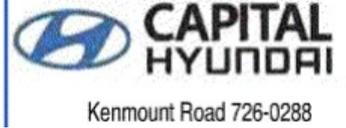




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Deep Purple hits the stage at Mile One

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Published on January 30, 2012
Kyle Mullin

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While dreaming up "Smoke on the Water," Roger Glover wasn't so much inspired as terrified.

"I just woke up saying it to an empty room, with my eyes still closed. Then I kind of opened my eyes and the words were somehow hanging in the air, and I thought, 'did I say something out loud?'" the bassist for British heavy rockers Deep Purple says of the drowsy utterance that would define his career.

Frontman Ian Gillan turned Glover's brief, nightmarish mantra into a lyric and song title which, along with Ritchie Blackmore's throbbing, instantly recognizable riff, became the most smouldering tune of the 1970s.

Today, Deep Purple's biggest hit is seen as one of hard rock's signature early songs. But the destruction that birthed it threatened the very lives of some of pop music's biggest names.

It all started when The Montreux Casino's auditorium burst into flames during a 1971 Frank Zappa concert thanks to "some stupid with a flare gun," as described in the lyrics that further depict that day. Deep Purple was recording an album in a neighbouring mobile studio as the casino fire spread. Soon, everyone was fleeing from the smouldering venue except for Glover — who rushed inside.

"We left with the audience, but then I couldn't find the rest of the band," Glover says of the trampling rampage that poured out quicker than the burning casino's smoke, separating him from his fellow musicians.

"So I went inside to look for them, and the auditorium was completely empty."

What Glover saw brought him to a standstill — not the deadly blaze, but the source of an inferno of sound.

"I remember standing in front of the stage, looking up at all of Zappa's equipment," Glover says of the bulky, then high-tech synthesizers employed during the show, including for a dazzling electro riff on the song "King Kong," that one fan tried to outshine by firing the flare gun that literally brought the house down.

"They were Moog synthesizers, which were very new at the time. And I was looking to see what



Deep Purple members (from left) Roger Glover, Ian Gillan and Steve Morse perform in Sarajevo, Bosnia in 2007. — Photo courtesy DeepPurple.com

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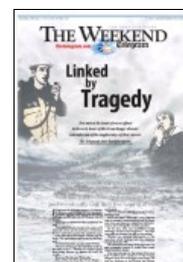
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they were like, knobs and wires hanging out. And I stood there for a moment just admiring his equipment."

That dangerously eccentric reverie faded as the smoke crept closer.

"I made my way out," Glover adds.

"About five minutes later boom, the whole place was an inferno. Then I hooked up with the rest of the band and we made it back to the hotel, and watched in horror as the thing raged."

After the last embers from all that mayhem cooled, and Glover woke from a fitful sleep with the perfect moniker, he and his band mates gathered to record their bizarre ode to it all.

"Smoke on the Water" rocketed the already successful troupe toward superstardom in 1972, topping singles charts around the world. In less than a year the members of Deep Purple became the top selling artists in the U.S.

But that multiplatinum success soon became a burden. By 1973 the band had barely been together for five years, but had already released seven albums. That led to relentless world touring, exhaustion and infighting. Glover and Gillan quit the band before 1974 because of tensions and creative differences with Blackmore, who went on to resign in 1975.

The remaining members of Deep Purple went through a carousel roster of replacement musicians, then broke up entirely in 1976. Glover and the others returned in 1984 only to play the same game all over again — a songwriting spat with Gillan prompted Blackmore to quit for a second time in 1993.

But by the middle of that decade Deep Purple recruited a new guitarist, Steve Morse, and with a more stable lineup they went on to become one of the highest grossing acts on the road to this day. But Glover still questions the cost of all that turmoil.

"It's absolutely like a divorce," he says of the endless tensions that strained Deep Purple over the years. "You're married to these guys. You don't sleep in the same bed, thankfully, but it is a family, like a real complicated marriage."

And in that sense, Glover is speaking from experience.

While his band may have reconciled and thrived on tour in recent years, he's also spent the last decade haggling with his wife Lesley and her lawyer.

They divorced and he captured some of that bitterness on the title track of his 2011 solo album, "If Life Was Easy," with lyrics like "I wonder why we have to be like chickens always chasing ... No joy on the phone, got company just when you need to be alone, if life was easy we could all go home."

After Glover finished recording that song, the first fan to hear it was his mother, who loved its every surly word.

"She said 'There's nothing wrong with that, it's got everything it needs to be a hit.' She was always my biggest fan," Glover chuckles about his mother's enthused reaction to the verses.

The tumultuous moments that inspired that song kept coming. His mother died shortly after hearing those sullen breakup notes.

Then his new partner Myriam gave birth to their daughter Lucinda in 2009. After that Gillian, Glover's daughter from his first marriage gave him a granddaughter.

Those ups and downs culminated in some of his most searing tracks on "If Life Was Easy." The opening song, "Don't Look Now (Everything Has Changed)," features a blistered, droning riff. Glover plucked those bitter notes on a seven-string Turkish baglama lute.

He discovered that exotic instrument years ago. Glover was stumbling across the streets of Istanbul, killing time before one of countless world tour gigs when he came upon a Turkish music shop dubbed Elvis. Its walls were lined with baglamas — some bass, some tenor, some tiny, others hulking.

Glover was oddly transfixed by those frayed strings and brittle splintered frames, much like the bulky synthesizers that brought him to a standstill amongst the flames devouring Montreux's Casino, or the ensuing nightmare inspiration that halted his sleep and left him reciting "smoke on the water" as if he were in a trance.

To this day, despite all the drama in his life, Roger Glover is still moved most by the strange sources of new rhythms.

"The baglama's got this lovely, harpsichord kind of zingy kind of sound," Glover says of his latest rhythmic muse which, in a way, reverberates with everything that's echoed throughout his chaotic life.

"It is difficult to learn how to play, not was. I'm entirely self-taught on the baglama. No one can teach me a thing, I'm stupid that way. When you pick up an instrument you make a sound out of it, it's just instinctive that way.

"Then you hear what someone else can do with it, the dexterity of the master traditional Turkish musicians, and that's when you give up. But then you pick it up again and you go 'I still like the sound of it, even though I'm clumsy.'"

Deep Purple will perform Thursday at the Mile One Centre. Tickets are \$65 and can be purchased at the venue's box office, by phone at (709) 576-7657, or online www.mileonecentre.com.



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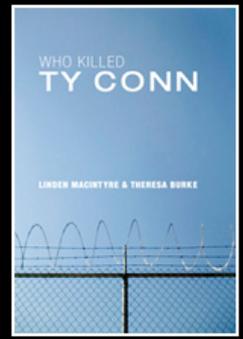
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