

## Blackmore's Night

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The name Ritchie Blackmore should require no introduction to anybody. Even if you were not a fan or even alive when his previous band Deep Purple ruled the earth, you should be aware that the Man in Black sculpted arguably the best known hard rock riffs in music history. Of course I'm referring to "Smoke on the Water", one of the undisputable anthems of metal.

After years of leading both Deep Purple and his subsequent band Rainbow to the lofty heights of rock royalty, Ritchie Blackmore grew tired with what he viewed as formulaic and restrictive material. He formed a new project along with his significant other, vocalist Candice Night. Blackmore's Night is based in Renaissance folk music but also embraces rock, pop, and other elements of other styles. The band was an instant hit in Germany, which has long been a stronghold of the Blackmore fan base. That was 10 years ago and now the band has released their newest record, "The Village Lanterne", a fresh and vibrant piece of work that impresses from the first few notes. Anchored by the nimble guitar work of Blackmore, the material allows Candice's engaging voice to take centre stage. In addition to the CD, the band also put out a DVD earlier this year "Castles & Dreams: which is absolutely delightful. As well as a full concert, there are many behind the scene interviews which are essential viewing for any fan of the band.

Fresh from a tour of Germany, where they only play castles, Candice took time to answer some questions by e-mail and enlighten this newcomer to the background of the band as well as their motivations.

**antiMUSIC:** I have to admit off the top that I have been a bit reticent to hear Blackmore's Night until recently. I am a big Purple fan that just kept thinking "What the heck is Ritchie doing with this wandering minstrel, bland stuff?" Like most silly misconceptions, one should fully experience something before commenting on it. I absolutely love what I've heard so far (the new record and DVD) and feel foolish that I haven't checked it out before. Do you often find new fans coming to you saying they were unexpectedly won over by the material?

**Candice Night:** All the time. I mean, when you don't fall into a perfect category and you're not neatly packed into a box with a title on it, people don't know where to put you. We don't get conventional methods of promotions working for us although just recently our TV debut in the USA was on PBS so that was great exposure. But without hearing something, you can't experience it or know if you'd like it. I never let critics views obscure my own because I always wind up thinking: Hey that's just one person's opinion...why does their opinion have more validity than mine? Besides, people often mistakenly categorize us as Renaissance music. Although that is Ritchie's inspiration in writing a few of the songs, as you can tell from our latest CD, obviously that's not all we're inspired by. We delve into folk, rock, fantasy, pop, ballads, instrumentals and even a tavern

song or two. It's such a great freedom to be able to play whatever you want to and not be stuck in one category.

We get such a variety of fans probably because of the variety of music. Some have followed Ritchie since the '60s and knew that his name is synonymous with incredible skill and talent, whether it is on electric guitar, acoustic guitar, hurdy gurdy or mandola- all of which he plays frequently now. But now a lot of those guys are married and the women love the music because it is melodic, romantic, has stories to the lyric and a female vocalist. They also have children who are still innocent enough to want to be princesses or Robin Hood so they come to the shows dressed in costume singing along to the songs. Then there are those into nature or alternative living who love that aspect of our songs. Or those into the Lord of the Rings/Harry Potter fantasy realm. There are also many people who aren't familiar with Ritchie's past bands which is always surprising for us. They just love what we're doing now. We seem to be bridging the gender and generation gap with these songs. The one thing all these people have in common is that they are independent thinkers looking for something musically different. I am glad you took a chance on listening to the music and enjoyed it.

**antiMUSIC: For somebody that is an admitted '80s music lover, what is the appeal of this Renaissance-type music for you?**

**Candice Night:** In all honesty Ritchie listens to nothing but purist Renaissance music in our home. He is completely fascinated by that music. He loves the honesty of it, the modal scales and harmonic structure, the historical accuracy- everything. For me its more the fantasy of it all. I love the romantic visual of the woman waving her scarf from the castle window, the knight riding towards her from the distance, the bonfires lit and the forest surrounding them. No ambient lighting to blind you to the stars, no ambient noise to drown out the crickets, no road rage, air rage, computer screens and one-dimensional cyber reality. Just candlelight. Millions of romance novels are based on that concept. We just take that visual and idea and translate it to music so you can hear it and feel it instead of just reading about it. I still listen to and love other types of music, but when I create...it's this fantasy world of another time that I turn to and draw from to help me to escape from the stress and pressures of today.

**antiMUSIC: Tell us how "The Village Lanterne" came about. What were some of the tracks that started off the project?**

**Candice Night:** The actual title track was originally going to be used for a film called the Dark Kingdom. We watched it and were inspired to write that song, but they decided that they wanted to use some of our other tracks instead. So we modified it and changed it around a bit and it became the "Olde Village Lanterne" which to us is a dual symbolic meaning of friendship, which is a light in the darkness and it's also what our music represents to us and to our fans as well. "25 Years" came from a CD that a fan gave to us while we were touring the Ukraine, of old Balkan folk music. The melody line was very different but we took their chorus which was just a shepherdic song being played on a bagpipe and made that into our verse. Lyrically I made it about how nightmares have such deep psychological holds on us. I've always found it fascinating that when you are at your most vulnerable, your defenses down, drifting off to a land of deep relaxation in sleep, your mind can infiltrate and twist ideas, thoughts, fears, memories in such a way that you can be traumatized and that wound that was basically you against yourself, will be something that you remember for many years later. In my case, 25 years later. "Olde Mill Inn" was a song that started out as a joke about a place that we frequent here on Long Island and all the people in the bar.

