

ROGER GLOVER

As a key member of both Rainbow and Deep Purple, Roger Glover has cemented his place in rock history. Not just a talented bass player, Glover is a skilled producer and gifted songwriter - and it's his songwriting that has attracted attention lately. His brand new solo album, entitled 'If Life Was Easy', is an varied group of tracks that Roger describes as "a hodgepodge collection of songs that reveals or obscures a range of emotions from a turbulent deade". As a fan of all things Purple, James Gaden made the call.

I was quite shocked at how many styles you've encompassed on here - it's quite eclectic. I don't know what I was expecting to be honest, I just assumed it would be nothing like Deep Purple because that is the whole reason for solo albums. But there's a bit of everything on here, a very wide scope.

Maybe I'm going for the Guinness Book of World Records! (laughs) It wasn't by design, that's just the way they come out. I don't really sit down to write a song. If you're a songwriter, you're writing all the time. You're always open and in tune with what's going on around you. Things happen to you, to other people and you pick things up from conversations, newspaper stories, whatever, and your own emotions. When you're going through a period of sheer joy for example - I find that's usually the best time to write a sad song. And conversely... it's therapy in a way, you have something inside and it's got to come out. In Deep Purple, we don't write songs, we just play them. With new stuff, we just start playing together and a song comes out, it's just jamming around, not really what I would call "writing". However, when you're on your own, late at night, you pick up an acoustic guitar, it's one in the morning, you've had a few glasses of wine... what comes out is what you feel at that moment. You can be in any mood, you play a couple of chords and something happens, it just appears.

Once you have that, there's the struggle to decide if it's any good of course! If you think it is, you have to make sure it's not actually somebody else's song, especially if you think it's quite interesting. You have to double check yourself because it's all coming from your subconscious. Your subconscious holds everything you've ever heard. But every now and again I have to put a solo album out, get things out of my system.

With that in mind, some of the songs you sing yourself, others are handled by guests. Did you find some songs were too personal to give to the guests, so you had to sing them?

Well, I realised a couple of years ago that my voice has the same range as Bing Crosby. Struggle as I might I'll never sound like Lowell George, who is one of my favourite singers. It occurred to me most of the singers I admire are not singers at all, they're songwriters. People who communicate - Bob Dylan would be top of the list, I'm a huge Dylan fan. And he became huge not by trying, but by doing the opposite and NOT trying. To be truly successful you don't try, it just happens because of who you are. I spent a lot of my life trying to be somebody. At this stage of my life I just want to write what is inside. No holds barred regarding style, it's all music.

Regarding the singing, yeah, there are some songs that are personal. Not to the point where other people can't sing them, it's just I'm uncomfortable with my voice. People have told me "Oh, you have to do that" and I've got to face that. When you sing, it's strange, it's like standing naked, you're very vulnerable. That's why all singers are insecure by the way! It's you, it's not an instrument, not your brain, it's you. I've had encouragement to do it, told it sounds great. I don't think it sounds great, but there you are. I'm still in doubt but I took the plunge and sing five or six on it.

Well I thought you did a great job on the title track, I thought your vocal was just right for that song.

Oh, thanks! That was one of the first ones I wrote for the record.

With the guests, you have Nazareth's Dan McCafferty singing 'The Dream I Had', Randall Bramblett who sings one of my favourites on the record which is 'Don't Look Now', your daughter Gillian does a few... when you give a song to a guest, are you very hands on how you want them to deliver it as it's your record, or do you leave it up to them?

No, I let them do it, it has to come from them. If I don't like what I hear, I'll tell them! (laughs) But first off, they must invest themselves in the song. When you

collaborate, you get stuff you'd never have thought of yourself. Gillian, for example, sings 'Set Your Imagination Free'. I had the track, I had everything written, I had the title... but I had several ideas of what it should be. I was struggling with the verses and came up against a brick wall. I played it to her one day and asked if she fancied having a go at writing. She said okay, went away with the track... and she came back with something brilliant, that I could never have envisaged! That's when you get the real sparks, collaborating.

I was very impressed with the actual sound of the record. I noticed in your sleeve notes that you recorded it mostly on a Mac with Pro-Tools. As a producer, are you someone who has fully embraced the digital side or do you still prefer analogue?

