

Candice Night and Richie Blackmore.

An interview and a throwback to the future.

It was interesting for Candice Night to share that when Legendary Guitarist Riche Blackmore left the stage of Deep Purple, or Rainbow, he would immerse himself into his love of the ancient music of the Renaissance. The following is an interview w/ Candice about this forray into the world of Romance, Magic, and Mysticism.

Paul: I'm fascinated with ethnic music. Despite a vast emptiness in much "pop music" today, I'm hopeful about the future in your approach. Please comment of both of your interests in blending world music in your work.

Candice: Well, when I first met Ritchie in 1989, not a lot of people knew that when he stepped off stage after playing guitar in one of the most legendary rock bands, he would put on Renaissance music. He always listened to that to relax, to be inspired and to escape to another realm. I had never heard of that music before I met him, but when I heard it I was instantly entranced. There was so much passion. It was honest. Written by musicians in a time where they weren't creating it to be on MTV, or to be rich and famous. It was written for the sake of the song. There is such beauty in it and passion that I feel we lack in today's music. I remember a time when music used to make me feel. There were heights of elation, and depths of melancholy - It was like the great puppetmaster of emotions. Now when I turn on the radio, I only feel annoyed. It's all so synthetic, no depth, just songs fixed in a studio by a whiz of a producer and backed by millions from a corporation. Yet, there's so much music out there that we aren't being exposed to that is just amazing. I find the best songs are usually given to me by fans who make compilations of their own regional folk songs or melodies from the history of where they are from. So, basically what we do is to take the songs, whether they are songs from the renaissance time period, regional folk melodies, or classical pieces, and we add new instrumentation. We add a new arrangement and new lyrics that embody the story that the melody line depicts to us. So those who are familiar with the original melodies, will still hear them embodied in the new song we have created. Those who don't know the origins of the song will usually try to find out more about them, do their own research, and find a whole new world of music that often times they didn't know existed. Its a wonderful way to open people's minds to the music that is out there, but not being played or talked about in mainstream circles. I just find that there is such depth to the melodies, they remind me of a simpler more beautiful time. The melodies seem to lend themselves perfectly to lyrics about legends and myths, to romance and nature based words. So that's what I do - I channel those pictures painted in my head by those tunes and create the words, that hopefully run a parallel between allowing people to personalize the lyric and recognize themselves in it as well as alluding to the ages gone past and the storylines within.

Paul: The Internet is an entirely new way to reach people with ones "art" or "voice." It allows people instant access to song samples, unique radio formats, and digital downloads. Do you think this will help you reach a wider audience?

Candice: It certainly does seem to make the world smaller. My only concern is that once again, it seems that those who have the most money put behind them by the major record labels are getting the most Internet promotion as well. They get the real player pop ups or the AOL welcome screen videos.

But the great thing about the Internet is that you can do research easily and find bands that you wouldn't normally hear about. That injects a ray of hope into the industry. I just wish that people would feel motivated to do that research and look for other music that is out there. We seem to have gotten very complacent as a society and are used to being spoon fed. So people tend not to look much further than what is being presented right in front of them. So, yes, the Internet is a wonderful tool and a lot of people are beginning to search through and find new artists. It levels the playing field a bit. From what I hear, more and more people are not listening to the radio and not watching MTV. They are looking for more meaningful music. The Internet is a great way to do that. I am not sure how they would stumble across our music since the web is so vast and our record company hasn't yet gotten a handle on how to get our music out there through downloads, etc. But if it does happen, then I'll be impressed! I think the best way we're reaching people through the Internet is fans who are telling other fans about us whether its on Blogs or their favorites pages. So, that is like word of mouth but for the world to see if they are looking in the right place. And amazon.com does wonders for us since our CD's are always available through them. It will be interesting to watch the progress in the next few years with it all

Paul: I agree about your "spoon fed" comment. I know many in the industry who comment that they are not here to educate. It is a business. Despite this, I do believe people will accept deeper music if it was supported by the industry. You hit the nail on the head in that the use of the Internet and live shows develops new fans - slowly but surely. This is completely new territory

With this in mind, have you thought of participating in what seems to be the biggest phenomenon on the Internet MYSPACE.COM? It is vast

Candice: Yes, actually there are 2 sites for us on there. One is Blackmore's Night and the other was made for me, Candice Night. Check here to see one:

<http://profile.myspace.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=user.viewprofile&friendid=29530692>

Yes, this is a great idea. The two sites are run for us by fans because I find when I sit at the computer, hours seem to just disappear and I miss my outside time. I try to stay away from the computer as much as possible. I do monitor and update Ritchie's official Blackmore's Night site, as well as getting very personally involved in my own site by answering

five chosen questions sent in by fans per month. I also give a general news update each month. Those two sites take up more time than I'd like to dedicate sitting in front of a computer as it is. I appreciate what is going on with myspace.com and it certainly brings the community closer together; but its almost like trying to search through the phone book for something. There are so many people on there that if you are looking for something specific it takes a lot of wading through to find. I don't know if people have enough time to search through so much, to find one particular thing - maybe they do.