Sort of like a "Piano Man" vibe- but the funny thing is that it's turning out to be quite a popular song in Germany! See, you never know.

**antiMUSIC: What was it about "St. Theresa" that appealed to you and how did you come up with that arrangement?**

**Candice Night:** "St Theresa" was a Joan Osborne song that we loved for many years. We first started performing that song about 10 years ago. We did it for a couple of years, and then other songs started to take precedence. But we never forgot it. So, when it came time to do this album, our 5th studio album, we just kind of dusted off the idea and revamped it. I came up with the shawm parts and Ritchie was just being amazing as always with that beautiful acoustic guitar intro which was just him emoting- through to the new upbeat arrangement. We usually do it as an encore in concert now.

**antiMUSIC: The "Mond Tanz / Child In Time" combination works well. How did that selection develop? I think it works tremendously well with your vocals.**

**Candice Night:** Thank you! Actually, when we do rehearsals before a tour there is a lot of repetition to make sure everyone knows the parts and the new songs so Ritchie gets easily bored going over things again and again. He'll usually throw in a riff from a Hendrix or a Cream song to spice things up a bit. One day we were rehearsing "Mond Tanz" and he started the riff of "Child in Time". Well, I love that song, so I started singing along. He really liked the way that it sounded, but the funny thing was that the other members of our band are so young that they had never heard it! So we had to teach the progression to the harmony singers (those great operatic voices!) Now, it's like there has been new breath breathed into it! It was always one of Ritchie's favorite songs to do on stage, but even when he was with Purple, many nights the singer would say that he wasn't up to singing it. It used to really frustrate Ritchie because he wanted to be able to play it more often. So, now he can and he's really pleased with that.

**antiMUSIC: "Street of Dreams" is covered, not once but twice. Whose idea was it to do the two versions?**

**Candice Night:** "Street of Dreams" was always one of my favorite Rainbow songs and Joe Lynn Turner was one of the members of Ritchie's past bands that was always very positive towards us and constantly kept in touch. He often said that if we ever wanted him to sing on anything he'd love to be a part of it. So we kept it in mind when we thought about rerecording "Street of Dreams" since he was the original singer. We recorded one version with me on vocals and the producer met with Joe and got him to do the other parts. At first we weren't sure which verses he should do, so I sang the whole song so they could choose and dub him in where they wanted to. But the producer and Ritchie liked the way it sounded when I did it myself also, so they decided to put both versions on the CD for a limited time.

**antiMUSIC: What is your favorite song on this record and what is Ritchie's?**

**Candice Night:** My favorite songs tend to be the story songs because I am basically very lyric oriented. So, I would say either "Windmills", which is the parallel of the story of Don Quixote to people that we can relate to in our own life and times; or "Faerie Queen" which I think is really magical. It's like watching fireflies in the forest, to song. Of course by my choices you can tell I'm in a mellow mood- but there are more rocking up beat songs that I listen to when I drive like "I

Guess It Doesn't Matter Anymore" which is a ghost story; or "I'll Be There" which is more pop rock based. Ritchie's would probably be "World of Stone" because it was based on a medieval song from the 1200's. Or "The Messenger".

**antiMUSIC: How did Pat Regan help shape this record and what was Ritchie's role as he is listed as director?**

**Candice Night:** I think Ritchie just got tired of always being executive producer so he wanted a different title, though it fits him well as he does direct the arrangements of the cads and songs. It's great working with Pat, because Ritchie and I will be writing and collecting these songs for about a year. So we have the vague ideas of the songs, lyrics and instrumentation that we want already done before Pat comes. Then Pat will fly in and stay at our home and we record in our bar room studio which is basically in the decor of a medieval dungeon. Stone walls, medieval torture devices hanging up and fairy lights adorn the wood bar. It's very dark down there- but its really good for recording- and drinking. We usually map the song with Pat and we'll discuss when we want the song to have the instrumentation of and Pat will do all the orchestration. He gets an incredible sound and we just leave him in that room for days until he's finished. Then we let him out for some air before we go onto the next song, or completely change what he just did. Most of the instruments are played by Ritchie or myself. He does the hurdy gurdy, all guitars, some drums and tambourine. I do the harp, all the renaissance and medieval woodwind instruments, the vocals and some percussion. Pat does everything else.

**antiMUSIC: How does the writing work with you and Ritchie? Does he usually put music to your lyrics or vice versa?**

**Candice Night:** Usually he writes the melody first. Then he asks me to sing it to see if it sounds right, in the right key, etc. Sometimes we'll discuss what it should be about. Mostly, though, I take that melody lock myself in a room or go outside and listen to it again to absorb it. I'm pretty lucky because Ritchie's melodies are so visual that if I close my eyes that tune will take me to a time or place or paint pictures in my mind. Then I just take those pictures and translate them by painting those pictures into words so everyone can see them. But in the words I want the listener to relate so deeply that they either see themselves in the story of the song or they can relate because they feel it's about someone they know. I want them to not only hear the words but see the person involved, feel what they are feeling, see through their eyes. On occasion I'll write both music and words as in "Ivory Tower" or "Now and Then", but usually the procedure is the same.

