passion each of them have for Iron Maiden, this collection of musicians is blessed with that coveted "intangible" element that most musicians hear about, but rarely experience. Having the freedom to operate without any danger of being hindered by the all-too-common pitfalls of inflated egos, conflicting personalities, entitled attitudes or substandard motivation, Maiden Chicago has extremely high expectations for the future. Now fully equipped with the ideal lineup, they press forward, ready and willing to provide fans throughout Chicagoland with "The Ultimate Iron Maiden Experience".

This progressive, historical biography is current as of:
March 31, 2011.