

Your only solo album to date has just been reissued with bonus tracks, and a second disc of cover versions. Why reissue it now?

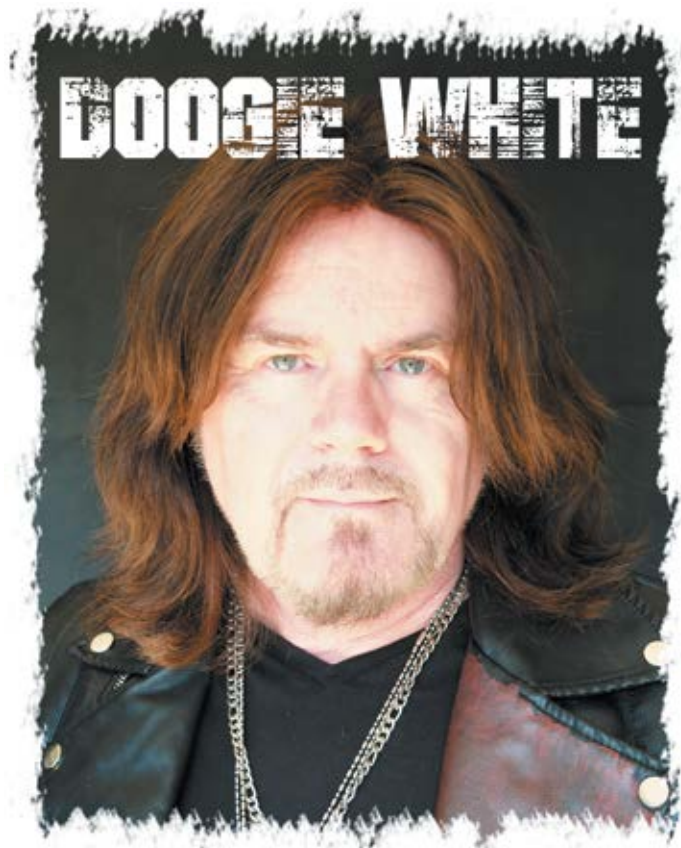
The company that is putting it out approached me and said they'd like to put it out again. The reason was that I did a lot of these tribute albums about 100 years ago, so they came up with the idea of doing a bonus CD featuring some of those covers. The album had been released eleven years ago, so it hadn't been around for a long time and it gave it a bit of momentum again. Add in the two bonus tracks and the covers disc; it's a nice wee package I think.

One of the bonus tracks, 'Dishing The Dirt', is great and your sleeve notes say it should have been on the album originally but it was "dropped to keep the peace". It's your solo album, surely you decide on what goes on it?

Well there were a couple of songs on the original album that I wouldn't have had there. The song selection *was* simply to keep the peace. Rather than add another track, it didn't need another one putting on there. I think it should have just replaced one of the existing ones, so it was nothing sinister, it just kept everyone involved happy. I intended keeping that and 'Small Town Saturday Night' for a second solo album but it's been eleven years, so I thought I'd just stick these two on the reissue as bonuses.

The opener, 'Come Taste The Band' is a duet with Patti Russo, and Tony Carey does a brilliant Rainbow-esque introduction. I read that you wrote that as an audition for Rainbow and wrote it in the style of Deep Purple Mk IV – why would you do that when Ritchie Blackmore wasn't in Mk IV... would that not antagonise him?

That was the whole point! [laughs] It was to see if he had a sense of humour. I have the original demo that I wrote with Alex Dickson. That and the track 'Catz Got Yer Tongue' came from the same writing session, we just sat and said "Let's write a song like Mk IV Deep Purple – aye, okay" and "Let's write a song like AC/DC – aye, okay" just as a wee experiment. I sang both the vocal parts like I was David Coverdale and Glenn Hughes, Al played like Tommy Bolin, and we called it that because I thought it would be funny to send to Ritchie. And he accepted it... he said I was a cheeky wee bugger!



Interview by James Gaden

Doogie White is best known for his stints with Rainbow, Yngwie Malmsteen and Michael Schenker. However, that shouldn't overshadow the fact he is reissuing his, to date, only solo album 'As Yet Untitled' as a lavish new two-disc set. Fireworks sat down for a chat with the amiable Scottish singer to talk about his album, career and his new job fronting Alcatrazz...

I wasn't even sure if he'd even heard Deep Purple Mk IV!

I'm not sure he ever did but the name 'Come Taste The Band' was the title of the only Purple album, at that point, that he wasn't on. So I knew he'd know that and it was a great tune. So to include it for the album, I wanted to get that Purple/Rainbow family tree thing out of the way first, so bringing in Tony gave it such a feel... he nailed it. It was a great way to open the album.

With disc two comprising of the covers from tribute albums... I'll be honest; I don't know who buys the albums themselves. I often buy odd tracks from iTunes because I'll maybe want to hear someone like you, Joe Lynn Turner or Jeff Scott Soto doing a classic song, but I've never bought a full album. So when you get hired to do one, are you assigned the songs or do you pick which ones you do?

