

Soldier of Fortune

Written by bluesever
Monday, 24 July 2017 15:09 -

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In a classic example of life imitating art — album cover art, to be precise — there were storm clouds brewing ominously on Deep Purple's career horizon as the storied British hard rockers unveiled their ninth studio album, 'Stormbringer,' in November of 1974. Blackmore leaving to form Rainbow soon after its release. The main reason for Blackmore's departure were the overt funk influences brought to the band by new members David Coverdale and (especially) Glenn Hughes. The album closes with the incredible "Soldier of Fortune", a Coverdale/Blackmore penned composition, which is a soft, slow ballad (regarded by many as a Purple classic,) where Coverdale shows the full extent of his fabulous voice.

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Deep Purple were formed in Hertford, England, in 1968, with an inaugural lineup that featured guitarist Ritchie Blackmore, vocalist Rod Evans, bassist Nick Simper, keyboardist Jon Lord, and drummer Ian Paice. With their self-titled third LP, Deep Purple's ambitions grew the songs reflecting a new complexity and density as Lord's classically influenced keyboards assumed a much greater focus. Soon after the album's release, and with the dismissals of Evans and Simper, the band started fresh, recruiting singer Ian Gillan and bassist Roger Glover from the ranks of the pop group Episode Six.



Deep Purple 1968 - 1969

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1970's 'Deep Purple in Rock' heralded the beginning of the group's most creatively and commercially successful period. At home, the album sold over a million copies, with the subsequent non-LP single "Black Night" falling just shy of topping the U.K. pop charts. Released in 1971, 'Fireball' was also a smash, scoring a hit with "Strange Kind of Woman." "Smoke on the Water" featured on the multi-platinum classic 'Machine Head,' reached the U.S. Top Five in mid-1972 and positioned Deep Purple among rock's elite.



Deep Purple 1969 - 1973

However, long-simmering creative differences between Blackmore and Gillan pushed the latter out of the group that same year, with Glover soon exiting as well. Singer David Coverdale and bassist/singer Glenn Hughes were recruited for 1974's 'Burn,' and Gillan meanwhile formed a band bearing his own name. 'Burn' and 'Stormbringer' both reached the Top 10, but Blackmore grew increasingly dissatisfied with the group's direction and in May 1975 left to form Rainbow with vocalist Ronnie James Dio.



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Deep Purple 1973 - 1974

“Soldier of Fortune” is a memorable and stunning melancholic acoustic song with vocal perfectly matched by the weary and time-battered voice of David Coverdale and dramatic guitar play by Ritchie Blackmore, one of the most distinguished guitarist in history.



Ritchie Blackmore & Ronnie James Dio

In the Jerry Bloom biography, “Black Knight. Ritchie Blackmore,” former lead guitarist says of “Soldier Of Fortune” it is *“one of my favorite songs. It’s got a few of those mediaeval chords.”* This slow, sentimental ballad was co-written with new vocalist David Coverdale for the first album by ‘Deep Purple Mark Three.’ Unfortunately, the rest of the band didn’t like the song, but Blackmore continued to play it after leaving the supergroup, including with Blackmore’s Knight, where the soft feminine voice of Candice Night although obviously not as fitting as David Coverdale’s, does not sound out of place.

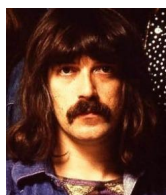


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Glenn Hughes & David Coverdale

Upon leaving Deep Purple, Coverdale formed Whitesnake. The green young singer from 1974 became a swashbuckling superstar, and even hired former Purple alumni Jon Lord (keys) and Ian Paice (drums). Meanwhile, Jon Lord also had a say on the song. He had retired from Deep Purple in 2002, and later he formed a group that toured the world with the Concerto for Group and Orchestra and some songs from his past with an added orchestral overtone. In 2009, he included "Soldier of Fortune" in the setlist. *"I love this song, even though I didn't write it"*, said Jon.



Jon Lord

Though Deep Purple has never released the song as a single and it has never placed on the record charts, it has developed a cult following over the years, and cover versions have been released by Whitesnake, Opeth, Black Majesty.

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~~whitesnake play 'Soldier of Fortune' (acoustic)~~