

MLIVE.com – Everything Michigan

Deep Purple co-founder comes to Frauenthal

Posted by [Bill Iddings](#) October 04, 2007 12:00PM

Categories: [Muskegon](#)

Sooner or later Oct. 12, the hue of Blackmore's Night will turn Deep Purple.

That assurance comes from Candice Night, lead singer for the Renaissance folk-rock -- talk about a sub-genre -- sextet she fronts with lead guitarist Ritchie Blackmore, a co-founder of the 1960s-70s hard rock band Deep Purple.

"They might hear a couple of the Deep Purple songs," Candice Night said of the audience that will be before her at the Frauenthal Theater in downtown Muskegon. "Ritch has had so many amazing melodies over the past 40 or 45 years or so (that) it would be kind of silly just to turn our back of all of those amazing songs."

Deep Purple's heyday made considerable noise with such hits as "Hush," "Soldier of Fortune," "Kentucky Woman" and the 1974 song that became Deep Purple's anthem, "Smoke on the Water."

Ritchie Blackmore, with Candice Night as his music and life partner, has now long gone Renaissance, which goes well beyond tagging the letter "e" onto the ends of words such as "old" and "tavern."

Ten years ago, Blackmore and Night hooked up to form Blackmore's Night. With contemporary lyrics and orchestrations, the band's music harkens back to Europe, as far back as the 12th century. Even an adaptation of Deep Purple's "Soldier of Fortune," which Blackmore's Night plays every time out, has been reinterpreted to the new band's style.

Taking most of its repertoire from the Teutonic and Renaissance traditions, Blackmore's Night made its initial splash in Europe.

"We kind of repackaged their songs with new lyrics and new arrangements and added some new instruments, as well as incorporating the old instruments, to see what they would think," Candice Night said by phone from her home in her native Long Island, N.Y. "And they've loved it. So, for the past 10 years, that's one of the things we've been concentrating on. Especially in Germany, because they have the amazing castles. Places like that kind of house the music very, very well."

Blackmore's Night's debut in Muskegon will take the band from castles to a palace. Opened in 1930 as a movie theater, the restored Frauenthal is a 1,725-seat gem of Spanish Renaissance architecture. The surroundings won't be as bizarre, to be sure, as the concert Blackmore's Night once played European salt mine, a venue that took them and their equipment a couple stories underground where, said Candice Night.

"Everything was carved out of salt. So everything that looked like marble -- the floors, the chandeliers -- was actually all grain salt."

The Frauenthal will more than do.

"We really love to play different, historical-type theaters," Night said.

Blackmore's Night concerts tend to be events of audience participation. As part of the craze in Renaissance festivals throughout the U.S., concertgoers often dress the part, costuming themselves from centuries out of history books. You see the affinity every day, said Night: women reading period romance novels, millions hooked on Harry Potter and "The Lord of the Rings." Besides, she said, acting out can bring forth a true personality.

"People can be whatever they want to at our shows," she said. "You can be the jester, or you can be the town crier or the king or the queen or just the peasant. I think Shakespeare once said that the mask is not to conceal, it's to reveal. That's always been an interesting saying to me. You're not really hiding behind it. You're actually showing what's on your inside and what you feel and what your real personality is."

"The interesting thing is that you find out how many people actually have tights hanging in their closet."

However people dress for a Blackmore's Night show in Muskegon, they can forget about sitting on their hands -- or, for that matter, staying in their seats. Blackmore and Night encourage audience participation, on drinking songs such as "Olde Mill Inn" to the more contemplative "Faerie Queen," and "Village Lanterne," all of which from Blackmore's Night's current CD, "The Village Lanterne." That's the way Europeans do it, said Night, so why should Americans pass on the fun.

"We encouraged everybody to get up on their feet and dance," she said. "(Europeans) are so used to that, as soon as they hear the opening chords, they're on their feet. They just know where the cues are. They're singing along and dancing in the aisles and Ritchie's passing out beer in big mugs and things, and we definitely want to get that same kind of vibe going on here in America.

"We kind of look at it like there's no separation between band and audience. It's just everyone having a really good time. We really want to get that positive energy out there."

Having played thing from excavated Roman amphitheaters to a former fortress in Istanbul where Night met Joan Baez, Blackmore's Night mixes the old and new.

Ritchie Blackmore, of course, is on guitars, be they electric or acoustic: In an Aug. 27, 2003 cover story, Rolling Stone magazine Blackmore the 55th greatest guitarist of all time, on a Top 100 list that included Jimi Hendrix, B.B. King, Eric Clapton, Carlos Santana and Robert Johnson. Blackmore also a variety of other string instruments. Candice Night, in addition to singing (and writing many of the Blackmore's Night songs), plays all the Renaissance woodwind instruments. The band's contemporary bent is complemented by electric keyboards and bass.

At the time they linked up, interest in the Renaissance was nothing new to either Ritchie Blackmore or Candice Night. She said that Blackmore, even when he was playing with Deep Purple and another group he founded, Rainbow, always preferred going back in the centuries.

"As soon as he would step off the stage after doing his shows with Deep Purple or with Rainbow, he'd immediately go either to his dressing room or to his hotel room and only put on Renaissance music," she said. "He was just so enamored and entranced by it that it was kind of all-consuming for it. It's really all he listens to."

The same holds pretty much true for Night herself. Throughout her life, she said, music has been a sanctuary, "always my great escape. But not just Renaissance music, any music that I really felt an emotional connection with.

"I'm just have a hard time finding that today on the radio because it's been so taken over by commerciality, and everything seems to be cookie cutter. Nothing seems to have a distinct personality, or even retains mystery or innocence."

So much for contemporary radio. Looking for magic where a listener can "look behind the veil and actually be able to relate to it deeply" might be the longing, "But today it always seems to be either disco or woman half-dressed just gyrating and being really angry. And I'm trying to find something in between that that I'm actually relating to and I'm having a hard time doing that. I'm trying to find something that makes me feel something other than annoyed."

Taking tours of Europe around three or four times each year, Blackmore's Night has seen, done and heard a lot. For a video of song "Village Lanterne," Candice Night played the Lady of the Lake while submerged 15 deep in a tank of water for five hours. The band's new album, half of which is recorded, will be released next year. A new DVD, "Paris Moon," is due for release in early November.