They're all picked for you. We're going back a long time; most of these were done in 1999. There was no streaming or digital

it was interesting because when I joined up with Michael Schenker, I had to learn some UFO songs and Phil Mogg is so unique vocally, it was difficult for me to figure out what he was doing. So I listened to the UFO one and checked out how Bernie Shaw or Steve Overland tackled them and it worked out perfectly for me.

Was there one that was particularly difficult to do, or really good fun to take on?

'Long Gone' was the hardest. I remember that because it has some weird notes in it that aren't in my script; it's half a step down from what I'd hit normally. But they were all good fun; it was in and out – "Have you learned it? Yes, I have", go in, sing it three times, and then leave. That's just what we did.

I found a couple of songs credited to you on iTunes and I have no idea what they're from, which were 'Cut Loose' and 'All Shook Up'. What's the story with those?

They were two songs I did for Lea Hart... he was involved in most of these tribute albums. You said about nobody really buying them, well we did an Iron Maiden one that that had Di'Anno on it, and it sold 50,000 copies – 50,000! That's why we did two of them, because the first one did so well... or so I was told anyway. So Lea brought us all in. 'All Shook Up' was a Fastway cover but 'Cut Loose' was done for an album Lea put together called 'British All Stars' or something like that. Lea got some backing players in and then brought notable lead guitar players and singers to record tracks for it. Then what he would do was take out the lead guitar and vocal parts and then do it as 'German All Stars' and bring in people like Doro and top German players, and he'd just do that all around the world! [laughs]

So, to touch on Rainbow, you said you wrote 'Come Taste The Band' as an audition song, by basically putting it on a tape and passing it to Purple's road manager Colin Hart with the message "If Ritchie ever needs a singer" purely on the off-chance?

That's exactly what happened. I was in Midnight Blue and we had split up. I had no money, I was on the dole. Deep Purple were coming to play two nights at Hammersmith and I had a friend who got me a backstage pass because I couldn't afford a ticket. So I made this tape of three or four songs and I saw Colin Hart, who I recognised from the 'Perfect Strangers' album

sleeve. I passed the tape to him, exactly like you said, and thought no more about it. Afterwards, I'd been in Germany rehearsing with Pink Cream 69. I was about to join them but they said if I joined I would have to go and live in Germany. So I was heading home for a difficult conversation with my girlfriend at the time and I came in and there was a note pinned to the wall saying "Ritchie Blackmore's secretary called, please call this number." I called and missed them, they called back and missed me, finally I was having a party and the phone went, somebody picked it up and said "Doogie, Ritchie Blackmore is on the phone wanting to talk to you!" And it really was him! Within about five weeks I'd done a tape, sent some pictures and then had to fly over to do an audition in person.

I remember reading Graham Bonnet had to sing 'Mistreated' in his audition and Joe Lynn Turner had to do 'I Surrender'. What did you have to perform?

It was quite free, I knew everything Ritchie had ever done... he'd start up a riff and I'd be away. We didn't do any Mk II Purple stuff... we did 'Burn', 'Man On The Silver Mountain'... oddly enough we did 'Love Hurts'! We did 'Yesterday' by The Beatles, 'Going Down'... we just jammed for three days... anything. When he walked in I was sound-checking with 'Rainbow Eyes' He said "I know that song" and I said "You should, you wrote it!" It was a great three and a half years.

I thought the 'Stranger In Us All' album was fantastic. Did you make much progress on a follow up or had he decided to do Blackmore's Night and that was that?

I knew he was going to be doing, well... "Candy's album" is what he called it at the time. We were in America on the last tour we did and he said "I'm going to do Candy's album, but come March next year we'll start on a new record." So I went away and wrote four or five songs and we played Esbjerg, which was the last gig we did, and I gave him the tape that night. I didn't know, but the band was finished after that. So I took those songs and gave them to Steen Mogenson for Cornerstone and they ended up on the 'Human Stain' album. It would have been interesting to see what Ritchie would have done with them but Steen took them and did something completely different, which was great.

A lot of people thought

Blackmore's Night would be a fad but he's done it for decades now, he clearly enjoys it. However, when he said he was going to be doing some Rock shows under the Rainbow banner, a lot of people got really excited. There was talk Joe Lynn Turner or other ex-members would be involved. Instead, it ended up being the rhythm guys from Blackmore's Night, Jens Johansson and Ronnie Romero on vocals, who most people were unfamiliar with. As both a fan and a former member, what did you make of those shows?

I thought it was all disappointing. I saw it in Birmingham and Ritchie just didn't want to be there. His playing was well below what I was expecting. I have no opinion on the band at all because I was there to see him. I was so disappointed – whatever reason he did it, he didn't go out with any fire in his belly. When he went out with me, Purple were still a very powerful band and he had something to prove. We went out there with a great album and the gigs were immense, some of them were otherworldly. And then I saw that show in Birmingham – I spoke to other journalists and they were saying it was shit, but when they wrote their reviews they all said how marvelous it was. I asked why and they said "Well, there's a chance we might get an interview!" [laughs]. I went because I wanted to see what he was doing, I didn't care who was in the band or what tunes he'd picked, I just wanted to see how he was playing. And I was very disappointed. Whether you stand watching him or stand beside him, you just get a vibe, and there was just no vibe at that show at all, nothing.

