

BLACKMORE'S NIGHT

Live at Somerville Theater

Somerville, Mass.

Oct. 27, 2009

A charming and unexpected aspect of Blackmore's Night in concert is the impromptu nature of how guitarist Ritchie Blackmore steers proceedings. Set lists change from night to night, and players don't know if/when they'll be asked to switch on the fly. A case in point: The band had just finished a powerful rendition of "World of Stone" and Blackmore's outro segued slowly into the melody line from Fleetwood Mac's "Rhiannon." He nodded to vocalist Candice Night, who sang along and the band kicked in, not missing a beat. Night later revealed it was the first time they'd covered that tune onstage.

This also was the group's first-ever performance in Massachusetts and first tour (an abbreviated seven-date U.S. jaunt) since Blackmore and Night got hitched – after 20 years of living together and 13 years performing their original take on medieval/Renaissance-inspired symphonic rock. "Yes, there's something regal about being 'Mrs. Blackmore the Fourth,'" Night joked, smiling and flashing her diamond ring to the audience,

A festive atmosphere at Somerville Theater reflected the band's motif and Halloween season. The stage was theatrically festooned in olde world décor embellished by rear-screen projections of rolling ocean waves, starry skies, and fireworks. Many in attendance wore colorful medieval garb as, naturally, did the seven-piece band. The relaxed onstage vibe – Blackmore played silent foil to Night's often hilarious jibes and anecdotes – made this as much a party as concert. During one pause Blackmore served drinks in silver mugs to some lucky front-row guests, while eager fans loudly shouted song requests (including classic Deep Purple and Rainbow tunes from Ritchie's early days that stood no chance).

The band did perform a haunting cover of Purple's "Soldier of Fortune," and Blackmore's electric Stratocaster made a rare appearance late in the set for a brief instrumental medley including "Woman from Tokyo" and "Black Night." But, the focus of this concert was Ritchie's ornate acoustic work via original Blackmore's Night material, emphasizing songs from recent album *Secret Voyage*. Violin, keyboards and vintage medieval instruments blended with Blackmore's distinctive guitar lines in support of Night's bewitchingly emotive stage presence and strong, sweet voice. The likes of "Locked Within the Crystal Ball" and "The Circle" were as mystical and majestic as the rollicking "Toast to Tomorrow" was clap-along rowdy.

High points included Night's heartrending take on Joan Baez's "Diamonds and Rust" and, of course, closer "Village Lanterne" – one of the most beautiful melodies (with earnestly touching lyrics) ever written, anywhere. – John Collinge
(Progression Magazine, www.progressionmagazine.com)