

# BACK IN THE PURPLE

In the early 70s Deep Purple achieved massive worldwide success; founding fathers, along with Led Zeppelin and Black Sabbath, of modern heavy rock.

By the midle of the decade the band had fallen apart; victims of bad management, intolerable work schedules and the associated strain on relationships within the band. After 10 years of differing fortunes (all five members remained in music, with Rainbow, Whitesnake, Gillan, etc.), they're together again, confident of a credible and ongoing reunion.

I spoke with lead singer



Ian Gillan, Deep Purple

**Ian Gillan who proved professional, articulate and opinionated, eager to set straight any rumours and theories surrounding the comeback.**

So what prompted the reformation of Deep Purple?

"We just ran out of ideas with our own bands I think. I got fed up with running my own band — I mean, we'd done 200 shows a year and 11 albums since I left Purple. So I was looking around for something else and I thought, well why not give it another shot? After all, what we'd all really been trying to achieve with our own bands we already had with Purple."

So you were the driving force?

"I think I made more phone calls than anyone else, yeah."

Did you feel pressure from the fans and the music press? There were constant rumours in the magazines.

"Yeah. I think probably on the precept that it was a big, successful machine, therefore it ought to be in existence. That was the kind of pressure we were getting from the business, particularly from the press. Which is something we resisted for many years — contrary to many opinions. When you make music you've got to live with

it for the rest of your life; money, you can spend it like water. It's not a permanent thing, it's just the currency for what we do. So music really is uppermost thing in our minds. And it was very important when it did happen that the motivation was right — and it is. The funny thing is the initial motivation and pressure on us came from the press, yet as soon as we did get back together the good old British press started saying 'Oh, they've only done it for the money.'"

So the new Purple means that all the individuals' bands, like Rainbow and Gillan are no longer extant?

"That's right. But Whitesnake will probably continue, because of the nature of band it is. This band is permanent, though. As permanent as you can be in this world anyway."

The reported reasons for the band breaking up last time centred around personality clashes. Were you worried about that becoming a factor again?

"If it was personality clashes then you'd expect the problems to arise all over again, but it's obviously a lot deeper than that. The factors which led to the personal clashes don't exist now."

"Those factors were basically two things, one leading to another. One was bad personal management and the other was inexperience on our part. I'm not saying we were brainless but we were inexperienced at handling the personality clashes. The poor personal management led to serious overwork, which led to serious tiredness, which leads to one thing or another. In many cases it leads to drug abuse or whatever. But this band has never been drug connected in any way, shape or form. So it has to find some outlet, there has to be a fuse. And we're fairly volatile characters, so there's the fuse, there's the weak point, just the fact that we start snapping at each other."

"And what one day just seems like a minor irritation which you pass off as a joke, the next day makes you a little more angry than you used to be. And we're all fairly strong-willed so no one gives way. Those factors have been eliminated now. We've got good management now and I think we've also learned to recognise in ourselves those weaknesses as they arise. We've got a little more tolerance — I wouldn't say we were more mellow because I don't think we are, there's always that element of danger lurking below the surface."

So you've actually instructed your management that you want things to be more leisurely this time round?

"That's right. You may laugh, because this tour which started in Australia a few days ago doesn't finish until we get to Rio de Janeiro next September, but it's at a pace which is not crippling, there are days off, the odd week here and there."

Onto the recorded side of things — in the 10 years since the band broke up there's been a stream of live and compilation Deep Purple albums. Has that been a source of annoyance to the band?

"Well, to be honest, I don't even know about half of these things. No one ever contacted me, there was never any approval, no involvement. I think Ian Paice was involved in the compilation of *Deepest Purple*, which is probably the best compilation. But I think some of the others have done a lot of damage."

"Anyway, when people talk about Deep Purple, they do it in terms of the albums, like *Deep Purple In Rock* or *Fireball* or *Machinehead*. Each album has its own identity and I think to start plucking tracks from one album to another and mixing them up is ludicrous, it takes away an awful lot of the impact, the meaning. For me an album is a collection of music which records a moment in time, which is an accurate reflection of how the band is. It's not only what's going on in the world, it's the location of the recording and everything else that has a great influence on the album. It's there subliminally, maybe, but you can tell the album that was made in the mountains from one that was made in the city."