You've played alongside Blackmore, as well as Malmsteen and Schenker, all of whom would be on the "best guitar players" lists of any Rock fan. Is there anyone left you'd really like to work with?

I never look at it like that; I just look at each job as a new challenge. We're all a bit long in the tooth, guys like that have been around a long time and worked with so many fantastic singers and writers. So all I do is try to do the best I can. Particularly with Rainbow, I went in as a fan so I thought "As a fan, what do I want to hear?" Sometimes I got my way, other times I didn't; we had to compromise to again keep the peace. With Yngwie, I knew he would write all the songs and he'd say "This is what I want you to do" and I'd go "Okay!" And I was with him seven years, happy with that because I was getting my writing

frustrations out with Cornerstone and getting my live passion and seeing the world with Yngwie.

And now, you're fronting Alcatrazz, which I thought was a bit out of the blue. Obviously you and Graham Bonnet work together with Michael Schenker and are friends. What's the situation there?

Let's go back a wee bit – so I was supposed to have been out with Schenker last year, starting in Japan. I was supposed to have had my 60th birthday in Tokyo playing in front of 7,500 people and it all just collapsed with Covid... the European tour, Russian tour, South America, it all went by the wayside. I was approached about re-releasing my solo album, so I said okay. Then, Frontiers approached me about doing an album and I had nothing to do, so they put me in touch with a Swedish guy called Emil Norberg and we wrote an album together. I was three quarters of the way through doing that when the Alcatrazz guys contacted me and said Graham had left the band and would I like to sing with them? I had to go away to think about that. When Graham was doing the last Alcatrazz tour, he called me and asked if we could go for a coffee... we've been mates for twenty years. He said he didn't like it anymore, he wasn't enjoying it, it was no fun and he just wanted to go back to doing the Graham Bonnet Band. So I'm saying "Do it, do the Graham Bonnet Band then" – not thinking that I would end up going in and doing Alcatrazz instead! I've just been listening to the final mixes of the album I've made with them. Graham will understand I've treated this with the greatest of respect. I love Graham, from before he joined Rainbow. I heard him do 'Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow' in the seventies and thought he was brilliant. I doubt Graham will listen to this new album but I will treat it with the love and respect his legacy deserves and do my best with them for future albums and shows, providing the fans accept it.

I'd have thought the biggest challenge would be doing their back catalogue... Bonnet's voice is just incredible.

Oh, listen man, Rainbow were in Kansas and Ritchie said "I quite fancy doing 'All Night Long' tonight" and I said "Really? We've never rehearsed it..." and he said "Doesn't matter, you know it" and he started playing it. I can still hear them laughing at me trying to do it [laughs]. So I need to find a different way to approach these songs because he's got such a unique

voice. As soon as he comes on you go "Ah, that's Graham Bonnet." He's just brilliant. I've always struggled doing it but I've sung Graham's songs with Schenker and with Malmsteen, so you do find your own voice for it. There's no point trying to replicate what Graham does, because you can't! But I'll treat it with respect just as I did with Gillan songs, Coverdale songs, Dio songs, Turner songs, and in this case Bonnet songs.

With all these other endeavours, do you foresee any opportunity to play your solo songs live anywhere?

I have a solo band called White Noise; we don't really play the UK but we've toured South America, Argentina and Europe. Wherever I go, I get four great players from that country and we go out and do, say ten gigs or so. I did some in South America, Russia and some Scandinavian gigs too. If that opportunity comes, I'll play some of these songs because I think there are some great tunes on here. I have a really big back catalogue now, so I try to only play songs I either wrote or initially sang. I do 'Ariel'... I had nothing to do with that really, that was Ritchie and Candy's tune, but I play that because people want to hear it, it's a classic Rainbow song. So, err... to answer your question – yes [laughs]. I'm really missing getting on a plane, getting on a stage and doing gigs. But until then, you can check out the solo album and the album I've done for Frontiers which is called Long Shadow's Dawn... because I just thought it would be funny to have people in the audience chanting "L.S.D! L.S.D!" [laughs]. That should be out around August. It's a cracking record, I put everything into that because I had nothing to do – and then Alcatrazz came along and go "Hi, would you like to write an album with us?" Oh fuck... okay! [laughs]

Hopefully we'll see you soon.

We are opened up in Scotland now and there was a guy who runs a theatre called the Tron in Glasgow, it's like a wee cinema. He had a two metre stick and he stood and said "all these seats, they're all gone". Four either side. Three rows behind and in front, so people are excited but I don't think it's anywhere near ready to come back, especially for the little venues. You can get 3,000 people distanced in the SECC or Wembley of course, but what about the bands who play bars and clubs? So I don't think it's viable at the moment. We live in hope.

Doogie White's expanded 'As Yet Untitled' solo album is out now.