

AROUND TOWN

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British hard rock legends Deep Purple perform tomorrow night in Taipei, one stop in their six-month tour of Australia, Asia and Europe

BY DAVID CHEN
STAFF REPORTER



Hues of Deep Purple

song," he said earlier this week on the telephone from Perth, Australia, where Deep Purple was wrapping up the Australian leg of its 2010 tour. "You never know what's going to happen. Somebody suddenly kicks off every night and that's what makes it exciting."

Deep Purple has undergone so many personnel changes in its 42-year history that you need charts to keep track (the fan site www.deep-purple.net has a "family tree" diagram that lays everything out nicely).

The current lineup has been the most stable, and includes keyboardist Don Airey, who joined the band in 2001, and guitarist Steve Morse, who joined the band after founding guitarist Ritchie Blackmore quit in the early 1990s.

Hard-core fans might miss Blackmore, who co-wrote many of the band's best-known songs, but Gillan says the band has been better off without him.

"[Blackmore] would just get in a temper and walk off [during shows]," said Gillan. "People were getting fed up with it. So, long gone. And the day he left, the rain stopped and the sun came out. And everything's been fine ever since."

Today, Deep Purple has proven to be more than an aging rocker's band, says Gillan. "The general age of our audience around the world is now 18 years old — and the energy we get from kids is just unbelievable. It's a kind of magic cycle that goes round and round and the show is extraordinary for me."

The above conversation with Ian Gillan was a follow-up to this e-mail interview from last week.

Taipei Times: When Deep Purple began in the late 1960s, a lot of rock bands were influenced by blues and R 'n' B. What artists in particular inspired you to sing and make music?

Ian Gillan: I grew up with classical music, jazz (well boogie woogie — my uncle was a pianist) and was a boy soprano in the church choir. Then I was touched by the young Elvis, Little Richard and moved on to Ray Charles and Ella Fitzgerald, somehow learning to play blues harmonica and absorbing everything from field laments to Delta blues and up the big river to Chicago. With Deep Purple we had the chemistry of [former keyboardist] Jon Lord's orchestral composition and his Jimmy Smith-inspired Hammond organ and [drummer] Ian Paice's big band swing influences to put into the equation. That's just a part of it though.

TT: Everyone knows the song *Smoke on the Water*, and fans expect to hear it at shows. Do you ever get tired of performing it? How do you keep old material fresh?

IG: It is slightly different every night, depending on the circumstances. But it has a power of its own and we couldn't possibly treat it with anything other than the respect it deserves — and quite rightly the audience

expects to hear it fresh and powerful — they always join in the choruses.

TT: What music do you listen to these days?

IG: Depends on my mood, but the most recent album is called *Duende Magic* and is full of wonderful flamenco guitar — Paco de Lucia, El Tomatito, etc.

TT: What is your view on rock and pop music of today? For you, what's good about it and what is lacking?

IG: I couldn't possibly comment as it is my firm belief that contemporary art (music, whatever) can only be judged subjectively and I'm not part of that generation. I remember being irritated when my older relatives would criticize my rock 'n' roll, but I was even more annoyed when they praised it.

TT: The band has been through countless personnel changes, and you've managed to keep three out of five long-standing members. What is the secret to your longevity as a band? What keeps you going?

IG: Actually it's the same thing that brought us together in the first place — music. And there is an understanding between us that gives the music its identity.

TT: Have you seen the film *This Is Spinal Tap*? Much of the humor was influenced by rock 'n' roll myths associated with Deep Purple (like the Stonehenge segment) and bands of the same generation. What do you think of the movie and the characters?

IG: I think it's hilarious. But the Stonehenge thing was to do with Black Sabbath when I was with them for the *Born Again* album and tour.

TT: You've sung with Pavarotti. What was that like? And have you thought about reprising your role in *Jesus Christ Superstar*?

IG: I sang the aria *Nessun Dorma* twice with Luciano Pavarotti. He was a giant in every sense, with a lovely twinkle in his eye. The *JC Superstar* recording was the definitive interpretation and I couldn't see any reason to repeat it.

TT: How much new material will Deep Purple be performing in Taipei? What can first-time audiences expect to see?

IG: We try to strike a balance between well-known songs like *Highway Star*, *Hush*, *Smoke*, etc, with some more obscure material like *Maybe I'm a Leo*, *Mary Long*, etc and some relatively new stuff, possibly *Rapture of the Deep*, *Things I Never Said*, and so on.

But the main ingredient to every [Deep Purple] show is the improvisation and jamming. I never quite know what to expect up there, but it does get dangerous sometimes.

TT: What's next for Deep Purple? Is there a new album in the works?

IG: No idea — we never make plans. 2010 is a busy year on the road — we don't finish until mid-December, so I guess we'll take a holiday then see what's what.

He has sung with Pavarotti and Black Sabbath, and was the voice of Jesus on the original recording of the rock opera *Jesus Christ Superstar*.

But Ian Gillan is best known as Deep Purple's frontman. The legendary British hard rock group makes its first appearance in Taiwan with a concert tomorrow night at the Taipei World Trade Center Nangang Exhibition Hall (台北世界貿易中心南港展覽館), 1 Jingmao 2nd Rd, Taipei City (台北市經貿二路1號).

Gillan joined Deep Purple in 1969 and was the voice behind some of the band's biggest hits, including *Smoke on the Water*, *Space Truckin'* and *Highway Man*.

Concertgoers can expect to hear the 64-year-old belt out these classic tunes, backed by a band that includes two other long-standing members, bassist Roger Glover and drummer Ian Paice.

There will be rock nostalgia in the air, to be sure. But for Gillan, the experience of a live Deep Purple show is as fresh as ever.

"The guys are always finding a new way to playing a

PERFORMANCE NOTES

WHAT: Deep Purple

WHEN: Tomorrow at 7:45pm

WHERE: Taipei World Trade Center Nangang Exhibition Hall (台北世界貿易中心南港展覽館), 1 Jingmao 2nd Rd, Taipei City (台北市經貿二路1號)

ON THE NET: www.deeppurple.com

ADMISSION: NT\$800 to NT\$4,000, available through 7-Eleven ibon kiosks or at www.tickets.com.tw

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