**antiMUSIC: Have either of you ever relented on a song that one felt very strongly about while the other had feelings in the other direction?**

**Candice Night:** It happens rarely. I mean, on "Ivory Tower" I had to dig my heels in about the bridge because Pat and Ritchie couldn't hear how I heard it in my head, but when we stayed on the path I felt it needed, at the end of the day they understood. But most of the time, when you work with someone who has 40 years in the industry and is a musical genius- you kind of bow to his expertise and learn from the path he's taking you on. I'm always in awe of working with Ritchie. The great thing is that in the creative process and in this band there are no egos involved. Everything we do is for the sake of the song.

**antiMUSIC: Your DVD set is just fantastic. How much fun/work was it to put all of this together?**

**Candice Night:** Thanks! We are very proud of it. It took a long time to get just what we were looking for and compile all the footage that we felt was a true representation of this band. It took a while but now we have our strongest line-up ever, the material is strong and even my voice, which at the beginning had more of an innocent quality, now has the strength that only a decade of touring can bring. The castle we filmed in was brilliant, the audience was amazing and it was just an incredible night. Most of our shows in Germany are like that since we only play castles there, but to have the perfect night and to have cameras there...that hardly ever happens. We also went through a lot of footage for those extra layers. There's hours and hours of footage on that DVD, including interviews, acoustic performances, home video camera footage...so much material! Someone once said it's like spending a week on the road with the band! It was great to finally see the finished product after working on it for such a long time.

**antiMUSIC:** For somebody who was never in a band growing up, wasn't it more than a bit unsettling to play your first live shows in front of large crowds and ones that had such great expectations, considering who the guitarist was?

**Candice Night:** Of course. I always wanted to be around music, but I never thought I'd be the one on the stage. But Ritchie must have seen something and he has an uncanny way of recognizing whatever it is he looks for in band members. He and I were together for years before thoughts of doing music together ever came into it. So it was quite a surprise when it happened. First we started just writing for fun for ourselves, never thinking we'd put the songs out. But our friends started wanting to hear more and more, so we thought maybe others might want to hear them too. Plus I think after playing rock music for over 35 years he wanted to try something different. It took me a long time to realize that with the other singers he's worked with in the past, I'm not attempting to fill anyone's shoes. I can't sing like anyone else but me. So what we do has a very different feel than anything he's done in the past. But then, though I can't fill their shoes, in retrospect, they can't fill my high heels - so somehow it all works out. It's just different, a new spin on some of the old songs and a new direction for the new songs too. But with Ritchie, although I am always amazed by his talent, I'm even more amazed by him as a person. So, when I look over on stage I don't only see who I think is the world's greatest guitarist, I see my other half, my best friend and someone who believes in me too. I was terrified of performing for the first few shows, but at this point that was 10 years ago so although I still get nervous, I now am able to react with the audience like they are just friends we haven't met yet. We take requests, everyone gets up and dances, and we just have fun like it's a big party at our house.

**antiMUSIC:** What's on tap for Blackmore's Night for 2006 and beyond?

**Candice Night:** Well, our PBS special will be running throughout the USA into 2007. We return for our third leg of our European tour to Italy, Czech, and Holland next week. I just finished shooting a video with the band Helloween for their single that we did a duet on, "Light the Universe" which will be released in October. I am also part of an interactive video game theme park called Magiquest ([magiquest.com](http://magiquest.com)) where I am "Princess Candice" and on their video screens throughout the park. They feature the music of Blackmore's Night there. Their main venue is Myrtle Beach SC, but they just opened another one in the Poconos and are spreading out in Virginia early 2007 so I'll be involved in those parks as well. Then we'll be back in the USA doing some tour dates here. And the release of our Holiday Album "Winter Carols" comes out around November 2006.

**antiMUSIC:** Any last words?

**Candice Night:** Just to mention that the shows we did in Germany were in cooperation with the World Wildlife Fund and we donated a portion of the ticket sales to what they felt was their most needed area right now, the orangutans of Borneo. Because of our contributions and the sold out attendance of each show we just found out that the money that was donated was able to purchase and plant 6,000 fruit trees to help with the deforestation problem in that region. Now, the orangutans have a place to feel safe and food to eat and it helps the environment too! We usually work with local animal charities and the international charities we have worked with were ASPCA, UNICEF and Red Cross so we're just pleased to be able to help make a bit of a difference in this crazy world.

Just thanks for the interview and we hope to be up in Canada soon! You can always get up to the minute updates on our site at [www.blackmoresnight.com](http://www.blackmoresnight.com) and [www.candicenight.com](http://www.candicenight.com)

Thanks again!  
Candice

*Morley Seaver and antiMUSIC thank Candice for doing this interview and to Carole Stevens for setting it up.*