

I was in a CD shop the other day, and thought to myself 'I'm going to take a chance and buy an album I know has a bit of a bad reputation'. I'd previously heard a couple of tracks from it, but other than them I didn't really know what to expect. You know what? On repeated listens, 'The X Factor' by Iron Maiden really isn't that bad. Sure some of the lyrics are a little stupid. For example, the singer repeats 'after the war, what does a soldier become' over and over as if it's a really deep question. It's not, it's simple, he becomes a veteran. Not exactly rocket science, war veterans are all over the place on TV programs and in retirement homes. I don't mean to rub it in, but who's never seen, let alone heard of a veteran? Another song goes 'the car is an oven and baking is wild'. I think I know what the guy means, but it sounds really dumb to me. I'm sure there's a reason I've never heard anyone but Iron Maiden say it. It's like someone saying 'the sun beams are crazying my mind' or whatever. It sounds pretentious. Just say you're hot!

Interestingly, the title of the album inspired the TV show of the same name. The CD cover also features a rather unflattering picture of Simon Cowell. (Google it, if you don't believe me). Perhaps most fascinating of all is the fact the LP was released a few years before the man became truly famous. However, that maybe isn't surprising as IM's lyrics are often supernatural. (Yes, I'm suggesting the group are supernatural too, and they knew he'd become a superstar - why add a picture of some random guy?) Why the obsession with Simon and not someone like roughly as famous (I think) Taylor Swift? Well for one thing, Taylor Swift is a girl and no serious metal would band base their sound on such a person. (Ok, the band are called 'Iron MAIDEN', but that's a torture device, not another name for Margaret Thatcher). Secondly, Taylor Swift performs pop music. I mean there's getting inspiration from unique sources and then there's insanity. Iron Maiden are not insane. Back to Simon and having had time to think, maybe IM like the man so much because of his fondness of the 'I, VI, VII, I' chord progression. No, that doesn't sound right, in fact I made that up. I tried though, in a way.

Ah yes, that chord progression. I totally ripped on the band in question in my 'Number of the Beast' review, and rightly so. The device is quite literally (almost) everywhere in the classic. It seems IM have grown with 'TXF' though, as whilst the sequence is common it's not milked to death. Admittedly 'TNotB' is clearly a far better album, so maybe the band SHOULD have used those ideas more, if it helps them so much. No. That would be crazy. If they made an unsuccessful, as explained, release with such cliches, my God would it have a bad name. Let's face facts, I would also be the one to mock it to death. But of course, only so the band grow. What do you take me for? Now let's mock the band member's hair for no reason, whatsoever: 'Ha! They all look like girls!' Hang on... Maybe them being influenced by Taylor Swift makes sense... No. It's time for me to move on and go back to intelligent writing.

It's ok! I have more great things to say! Here goes: Only someone very greedy and demanding would say the guitar solos could be better. I really like them and they are a highlight for me. They're really flashy, but not over the top. And let's not forget Blaze Bayley's (no relation to Bill Bailey - his name is spelt differently #wisdom), excellent, perhaps even soothing (relatively speaking) voice. Yes, many IM fans were horrified when previous frontman Bruce Dickinson left, but you could argue the band needed a change in direction. Especially because of that goddamn chord

progression. What score do I give the X? Well, as hinted at earlier other reviewers weren't so kind. According to Wikipedia, it got 4/10, 2/10 and the much more respectable 7/10. However, I'm going to take things a whole lot further and give it 8.5/10. A hidden(ish) gem, in my opinion. The apparently amazing 'The Book of Souls' LP however, is an overrated borefest. Bye!