

## MUSIC NOTES BY MARK MORRIS

Michael Des Barres is probably not a name that most readers will be familiar with, yet most everyone knows him. Des Barres has a new band, and a great new rocking album called Carnaby Street, that is not what most would expect from a 64 year old man.

River City Tanlines is a three piece rock band from Memphis, led by singer/guitarist/songwriter Alicja Trout, who's signature guitar is a white Gibson Flying V. Coast To Coast is River City Tanlines' ( a river city tanline is what is also known as a farmer tan) second full length album since the band's formation in 2004, and it's the best thing that they have ever recorded.

Jon Lord, best known as keyboardist and founding member of Deep Purple, passed away July 16 from a pulmonary embolism at 71. Lord is often overlooked and underappreciated for his achievements. He was responsible for introducing the Hammond organ to rock music as well as pioneering the fusion of classical and rock music. Lord was also a founding member of Whitesnake, and he had numerous side projects, but for now, we'll be taking a look at the second incarnation of Deep Purple.

### Michael Des Barres – Carnaby Street



Michael Des Barres has been a lead singer in several bands, including the early 70's glam rock band Silverhead and the criminally overlooked hard rock band Detective, that was signed to Led Zeppelin's Swan Song label in the mid-70's, and included ex-members of Yes and Steppenwolf . The huge 80's hit Obsession by Animotion, was a cover of Des Barres' song that he had recorded with Holly Knight. Des Barres also replaced Robert Palmer in the band Power Station, and it was he that sang with the band at

Live Aid in 1985. Des Barres actually started out, and continues to be, an actor. His first roll was in *To Sir With Love* in 1967, but he may be best known as Murdoc in the popular *MacGyver* TV series of the 80's and 90's. Des Barres has been in countless movies and TV shows since, often playing villainous characters. To further his unique story, Des Barres was once married to Pamela Des Barres (they remain good friends), one of the most famous groupies of all time.

Michael Des Barres has a new band, and they have come up with the most unexpected album of the year, *Carnaby Street*. Carnaby Street is the fashion shopping street in the Soho district of London that led the fashion world in the mid-60's to the early 70's, the period that Michael Des Barres was most influenced by musically. The gravely-voiced singer's vocals have actually improved with age, and he sings like a young Rod Stewart (before you laugh, Rod Stewart was one of the best rock vocalists - in the early 70's, and there aren't many that sang like their life depended on it the way that Rod once did). Des Barres' band flat out rocks like the Faces and the early 70's Rolling Stones, yet this album sounds fresh and exciting. Carnaby is just good blues-based rock and roll that has a ton of 60's-style soul heaped upon it. If you are a fan of The Black Crowes' first album, *Shake Your Money Maker*, you will love this album. Little Steven's *Underground Garage* picked *Little Latin Lover* as coolest song of the week on July 25<sup>th</sup>, and has had the song on constant rotation.

There is a special edition of *Carnaby Street* that includes a DVD of some live performances that can be purchased for \$14.99 directly from the Gonzo Media Group label at:

[http://www.gonzomultimedia.com/product\\_details/15483/Michael\\_Des\\_Barres-Carnaby\\_Street.html](http://www.gonzomultimedia.com/product_details/15483/Michael_Des_Barres-Carnaby_Street.html)

## River City Tanlines – Coast To Coast



Memphis power trio River City Tanlines has evolved from a punkish low-fi band into a more straight-forward rock band that acknowledges their roots while adding a bit of power pop into their sound on

their brand new Coast To Coast album. Singer/guitarist/songwriter Alicja Trout attributes the band's change in sound to her change of outlook on life after becoming a mother. The songs are less about anger and frustration, and she says she "had to get rid of the screaming stuff". Her vocals are more out front than on previous recordings, and though there are some more pop oriented songs, the band still rocks. This is far from wimpy music, it sounds kind of like a fusion of early Cheap Trick and The Runaways with a lot of short and sweet guitar solos, some of them fuzzed-out 60's garage band style. The adventurous song Dark Matter, in fact, may be the band's hardest rocking song ever. It is a Black Sabbath-inspired classic rock style song with multiple changes, and the first four minutes of the five and a half minute song is all instrumental. In true River City Tanlines form, the guitar solo sounds like it belongs in a 60's surf song, yet it fits right in.