Was there any particular reason for doing the new album in the USA?

"Just convenience really. Three of us live in England and Roger and Ritchie live in Connecticut, so we try and split rehearsals. We found this little place in Stowe, in Vermont. It was just the basement of a house but it was quiet, we needed to get away from prying eyes. We didn't know if it was going to turn out and we didn't want people hanging round if we did have teething troubles."

"And we found we liked this

basement so much that we thought right, let's get the mobile down here and do it."

Is that why it's produced by Roger Glover and the band rather than an outside producer like Martin Birch?

"We made that decision way before we went in there. We decided to do it ourselves, because very simply I don't think there's a better producer around than Roger Glover. In fact, I'm not aware of any better all-round artist in the world today. He's a painter, a photographer, a producer, musician, writer ... so talented."

"But I think all we need in terms of an outside producer is just a really good sound engineer. Most groups could produce themselves I think, if they had the temperament. We always use the same people, Roger and Nick. Roger can be more objective than the rest of us. We go in as individuals to try and achieve maximum performance both from the point of view of writing and performance. You find the need to artificially stimulate your adrenalin in the studio to match the natural high you get in a stage performance. It's very difficult walking into a cold room and playing this music — it's not sitting on a stool stuff, it's very physical. So you tend to be concentrating on your own performance only, it's very subjective, very insular. And that's why you need people like Roger to stitch it all together."

"He can see 'Oh my God, that's brilliant, but it just doesn't make any sense in this context.' So he's the guy who talks to us, knows what makes us touchy, has the patience, to leave something for two days if he's knows it's not the right time to raise a point. It's invaluable."

Would you say Deep Purple's strongest following was still in Britain?

"No, I wouldn't. I'd say it was the USA — the new album went gold before it was released there. The UK's a funny old market. There are a lot of very serious fans there but it's the one country in the world where we just don't bother doing interviews at all, we refuse to talk to the press. They're cretins, absolute idiots."

"It's always been the same — they try and build things up and if they haven't made something or had some role in it, then it's really personal, vitriolic attacks all the time. It even gets beyond the point of being libellous. If we did interviews we'd end up smacking the guys in the mouth, because they are the enemy. All of them, *Sounds Kerrang*... we got tricked into doing an interview for *Kerrang* which we were told was for someone else."

Why is there that situation?

"I've no idea. I wouldn't even waste time thinking about it."

So presumably the only way to counter it is by just going out and doing it?

"Yeah, that's the only thing. Radio's okay — they hardly ever play our stuff on radio anyway but you can find the odd rock show, there's Tommy Vance on the BBC and Phil Easton on Radio City, which is Liverpool's big station, and one or two others."

But there's not much going on with TV shows and videos?

"No. They're rubbish shows anyway. Which is a shame, 'cause I live there, but they're rubbish."

What's your opinion of some of the metal bands around at the moment? Do you pay much attention to what's happening?