Paul: It is obvious The Renaissance period is of great interest to the both of you. What is the main "hold" or "fascination" of this period?

Candice: For Ritchie, it is the historical accuracy. For me it is the fantasy element. I mean, would I really want to live in the 1500s? No running water, no sanitary conditions, no air conditioning? Hmm...Not really. I like my modern day amenities. But, then think of no road rage, no ambient lighting, no bass drums coming from the guy listening to a rap song three blocks away that you can still hear in your home because its so loud. Imagine no air rage.... Interesting concept. A world lit only by candlelight, fire, the sun and moon? That's the fantasy element. The romantic visual. Bonfires with people using the old fashioned way of communication-speaking and telling stories and pondering the mysteries of the universe while playing acoustic instruments. A castle on a hilltop with a maiden

waving a handkerchief to her knight who is riding off on a white mare promising to return...Forests that go on for miles without condo complexes being built on them. Meadows of fireflies. The visual of that time is bewitching for me. The good thing about living today, is you can review all the times that have come before and choose which ones you want to incorporate into your life now. So that's what I do.

Paul: Ahhhh you're a romantic. Forgive me but I'm gonna harp a bit here because I love it when seemingly ambivalent things work together in harmony. How interesting can it be that these computers can actually be the tool for simple honest people to find one another - to support the old oral tradition of passing on lyric, story, and song. To further explore the reality and fantasy of myth (Interestingly, myth, fantasy is a prominent theme in the artwork of many at Myspace)

Candice: Nothing to forgive- I was harping on a bit myself there...but it's all good. Meant to make you think and reflect. I have seen some of the fantasy artists on Myspace. There are some really amazingly talented artists. This site was set up for me so you can see the artwork that is being sent over: <http://profile.myspace.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=user.viewprofile&friendid=56654651> I also have a page on my official site for people who send me their art and poetry. If you go to candicenight.com and click reflections you will see links for poets and dreamers. In dreamers you will find artwork sent to me from fans worldwide. There are so many good things about computers, the fact that by writing through them we are saving trees, the fact that you can reach out to people worldwide and it makes the world a little smaller and us all personally connected. But I still do believe that no matter how realistic they make cyber reality (duplicating forests, streams, waterfalls, everything),.its still pretty one dimensional. I hope that because of our fascination with computers and the Internet, we don't forget to go outside and see the truth and the reality of the beauty of nature. Nothing will really be able to duplicate the sense of strength and wisdom you get when sitting against a tree, or the feeling of freedom when you feel the wind on you face or the smell of winter in the air. I just hope people don't forget to do those things because they are so important. We do all have a tendency to sit inside and get involved in the computer for hours and miss out on the beauty of another day. We need sometime just to unplug and remind ourselves of the simple things that are before us everyday, but we have a tendency not to see

Paul: Please comment more on your attraction to fantasy. Has it always held such fascination for you?

Candice: Always, always, always. Yes. When I was 4 my parents enrolled me in acting/singing lessons and I loved the fact that I could be anything, anywhere, at anytime, and slip away from my own reality and into someone else's. So I could become other people when I needed to write through their view points and their perspectives. In that other realms and visions have always been very accessible to me. I have one foot in another realm at all times. Recently I was sitting outside with a group of friends by the water front. We all were watching the sky and talking when a big shooting star shot through the sky. It was brilliant. One of my friends said- "Wow I haven't seen a shooting star like that since I was little." I thought, well, the stars haven't stopped being shooting stars so I said to him "When did you stop looking up?" A close friend of mine always relays that story about me because she thinks it describes me perfectly to others. I can just honestly say that I never stopped looking up.

Paul: Mystery is also a continuing theme for you. Do you care to comment on the "awe" of mystery and it's role on your music?

Candice: Its a very important element. It keeps people intrigued, bewitched, wondering, guessing.

