

Blackmore and Night

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by [Jeff Niesel](#)



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8 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 14 House of Blues 308 Euclid Ave. 216.523.2583 Tickets: \$20
houseofblues.com

For 12 years, former Deep Purple/Rainbow guitarist Ritchie Blackmore has toured and recorded with his wife Candice Night as Blackmore's Night. Calling from the "enchanted forest" that is their Long Island home, he and Night discussed their interest in minstrel music, a far cry from the power metal Blackmore played with his previous bands. Their latest jaunt, dubbed the "Secret Voyage Autumn Nights" tour in honor of the album they released last year, comes to House of Blues next week. Proceeds from the show will benefit the locally based Caroline's Kids Pet Rescue.

I've read different accounts of how you two first met. What's the real story?

Blackmore: We met on a soccer field. I like to play soccer on my days off, and we do a lot of charity matches against radio stations, preferably against people who can't play very well. Candy was working for the station we played against.

Night: I think Ritchie stacked his team with really good European players. My team was these DJs who knew how to eat pizza and press buttons but not run around after a ball. After the game, I asked him for an autograph. I'm sure I looked really glamorous in my sweat pants

and jacket. I was ready to walk away and take my autograph and go home, and he said, "You're a very beautiful woman." I thought that it would make for a great Ritchie Blackmore story.

And then how did a relationship begin?

Night: He sent his roadies through the crowd, so that I could meet him at a pub later. We ended up talking about things we had in common, our interests in the supernatural and other worldly things. We were completely fascinated by that realm. We could talk about that stuff for days. We just kept in contact. When he came back to American soil, we'd get together. We were close friends for a while, and it grew into a romance. I went on the road in 1993 with Deep Purple, and there was a large amount of friction between band members, so he decided he'd reform Rainbow. They were in this old farmhouse in Massachusetts, and there was like six feet of snow every day. There was no way to get out of the farmhouse. The singer was Scottish, and I don't think he had ever seen that much snow. They were relying on him to come up with lyrics, and I think he was going stir-crazy. Ritchie called me when I was on the way up and asked me to come up with some lyrics. I had 14 verses and the song became [Rainbow's] "Black Masquerade." That's how we started writing together. When the other guys were doing the backing tracks, we'd be sitting by the fireplace writing songs. We never thought we'd put them out, so it's been an interesting progression.

Did you have any sense that Blackmore's Night would be going strong 12 years later?

Blackmore: Yes and no. It felt very natural to me. At that point, Rainbow was feeling very unnatural. We were a hard-rock copy band. That was forced. In the early days, Purple was natural. But toward the end, I was getting bored with what I was doing. It was the same thing. Heavy riffs and someone screaming over them. I like pretty melodies. I always have.

Night: I always find that Ritchie is much happier when he's not in a box. When he started with rock music in 1968 and through the '70s, '80s and '90s, things became expected of you. If you don't play "Smoke on the Water," people get angry with you. This is where his heart is. Ritchie is such an improvisation guy. He'll play "Smoke on the Water" if he feels likes it. He

redefines everything he touches. It's the Blackmore brilliance. Whether it's a pop song or a tavern song or a rock song, once you get a taste of that creative freedom, it's really hard to go back into that box.

How has Blackmore's Night evolved?

Blackmore: In the beginning, it was a real challenge. There was no one to copy. We had to make our own tracks and our own road somewhere. It was an interesting journey and still is. When you're recording, you have to learn little tricks about what will work with a woodwind, which has an intonation that is slightly out of tune, whereas the synthesizer is perfectly in tune. You learn things like that. You learn what works as far as registers go. A mandola will not mix with a guitar. There are purists who just play Renaissance music, and that's all they play. They don't mix the renaissance music with rock and blues.

You've been pretty prolific.

Blackmore: When we first started, promoters were dumfounded. They said I'd never make any money playing medieval music. That's not the point. I have played in bands to make money and pay the bills. We were happy to play to a 100 people in the beginning. In certain countries, it's taken off. Now, it's almost becoming too much.

Night: 10,000 people showed up in Russia. We look at it as intimate music. We don't want any boundaries or walls. When you go back to medieval times, the minstrels were there to entertain the courts and the people. Somewhere in the 1970s, it turned the opposite way and the musicians were so out of touch, they wanted to be these big rock stars on pedestals with pyrotechnics. It's like watching a movie. You don't feel that connected. We want to turn it back around and build up that connection. When we're out there and having a good time playing, which is pretty much all the time, we'll take requests from the audience and get people up on their feet dancing and singing. It winds up being more of an event than a concert where you come and sit and watch.

And you truly enjoy playing Renaissance fairs?

Blackmore: We go out of our way to turn up at Renaissance fairs, especially in our area. We'll take our instruments and just walk around. Fortunately — or unfortunately — now we end up getting recognized. I like to be incognito and walking around and hearkening back to the old days when a minstrel just walked around. There's a big movement for this music, and I don't think people are aware of it in the mainstream.

Night: But there is a huge contingent of people interested in looking behind the veil, but certainly not living back there with the plague and stuff like that.

Blackmore: Sometimes I think about living that lifestyle, but I would want air conditioning and central heat as well.

Night: And an air mattress.

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