

# BLAZE BAYLEY

CAESAR'S PALACE, MONDAY 5<sup>TH</sup> MARCH

*'This is a song about how machines are going to take over the world. Because when that happens, there will be a Second Messiah!'*

Like, yeah Blaze, whatever man. Let's get this straight: I don't like Iron Maiden. I can't hear that name without thinking of widdly guitar solos, pompous over-the-top lyrics, grown men in shorts, Dungeons & Dragons, scampi flavour Nik-Naks, sacrificial virgins - you get the picture. So what am I doing at a gig whose main attraction is **Blaze Bayley**, the man who fronted Maiden through what is considered to have been their worst years? Well, there is the added bonus of **Risactonia** and **Black Atom**, two bands that are always good to watch. And I *have* been informed that Blaze's solo material sounds nothing like that of his previous employers. Anyway, who can resist a good metal gig? This *is* Aberdeen after all, a lonely outpost that plays host to such diverse names as David Gray and Coldplay. It's just too good an opportunity to miss.

By the time Blaze come on, a steady crowd has gathered, largely made up of old Maiden fans, who seem to crawl out of the woodwork whenever such events come around, plus a good number of metal kids. Even Fudge decide to grace us with their presence.

Black seems to be the colour of choice tonight. The band are dressed in black. The stage is black. And I am wearing, well, *white* for some reason. The other thing I should mention about the stage is the huge drum-kit that takes up half of it. It includes a pick 'n' mix of every kind of cymbal you could dream of, plus some big fuck-off toms thrown in for good measure. Pete would have creamed himself.

The drummer starts playing, and is soon joined by the two guitarists and bass player. Each has a cordless guitar, each has an amplifier concealed behind the black backdrop. How much more black could it be, I wonder? And the answer is none. None more black.

A fat man wearing a baseball cap leaps onto the stage holding a cordless microphone. He looks like a cross between a Spanish disc jockey and an extra from Wrestlemania. This can't be Blaze Bailey. The man starts shouting into the mic. Oh god. It is him.

I don't know how to put this really, but Blaze are GOOD. They are tighter than a hangman's noose and heavier than Big Bad and an arctic lorry put together. (I'm getting

good at this journalism thing, don't you think?) Blaze jumps around like a madman and swings from the lighting rig, the PA and whatever else is handy. He claps a lot and gets everyone to join in. It reminds me of the Nazi party rallies we used to watch during history class. Insane, but compelling.

Blaze dedicates *Hard As Steel* to '*all you metal fans who don't give a fuck about fashion or image.*' Damn. Those were the two values I ascribed to most. He also rants about Popstars, space(?), and, er, machines. How very Iron Maiden. To be fair, though, the band rarely stray into the territory of the Beast. Sure, there's widdly guitar solos and cliched dialogue, but it's performed so well that Blaze somehow manage to pull it off. We get the meet-the-band-members song. We get devil signs and long hair. We get hot and sweaty. We even get an Iron Maiden and a Wolfsbane cover for the encore. It's a million miles away from the world of Limp Bizkit and Papa Roach, not to mention Wheatus, who would probably shit themselves if Blaze Bayley screamed into their little geek-rock faces. So uncool, yet so much fun. Spare a thought for Paul Stewart, though, who spent the entire gig clutching the PA stack to prevent it from toppling over every time Blaze came near it. Those machines have got a bit of catching up to do, it would seem.

Reviewed by Kai Sirius.