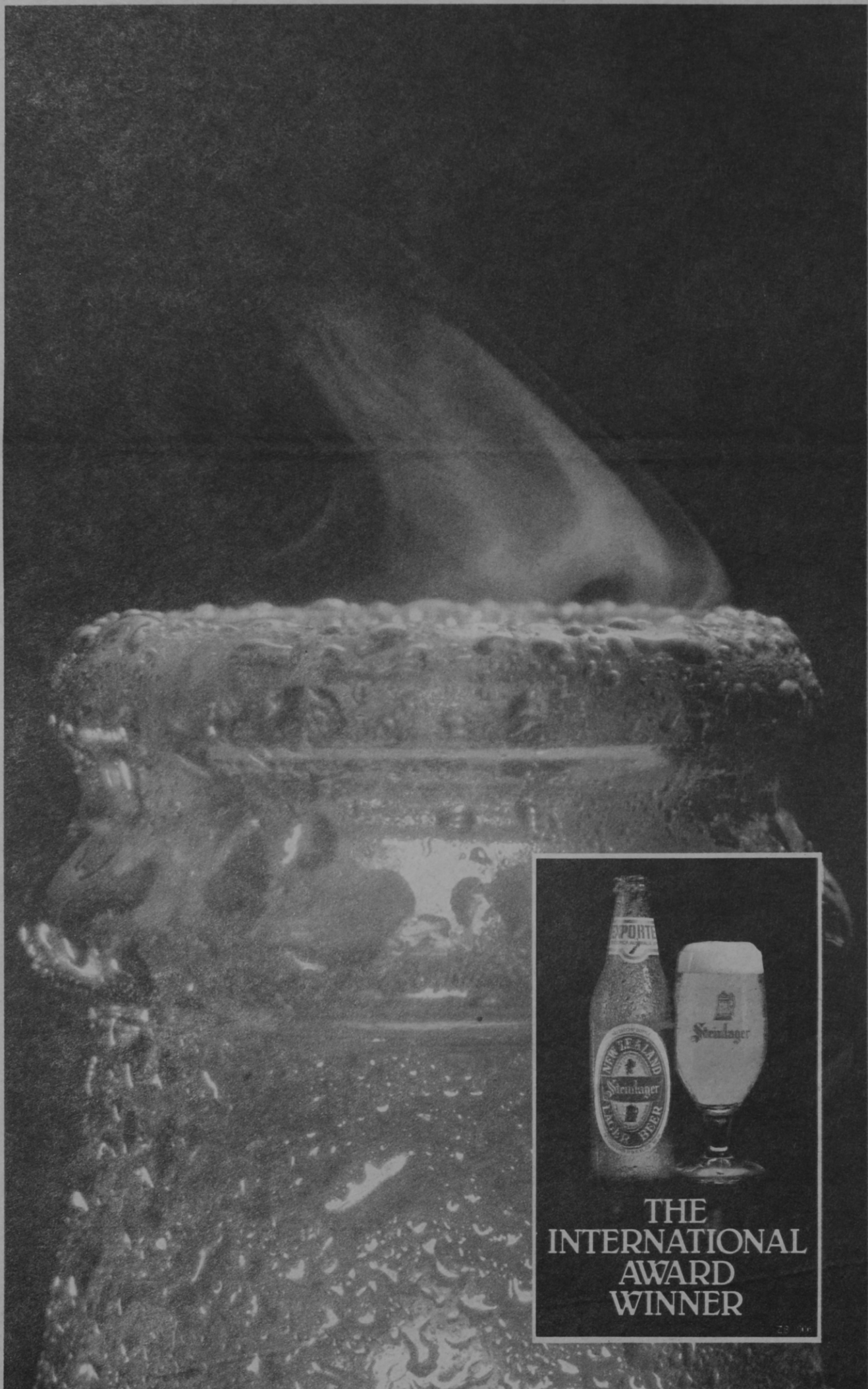
"Yeah, mostly what I hear on the radio, I don't read the papers much. There's a big problem in that I don't like heavy metal at all. I mean, there are some good heavy metal bands but this whole image thing is nothing I want to be part of. I like music and I like quality music and there's a lot of stuff that moves me."

"One of heavy metal's huge weaknesses is that it's become such a narrow field. I find it infuriating that if a fan goes to an Iron Maiden concert, then wants to go to an Adam Ant concert a couple of weeks later he has to go in disguise, he can't tell his mates 'cause it's not cool. Now you go back 14 years and you'd get someone going to a Jethro Tull concert one week and then the next week they'd go and see Mark Bolan. And I can't think of a more accurate parallel than Mark Bolan and Adam Ant. But there's none of that diversity now, it's all getting very factionalised."

And you're usually lumped in as a heavy metal band aren't you?

"No. If somebody says that then I don't want anything to do with them. We're a musical band, we're what we are, a rock band, whatever. Anyone calls me a heavy metal band and ..."

Chris Caddick



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