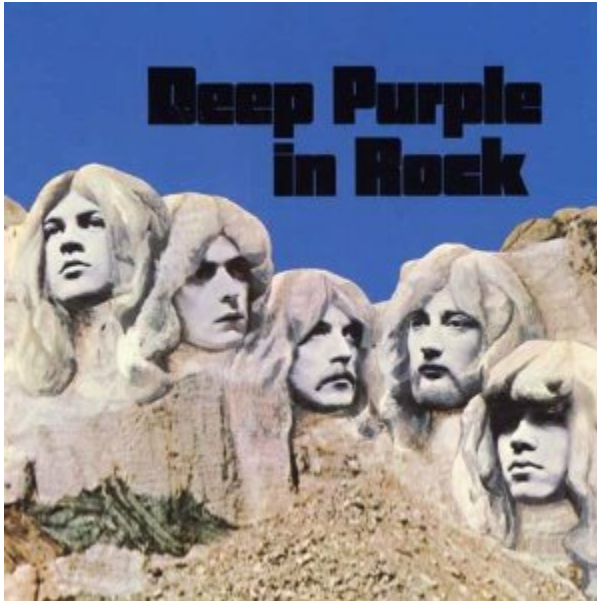
Coast To Coast was recorded at Dial Back Sound in Water Valley, Mississippi, near Oxford. Recording there allowed the band to concentrate their efforts on the music without day to day distractions that they would have encountered at home in Memphis. The prolific Alicja Trout is in several other bands, so if a song that she has written doesn't fit in with the Tanlines, she simply uses it in a different band. Dial Back is the best recording studio that the band has ever used, so this album sounds better than the Tanlines' previous recordings, and it is a solid, cohesive album. Coast To Coast is on the Big Legal Mess label, a division of Fat Possum Records from Oxford, Mississippi, and it is available on beautiful translucent green vinyl (which includes a download of the album in mp3) pressed at United Record Pressing in Nashville, TN, as well as CD and mp3.

## **Deep Purple – The Mark II Studio Albums**

Deep Purple is often written off as a bombastic, over-indulgent classic rock band. One could write an entire book about the various versions of the band, and they were (and are) very versatile in styles, which have included progressive rock, rock/classical fusion, blues based hard rock and funk rock. They were always unique because Jon Lord played Hammond organ, and preferred to use different techniques to get different sounds with it, such as switching between a Lesley cabinet and a Marshall amplifier, instead of using synthesizers. Their huge hard rock anthem Smoke On The Water, massively popular Made In Japan live album and the re-formed band's 80's material are generally what are familiar to all except for the more hard core Deep Purple fans, and there is a lot more to the band than these. The Mark II version of the band is rightly considered the band's classic period, but it only lasted for four years from 1970-1973, when guitarist Ritchie Blackmore and singer Ian Gillan finally came to the conclusion that both of their egos were too big for one band to contain. In spite (and maybe partly because of) this tension, Deep Purple recorded four great albums that hold up surprisingly well forty years later. The band had previously recorded three good albums between 1968-1969 that were somewhat successful in the U.S., but went mostly unnoticed in the U.K. Blackmore and Lord recruited powerhouse singer Ian Gillan, because they didn't believe that original singer Rod Evans had strong enough vocals to tackle the harder rock sound that they were preparing to venture into. Bassist Roger

Glover (also a successful producer) was in Gillan's band, and joined Deep Purple shortly after Gillan did. Drummer Ian Paice is the only member of Deep Purple to be on every single album, though Jon Lord was on every one until he retired in 2002.

## Deep Purple In Rock



In Rock, from 1970, is the first album from Mk II Deep Purple, and it makes a statement right out of the gate with Speed King, a fast hard rocking song that is made up of lyrics from 1950's rockers such as Elvis, Little Richard and Chuck Berry. The album also includes the 10 minute Child In Time, which builds from a low key organ intro into a faster harder rocking song with a great guitar solo from Blackmore before dying back down to the quieter organ again. The song was designed to showcase just how powerful Gillan's vocals actually were. Gillan has said that attempting to sing the song now would literally put him in the hospital. In Rock is rougher around the edges than the following Deep Purple albums, but it is among the favorite of Mk II fans, and was the band's breakthrough album in the U.K. There is a great 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary expanded edition of In Rock that includes the excellent single Black Night along with some alternate takes and unreleased bonus material. The jewel case has an added bonus as well, as the band's signatures are silk screened on the front jewel case.

