

Deep Purple – Bananas (2003)

Written by bluesever

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01 - House of Pain [Gillan, Michael Bradford] 02 - Sun Goes Down 03 - Haunted 04 - Razzle Dazzle 05 - Silver Tongue 06 - Walk On [Gillan, Bradford] 07 - Picture of Innocence [Gillan, Morse, Glover, Jon Lord, Paice] 08 - I Got Your Number [Gillan, Morse, Glover, Lord, Paice, Bradford] 09 - Never a Word 10 - Bananas 11 - Doing it Tonight 12 - Contact Lost [Morse] Bass Guitar – Roger Glover Drums – Ian Paice Guitar – Steve Morse Keyboards – Don Airey

Bananas has every sign of being a disappointment. Jon Lord's grandiose keyboards were always a focus but he's gone, it's released in the heady age of Radiohead, and it's got one of the oddest titles and the oddest cover art that ever graced a Deep Purple album. Surprise, it's fantastic. New keyboardist Don Airey is an effective replacement, adding new sounds and styles and working the Hammond so well that an uncredited Lord appearance was rumored among fans. Lord has said he's not playing on the album, but he did contribute some writing on the excellent "Picture of Innocence" and "I Got Your Number." Those two tracks, followed by the winding and pastoral "Never a Word," add up to a strikingly impressive suite that bridges the more bombastic first half of the album with the looser and more playful second half. That's right, "Deep Purple" and "playful" in the same sentence. The thunk and chug is still there, but Bananas often turns to mid-tempo boogie and blues, allowing Ian Gillan's wry and witty delivery some deserved space while guitarist Steve Morse's time in Kansas and the Dixie Dregs pays off as never before. The funky light reggae of "Doing It Tonight" is downright smoky-bar slinky-sexy, and if the band doesn't add it to every one of their encores for the rest of their career they're nuts. Filled with hooks and songs that get better with each listen, there's little to dislike about Bananas. Certainly the urgent "House of Pain" could have benefited from punchier production, and there's a noticeable lack of lengthy solos throughout, but these are minor quibbles. Hipsters have already decided, and some hardcore fans will pine for the monolithic sound of Machine Head, but on Bananas Deep Purple sound comfortable, free to do what they want, and more than the sum of their parts than they have in a long, long time. ---David Jeffries, AllMusic Review

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