As far as working, digital makes life so much easier. Analogue is great - if I were to go in a studio and record a band properly, I'd record drums and guitar on analogue, especially drums, they always sound better with a tape system. But once you have that sound, then you can transfer it to digital and work with it. The old days of cutting bits of tape up and sticking them - as romantic as that sounds, it was a pain in the neck! The Butterfly Ball for example, that's a continuous piece of music. It had little interludes between each main song to join everything together. Imagine trying to undertake that on analogue - thousands of edits!

I spoke to Don Airey yesterday because he has his solo album out too. Ian released 'One Eye To Morocco', Don's put a record out, now you have 'If Life Was Easy' - is that necessary to keep things fresh in Deep Purple?

No, there's no method to it! (laughs) It's just how it happens. Getting Deep Purple to write is much more difficult because there are five of us. If you're on your own you can make any decision you like and bang, go with it. When there's five, just the decisions of where to go, where to meet, where to rehearse, what time, how long for... time is tight, we all work a lot. We all have families so you can't be away all the time. But when you DO have free time, what do I do? I write songs!

When you all put out solo albums, like Ian, Don and yourself have been doing, do the other members of Purple listen to them and critique them, or do you all stay out of each other's way?

That's a very good question actually. We do listen to each others songs and if I hear something I really like I will say so, absolutely. I listen to Ian Gillan, Steve Morse...

With Ian's 'One Eye To Morocco', I thought that was one of the best things he's ever done, but some people slammed it because it wasn't like Deep Purple. But why would it be? He's IN Deep Purple.

Exactly, that's exactly the point of solo records.

That ties to one of my favourite non-Purple projects, which was the Gillan And Glover album you did together back in the eighties. Again, nothing like Purple but a really good record. Did you ever think about doing another one?

Oh thank you. We've often talked about it, but in a way, because so much time has passed, that album has become a bit of a

jewel. I don't think we're ready yet - maybe we will one day. I think we still have one in us both and we have the same sense of humour. Right now we're too tied up though.

I spoke to Don about Purple touring with an orchestra recently - how did you find it?

Surprisingly good. It was great, really, really good. We've worked with orchestras before obviously, but it always used to be an orchestra with us as guests. This was a rock format with thirty eight pieces behind us. Half strings, horns, some percussion, that kind of thing. The whole thing was really a big experiment. We were working with a different orchestra every night and the key was the conductor, Stephen Bentley Klein. He did most of the arrangements, Don did a couple. We wanted to get away from the idea of "symphonic", you know? It's as much jazz as anything... the parts that have been written have enhanced those famous riffs in a quite surprising way. I've got to say, most nights were a really great experience and I can't wait to do it again!

Are you thinking or recording any shows?

Probably. We're doing the Montreux Jazz Festival in a couple of days. That'll be recorded for sure.

Can we expect a new Deep Purple album anytime soon or do you have too many touring commitments?

We've started, we had a session and have about a dozen ideas bubbling around that need working on and finishing. The next session will be later this year or early next year. Hopefully an album next year. But we won't release it until it's finished! (laughs)

No, that would be silly! I've been pleasantly surprised at the amount of output from Purple. Like I say, a flurry of solo releases and now you guys have started on a new Purple album. Some long standing bands tour, tour, tour some more and then think "Oh, I suppose we need to put out a record" but with Purple I never got that impression.

We do an album when we feel it's right to do it. I can't even imagine how it was back in the seventies when we made an album a year - while touring all the time. The workload we got through back then was amazing.

It's like what Glenn Hughes has done with Black Country Communion - only a nine month span between albums!

Yes - he's a prolific man!

He is. Right, I'm nearly out of time, so I'll wrap up now Roger.

Thank you, I'm glad you liked the album, or bits of it, however it connected with you.

I do, it's growing on me, different songs are grabbing my attention when I play it.

That's how it goes with some albums. Did you know about the Beatles? Every song they wrote was different - they had no real formula. If you listen to the musical structures, they're all different. That's the magic about them. If you listen to a Beatles album, you know the next song will be a completely different mood and structure to the previous one. That's a bit like 'If Life Was Easy' - like a radio station with a bit of everything!