It draws people into your world...your realm. It fascinates people, and makes them dream. There is a beauty and a power in the essence of mystery. It captivates and makes you believe.

Paul: There is a mystery to spirituality. Care to comment on the role of spirituality in Blackmore's Night?

Candice: Very important. We are both very spiritual creatures, Ritchie and myself. The first time we met we spoke all night into the early morning hours about spirituality and our beliefs and encounters with otherworldly presences. We both believe in the supernatural, or the very natural as we call it. I think because we are sensitive and we are very much in tune with the other realms, it really helps to steer us not only in life, but in this musical path that we are on. The music comes directly from our hearts and souls. There is no egos involved, nothing but the channeling of the song. We believe very strongly in love being the highest power. And in that we are able to see the beauty and the magic that is around us at all times. I take time out to watch the sunset every evening, to feel the breeze in my hair, to absorb the mystical moments of nature and to see it all through the eyes of a child. With as much wonder and awe and innocence. I am amazed everyday by the magic of nature. Unfortunately, a lot of people don't see what is in front of them because we are caught up as a society - in survival mode. Today's just add water instant society is always trying to go faster than anything that has come before. It must be bigger, better, quicker, and we are burning ourselves out. People don't seem to realize that you need to take time to recharge your batteries if you want to be able to keep up with the pace again tomorrow. So many people are running on empty and angry. There's a lot of hostility, understandably, but it is sad to see. So we also put our music out there because it comes from a genuine place. Maybe we can help by putting a little healing and beauty into a society that so badly needs it. Paul: I think many folks will be curious about how you and Richie met, and what was the draw that lead the both of you to focus on this unique music

Candice: We met on a soccer field. I was working for a radio station, and he had called us up to play a charity soccer match against our DJs. What he didn't say was that he was stacking his team with ringers so that they could beat us mercilessly. After the game I went over to congratulate him and ask him for an autograph and he asked me to meet him at a pub and we talked all night. He kept in touch from wherever he was on the road after that and we were friends for years before we became involved romantically. Then I moved in with him in 1991 and in 1993 he asked me to sing some background vocals on the road with him while he was in Deep Purple. My first experience was in front of 15,000 in Czechoslovakia. He left that band and in 1995 and reformed Rainbow. While he was recording with them, they were having problems coming up with some lyrics, so he called me and played the backing track to me over the phone. I came up with 15 verses for the song - they chose 4 and the chorus and then knew that I could write lyrics. That's how I wound up CO-writing 4 songs on Stranger In Us All. I also did the backing vocals on the CD and on the tour. But Ritchie and I would write songs for ourselves when he wasn't writing rock songs with them. When we started playing those songs for our friends, they said if we put out a CD, they would be first on line to buy this music. AND, we thought maybe other people might like it too. Those songs ultimately became the songs for Shadow of the Moon, our first CD, back in 1997. Its been almost 10 years and 6 CDs now. Right now we're recording holiday songs which we hope to have out by this season.

Paul: I see that you perform many "live" shows. Touring can be expensive, and musically you have a lot going on. Do you guys take other band members with you? If so, what other instruments do you use? How many dates do you do a year?

Candice: Yes, we usually lose money whenever we go on tour but we do it because we believe in the music and the people really love to see the show. We lose money mostly because we play specialized venues like castles or theaters and try to cap the audience at 1800, though that is getting harder to do. Now we are beginning to insist the cap be at 3,000. But, we also insure that the ticket prices not be more than \$25. So we drive the agent crazy! Also, because Ritchie has been touring for over 40 years, he insists on lots of days off, we won't play more than 3 dates in a row. So, we're still paying expenses...you can imagine the costs. But that's OK. Thanks to Smoke on the Water, we can afford to do this for a while. We have an 8 piece band: a violinist/woodwind player, bass player/rhythm guitarist, percussionist/drummer, keyboardplayer/male tenor opera singer, two harmony operatic twin female singers, and Ritchie playing Mandola, Mandolin, Doubleneck Acoustic Guitar, Hurdy Gurdy, Electric and Acoustic Guitar. I play the Shawms, Cornamuse, Rauschpfeife, Tambourine, Pennywhistles, Chanters, Recorders, and sing. We usually go out for about a month, come home for a month, and go back out again about 4 tours per year. Then we're recording the rest of the time.

