Gillan - Mr. Universe (1979 Japan Edition 1989)

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1 Second Sight   2 Secret Of The Dance   3 She Tears Me Down   4 Roller   5 Mr. Universe   6 Vengeance   7 Puget Sound   8 Dead Of Night   9 Message In A Bottle   10 Fighting Man   11 On The Rocks   12 Bite The Bullet   13 Mr. Universe   14 Vengeance 15 Smoke On The Water   16 Lucille   Bass, Mixed By – John McCoy Drums – Mick Underwood Guitar – Bernie Tormé Keyboards – Colin Towns Vocals – Ian Gillan

Leading his own bands in the late '70s and early '80s, Ian Gillan continued to embrace music that, not surprisingly, was heavily influenced by his former band, Deep Purple. And he never sounded more Purple-ish than he does on Mr. Universe, which isn't quite on a par with Purple's Burn but is stronger than many of the albums the outfit had recorded after Gillan's departure (some of which were quite disappointing). This is Gillan at his most aggressive and passionately rockin'. Those with fond memories of his work with Purple will appreciate the testosterone-driven energy of "Vengeance," "Roller," and "Message in a Bottle." Headbangers shouldn't overlook this one. ---Alex Henderson, AllMusic Review

He was one of the voices of 70's British hard rock and will always be associated with his two stints with the legendary Deep Purple, whom he joined, in the company with Roger Glover, in 1969, left in 1973, rejoined in 1983 and left again in 1989 to tales of acrimony and bad feeling. In between the comings and goings, Gillan fronted a number of bands named after himself. In 1979, the band called simply Gillan, released one of the best hard rock albums of that time, Mr Universe. A tough thing to do because Gillan and his contemporaries were under a cultural attack from the hoards of punk bands and their fans that were quickly growing and growling around him.

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More than that, though, as this album was released, the band were not in the best of shape. Gillan himself had just left The Ian Gillan Band – that's right, he left his own band – mainly because half of the then band wanted to explore jazz fusion rather than rock and ridiculed any movement towards the hard rocking style. So Gillan started again with Colin Towns as the core alongside himself while Bernie Tormé entered the guitar slot and John McCoy (who was with Gillan during the Pre-Deep Purple band, Episode 6) appeared on bass.

The band released the LP, Gillan, in the Far East in late 1978 and an updated version of that LP was released in the UK in 1979. As Tormé said, "I suppose my best memory is of being in a hotel guesthouse in a grim place in the north of England called Carlisle, up by the Scottish border. We had played a gig the night before, gone to this little hotel, got up in the morning to get some breakfast, except there was none: all there was a little instant coffee machine that didn't work in the hall, which was about the size of two telephone booths put together. We were all cold, hungry, depressed and fed up. Then we had a call from our office in London to say that Mr. Universe, our first album, had just gone in the charts at No 11. What a feeling!". ---Paul Rigby, theaudiophileman.com

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