Candice Night & the Minstrel Melodies of Blackmore's Night

by Tommy "Hashman" Hash

Literally ten years ago, **Ritchie Blackmore**, always the inventive guitarist, would literally reinvent himself again as a musician with something that was truly original. The sound fused European minstrel folk with a hard rock presence – something far fetched from both Purple and Rainbow. But it was not only Blackmore's playing that was the centerpiece of this ear candy, it was the presence of his wife, the velvet voiced **Candice Night**, who really brought her own charismatic element to the group.

Shadow of the Moon was the first album from **Blackmore's Night** and since then, a string of many releases, including *Ghost of a Rose*, *The Village Lanterne* and their latest DVD, *Paris Moon* have received critical acclaim & high chart positions. Through constant touring and several television appearances, including CNN's World Beat, **Blackmore's Night** has become a major staple in wide variety of music scenes, from new age, heavy metal, and progressive rock. **Candice Night** took the time to speak to Ytsejam.com about the mystical and enchanting music that she is involved with.

"To me its always been a natural progression of where we are in life," begins **Night**, referring on how the band has evolved over the last ten years, "It is like, the 1st album , *Shadow of the Moon*, was our first attempt. It was my 1st album as a lead singer and Ritchie's first delving into this style of music after playing a totally different kind of music for forty years prior. So, when I hear that album, I hear the innocence in my voice and I think those songs

still have a charm to them since the style was so new to us. The second album, *Under A Violet Moon*, we wrote some songs of a necessity for upbeat, audience involvement songs. A lot of the songs on *Shadow* were relaxing and mellow, so when we started touring we realized the need to also get the audience on their feet and singing along.
Under A Violet Moon allowed us to have that involvement from the audience. *Fires At Midnight* had more rock guitar in it and I had first started the incorporation of my shawms in those songs as well. So those had a different feel to them. In Ghost of a Rose we started adding more dramatic orchestral arrangements to the songs and incorporating more hurdy gurdies and alternate shawms that I had learned to play by then. With *The Village Lanterne*- it was sort of the culmination of all of the different styles of music- the rock, the tavern songs, the pure ballads, the instrumentals and the ethnic inspired songs. We're pretty adept at incorporating all the instruments I can play which is about ten different renaissance woodwinds including rauchepfife, a bunch of different shawms, cornamuse, gems horns, etc and Ritchie is playing quite a number of stringed instruments. My vocals are much stronger after 10 years of being on the road. So I feel like our current albums, whether its *Winter Carols* or *Paris Moon*, reflect where we are on this journey we've been on, musically and personally."

Recently, the second **Blackmore's Night** DVD has hit the racks, *Paris Moon* which was filmed on their first visit to the city that bears the release's title, for which playing that show was an interesting experience for all, "It's always a little daunting, playing a country for the first time," elaborates **Night**, "You don't know if they are coming out of curiosity, or if they really get what you are doing and have been waiting for you to come. And you won't know what their reaction will be till your on stage that night. Luckily, the French audience seemed to have studied the *Castles and Dreams* DVD! They knew when to get up on their feet, when to yell "Hey" in the right spots of the songs, when to sing and dance- they were amazing! It really made us feel right at home. For us it was important to put this DVD out now, because on *Castles and Dreams* we had played for over three hours. The record company said that we needed to cut that concert down to the amount of time that a DVD could fit because due to all the extras on the second DVD (the bonuses) we were already at our limit of a double DVD set! So there were a lot of songs that we play often that wound up on the cutting room floor. So for *Paris Moon* we were able to add a lot of the songs that didn't make the cut on *Castles and Dreams* and the ones that a lot of fans were asking for as well as the old favorites. Between the two DVDs we've now put out there, its almost like seeing a full **Blackmore's Night** concert if you watch them back to back."

Speaking of touring, even with sold out tours in Europe & the west coast as well as gigs performed in castles, there are places that **Night** herself would still love to play, as she explains, "I'd love to tour Australia and South America. We get so many fan letters from those areas. I'd also love to play Romania. I have a lot of eastern European blood in me so I always tend to feel drawn to those areas and the handicrafts and folk art and folk songs that come from there. It is hard, though, to try to narrow down favorite places. Each one has its own identity. I

mean, to compare the German 12th century castles we play with the salt mines of Krakow Poland or the beauty of the United Kingdom fields of green or the Italian passion is too difficult to choose. I've also found that places I didn't even know anything about were incredible! Like Slovenia, or Serbia, or Yidicule in Istanbul! But of course there is no place like playing home! I love playing the USA."