## Fireball



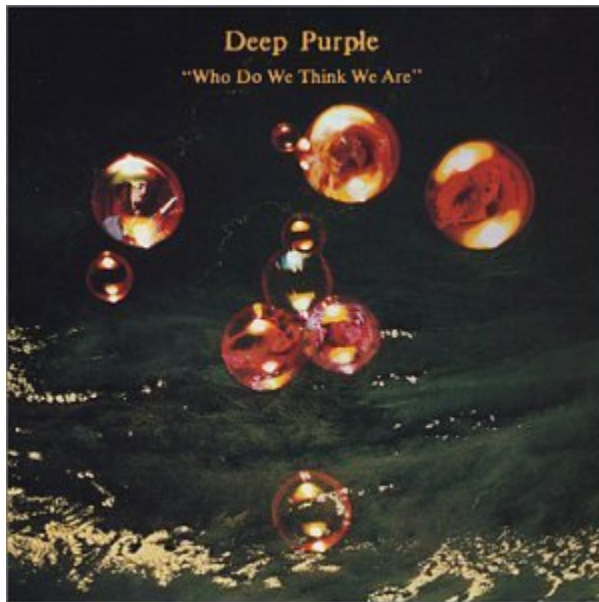
Fireball, from 1971, is the most under-appreciated (by rock radio) Mk II Deep Purple album. It is much smoother than *In Rock*, and is closest in sound and quality to the epic *Machine Head*, which came out the following year. I first heard *Fireball* on a college radio station and was surprised that it seemed to have been skipped over by commercial rock radio. Only *Strange Kind Of Woman* received commercial radio play in the U.S., and this song wasn't even on the U.K. version of the album, as it was a single-only release there. In the U.S., this track replaced the outstanding *Demon's Eye*, prompting many Deep Purple fans to buy the import version of the album just to get that song. *No, No, No, Fools and No One Came* sound like could have all come from the *Machine Head* album. The band was tight and confident, and the call and response soloing of Blackmore and Lord was in full force. *No One Came* is one of my favorite Deep Purple songs, and the quirky lyrics are a poignant and humorous look at rock stardom. Some of Jon Lord's organ solos will sound familiar to early Nintendo players, as Deep Purple's huge popularity in Japan spilled over into the video game soundtracks of the late 80's and early 90's, when most video games were made in Japan. It's both weird and funny to hear the influence, especially from this album. The 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary CD of *Fireball* has the U.K. version of the album, followed by the *Strange Kind Of Woman* single, some great out-take songs and some remixes of album tracks.

## Machine Head



Machine Head, from 1972 (the same year that Deep Purple held the Guinness Book of World Records for the globe's loudest band), is Deep Purple's most popular album. It is a tour de force, with no weak tracks or even a dull moment, but most importantly, it contains Smoke On The Water, a song that has one of the most recognized guitar riffs (which is doubled on the Hammond organ) in the history of rock. The song chronicles the recording of the album, which was to take place at the Montreux Casino in Switzerland using The Rolling Stones' mobile recording studio, until the casino was burned down when a concert goer fired a flare gun during a Frank Zappa concert there. The band wound up recording the album at the Montreux Grand Hotel instead. The band did not expect Smoke On The Water to be a hit, thinking it was too simplistic, so Never Before was released as the first single instead. Every song on the album eventually received commercial FM radio airplay. Machine Head isn't only Deep Purple's best and most popular album, it's one of the best classic rock albums, period, and a great place to start listening to Deep Purple's music. The 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary edition is a double disc set that adds a B-side single along with Quadrophonic Mixes of Maybe I'm A Leo and Lazy to the original album as well as the entire album remixed by Roger Glover, which is interesting because it includes some "noodling" of the band that was edited out of the original album as well as some alternative guitar solos. It is a brighter sounding mix that some will prefer over the original.

## Who Do We Think We Are



Who Do We Think We Are, from 1973, is the last Deep Purple Mark II album until the Perfect Strangers reunion album in 1984. Reflecting the band's sense of humor, the album title came from a negative review that the band had received, titled Who Do Deep Purple Think They Are. The original LP gatefold was plastered with reprints of positive reviews that the band had received, and is duplicated in the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary CD edition. Woman From Tokyo was the big hit from this album, and the song still gets airplay on classic rock stations today. Ironically, Who Do We Think We Are may be the most "radio-friendly" album that this version of the band produced, but all but the single was ignored by radio. Super Trouper, Smooth Dancer and Rat Bat Blue could have all been rock radio warhorses, even having shorter running times than most anything that Deep Purple had done before this album. The rest of the album is good as well, though it was no Machine Head, so it was written off as a hurried follow-up to the Machine Head tour that produced the Made In Japan live album. The 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary edition of the album includes some remixes, an outtake song, some songs in progress, and a previously unreleased instrumental jam.