

HoustonPress

Houston, TX
December 12, 2013

Knocking at Your Back Door: A Deeper Shade of Purple In the '80s



Deep Purple

Perfect Strangers Live

Eagle Vision, 141 mins., Various CD/DVD formats

It's something of an intellectual parlor game for Deep Purple fans to debate the ultimate question: Which lineup was the best?

Commercially and song popularity/longevity wise, it's clear DP 2.0 -- the band responsible for efforts like *Machine Head*, *Fireball*, *In Rock*, and *Made in Japan* -- is the winner. Ian Gillan (vocals), Ritchie

Blackmore (guitar), Jon Lord (keyboards), Roger Glover (bass) and Ian Paice (drums) remain the "classic" lineup.

But the quintet had been broken up for more than a decade when they reconvened to release the better-than-you'd-expect *Perfect Strangers* in 1984, followed by a massive reunion tour. This healthy 2-CD and two-hour-plus DVD recorded on their stop in Sydney, Australia, and shows a band hardly content to rest on their '70s credentials.

By mixing their classics ("Highway Star," "Strange Kind of Woman," "Space Truckin'," "Black Night," "Speed King") with material from the new record like the underwhelming "Under the Gun" and "Gypsy's Kiss" alongside winners like the title track and anal-sex tribute "Knocking at Your Back Door," the show moves along at a powerful clip.

And while Gillan is in fine, powerful voice and the rhythm section of Glover and Paice keep the beat, it's Blackmore's versatile guitar work and Lord's keyboard solos and flourishes (with both men giving nods to classical music riffs and themes) which shine. Whether it's the funky "Lazy," the ambient "Child in Time," or show-closer "Smoke on the Water," these two impress the most.



The only concession the band makes to the '80s rock concerts and fashion seem to be in the knee-deep smoke effects on some songs, plus Gillan's leather pants and Glover's blue spangly suit jacket. Though the camerawork is primitive and filled with stationary shots by today's standards, the picture is clear and the sound pulsates.

Perfect Strangers Live is available as a DVD, a 2-CD set, and a combo packet. The DVD also includes a bonus documentary on the tour, including a press conference announcing the reunion where Glover coolly announces when asked about comparisons to their younger, big-haired contemporaries "We're not a heavy metal band... we're more of a country and western band compared to [current] heavy metal."

Oh, and by the way, Deep Purple is *still* not in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. Guess their slot must have been taken by Percy Sledge, Madonna, Donna Summer, Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five, or ABBA.