Paul: When one goes to the Blackmore's web site, there is a wonderful droning introduction as the page invites you to "enter." Care to comment on what instrument you used? I love the mix of early instruments. Also, what instrument do you feel best supports your singing - you know, you can't play a double reed shawm when singing

Candice: That is the Hurdy Gurdy on the song Twenty Five Years. That is one of the songs we were introduced to by a fan when we played in the Ukraine - though then it wasn't called 25 Years. It was a sheperdic bagpiper playing on a hill to his sheep with a very different vocal. The Hurdy Gurdy is being played by Ritchie (though we both play individual ones around the house), and it substitutes for a guitar solo. Its really soul stirring and so interesting! The record company and I got him a Nickleharp for his birthday last year, and he's learning it now. What an incredible sound! I'm hoping to get him to play it on the holiday album.

I know the singer/woodwindplayer dilemma of not being able to sing while playing. Sometimes I think that's why he got me to play these things in the first place! I love nylon strings on a supporting instrument, and I am really pleased with the medieval tuning that he uses on some of his guitars. The sound just rings, but in a totally different scale... really nice. But I may have to go back to the oldest instrument of all for the answer. When I sing together with the two girls its like a harmony blanket, really warm and all encompassing. I love it. The Nickleharp sound is becoming a fast favorite to sing with...
Paul: Can you explain to the folks what a Nickleharp is?
Candice: Sure-its also known as a Swedish Fiddle. Its a sort of an elongated violin with sympathetic strings that make it sound very melancholy and give it a ring that resonates long after the notes has been played. You use a bow, as you would with a violin, but it also has pegs like a hurdy gurdy so you need to press the pegs and use the bowing technique in order to get the sounds

Paul: The Shawm has a double reed and can be tough to play. Do you find that reed giving you fits at times?
Candice: Of course, listen to the track Mond Tanz/Child In Time on our latest CD, The Village Lantern. At the end of the song, you will hear me break into a hysterical fit of laughter. That comes from the fact that I was playing the part on my trusty shawm and 15 times in a row, when I went for the last note, it would make a squeaking/honking sound because the reed would seize up. We tried everything! Just going for the one note, playing the whole thing, warming it, making the temperature colder, wetting the reed, drying it, squeezing it, all the tricks. It still wouldn't play that one note! All the other notes were fine! So the 15th time was my breaking point. I lost it and started hysterically laughing. Of course now, interviewers are asking em if that was a hidden meaning - me laughing because we were playing Ritchie's old song Child In Time, And I'm just thinking "you've obviously never had to deal with a double reed, have you?"

Paul: Well, to end up let me further ask about the role of spirituality in your music. You mentioned many people "running on empty". My belief is that the volume and bass utilized in music today does all the work for the listener. The listener doesn't have to do much as this sound literally, physically, and sonically, comes out and grabs you. The music you speak of definitely speaks to the listener, but it is helpful if they can just slow down and hear. It's in that willingness to hear, that allows the spiritual connection to germinate. And of course then your fantasy and story is more easily ingested.

Candice: Yes, I find that today's music that is heard on the radio tends to be broken down into two categories - Aggression and overt sexuality. There is no innocence, no mystery, no story lines, no magic. It's all in your face and its all the time. If it's not Eminem, its a hostile rock band yelling at you about abrasive subject matters. Or its the Pussycat Dolls or Beyonce or those types with tiny skirts and bikini tops grinding away. OK, as a woman, they don't have anything more or less than I do- but they leave nothing to the imagination. Also, kids are being forced into believing that this is the only way to be. Its like they finish watching Telly Tubbies, and the next year have to be Britney or Christina. They wear tiny things and listen to songs like "Dirty" to be "in" and to be cool. Its heartbreaking. Their innocence will be stolen away from them soon enough, if they allow it to be. Do we really need major labels pushing these images on babies just so they can make a buck? Its selling their souls- yet , to listen to the radio, there is nothing else to choose from. In this country you'd think because we have freedom we'd have more variety. But not with the same companies owning hundreds or more stations nationwide and supplying them with the same playlists. Its like Henry Ford's original car model "You can have any color, as long as its black." The idea of freedom of choice is there, but the variety isn't readily available. And as far as the aggressive stuff, anger is a natural emotion. We all go through it and experience it. But I think that artists should take a little more responsibility in what they're putting out there. This world has a lot of aggression as it is. And that emotion is contagious. Positivity is also contagious. I'd just rather put some healing and some positive emotions out there to try to help this world get better and make people feel good, instead of putting out more of the over abundance of anger that we already have.