The music of **Blackmore's Night** has always had a mysticism that is incomparable to any other enticing music that is pondered upon our ears, it's not surprising to see where the inspirations of the music comes from, "I'm very inspired by nature. Also by legends, and myths and fairytales" elaborates **Night**, "I try to write stories in the songs so that they reflect those tales from ages past but also so when you listen to them, you see the reflection of yourself in them. I want the listener to relate to the words- deeply. See through the eyes of the song, feel what its feeling. But still to have that one foot in the veil of the mystery of the ages gone past. The music is usually inspired by either medieval or renaissance tunes or even traditional folk melodies. 25 years is written over a tune based on a Balkan sheperdic dance. The world is full of inspiration if you're open to it."

And when it comes to actually writing the music and lyrics, it's usually **Night** who pens the lyrics and **Blackmore** who composes the melodies, but there are exceptions at times, as the process is explained, "The way it usually works is that Ritchie will come up with the melodies. He then calls me in the room and I sing a melody line that he has come up with over it. Then I go into another room and close my eyes and see what pictures are painted in my head by those melodies. I then take those pictures, that visual, and allow it to tell me the story. That story then gets put into rhyming lines and we have a song! Although occasionally I will write both the words and the music. In cases like "Now and Then," "Ivory Tower "or "3 Black Crows," I wrote the whole song."

The band will go back into the studio in 2008 to record their studio follow up to *The Village Lanterne*, when asked what direction the next album will go into, **Night** simply answers by saying, "I think its always a journey without a direction. The songs take us in the direction they want to go in. We always say it's "for the sake of the song" not for any egos to be involved pulling us in alternate directions. We have about five songs written for the next album already so its coming together nicely."

Several cover tunes have graced the albums, including Dylan's "The Times they are a Changin'," Joan Baez's "Diamonds and Rust," and even Joan Osborne's "St. Theresa," for which **Blackmore's Night** have added their own twist on these tracks. "The songs that we cover always have to be melodic- that's the most important thing for us. And we need to feel as if we can add something to them to give them our own stamp. There is no point in covering a song if you are going to do exactly what the original did. So we need to feel as if we can add something to it. Richie has always been a huge Dylan fan, his favorite album being *Blonde on Blonde*. So that's where that

one came from. I heard a friend singing “Diamonds and Rust” and fell in love with it. And I had the Joan Osborne album and used to play it around the house. “St Teresa” became a fun one for us to do on stage years before we attempted it in the studio.”

Besides being an accomplished vocalist, she was a guest on Helloween’s *Keeper of the Seven Keys Part 3*, featured in many magazines, including big features in BURRN! as well as being the first ‘human’ on the cover of Japan’s Cat Diary Magazine, but besides touring & writing with Rainbow, how did ‘her musical’ life begin? “I took piano lessons and singing lessons for years before being in chorus in school,” elaborates **Night**, “But I was never one of those people to form a band at 16 and play the clubs. I never had that confidence. But I always wanted to be around music. When I met Ritchie through a radio station on a soccer field we became friends and he asked me to go on the road with him. I was singing around the hotel room and he thought I could carry a tune so he asked me to sing backup on his *Difficult to Cure* solo. After that he reformed Rainbow and they needed a backing vocalist and a lyric writer. They played a backing track for me and i came up with fourteen verses. They chose four out of that and pieced together a chorus out of two and that's how I co-wrote four songs on *Stranger in Us All*. So, each step has been a very natural progression. Ritchie and I started writing songs as his escape from the pressures of the rock world while Rainbow was doing backing tracks in the studio. We didn't think we'd release those songs till our friends started saying "If you put a CD out with that music on it- I'd buy it!" So we thought other people might like it too. Ten years later- we're still going strong and really enjoying the creative freedom this style of music affords us. We're not locked in a box of a certain genre- we can play anything we want. It’s incredibly freeing!”

The future for **Blackmore’s Night** includes the Re-release of their Holiday CD, *Winter Carols*, a brief tour of Germany for some Holiday shows and then back home for the holidays. Then, both **Candice Night** and **Ritchie Blackmore** will again, head into the studio to record their next record, for which we will be looking forward to.

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