

Interview: Candice Night, singer and front woman of Blackmore's Night (performing at PKO, Thursday Feb 12th)

By Stephen Mander

On Thursday Feb 12th one of the legends (nay, monsters) of rock will be in town. Ritchie Blackmore, the man who came up with 'Smoke on the Water' (yes! *that* song; yes! *that* riff) will be gracing Bratislava with his presence.

First there was Deep Purple then there was Rainbow and now there is Blackmore's Night. Formed in 1997, the band grew from a chance encounter at a football game with an ex-model called Candice Night. After recording Rainbow's *Stranger in Us All* album on which Night performed backing vocals, Blackmore became interested in bringing one of his perhaps lesser known interests to a wider audience; to wit, renaissance music. With her natural singing ability and personality, Blackmore saw Night as the perfect front-woman for the band and in 1997 they recorded their debut album, *Shadow of the Moon*.

Described as neo-Medieval Renaissance-inspired folk rock, Blackmore's Night have been touring and recording albums ever since, using instruments as varied as the shawm, the hurdy-gurdy, the cornamuse and the plain old guitar. BratVegas caught up with Candice Night in (where else?) a castle to get the low-down before the gig and asked her how the *Secret Voyage* tour was going.

"So far the audiences have been great. Because we change the set list every night, many fans travel to different countries to see more than one show because they know they will never see the same show twice. We do songs from the Blackmore's Night back catalogue, including our latest CD *Secret Voyage*, as well as ones from Ritchie's previous bands. The concerts are a variety of renaissance, rock, folk, ballads, tavern songs, and instrumentals. There is something for everyone and for all ages."



So, were you a fan of renaissance music before you met Ritchie Blackmore or did he develop your interest?

"I had never heard renaissance music before I met Ritchie. He is a fan of the bombastic woodwind instruments - the ones I play on stage now. I suppose it was the rock music of that time. They had definite riffs and it is easy to translate these from shawms and rauchpfiefifes to electric guitars. You can use modal 4ths and 5ths on them just like on 'Smoke on the Water'. They have a great ominous sound. I like the quieter renaissance songs, however, because to me if you look out the window and are surrounded by nature it seems to be the soundtrack to what nature

should sound like in music. It's a totally different feeling from listening to contemporary music which is not in tune with nature at all. I have learned about eight renaissance instruments, mostly woodwinds. They can be tricky because you have to come to terms with the different reeds and fingerings, but Ritchie loves the look and the sound of them, and I think that is one of the things that makes this band so different sounding. It isn't just a five piece band with the typical line up. By incorporating different medieval instruments and renaissance sounds into the songs we get a sound that is uniquely our own."

Do you find that much of your fan-base comes from old Deep Purple fans? We noticed that your second album Under a Violet Moon went to #2 on the Japanese billboard chart and #20 on the European chart. Why do you think people react to you so positively in Japan and Europe?

"I think that at the beginning when we did *Shadow of the Moon*, people were curious about what Ritchie was doing and since this project bears the Blackmore name they may have bought it out of curiosity. But *Under a Violet Moon* was the second CD we did, so people already knew what the music was about. *Shadow of the Moon* earned us our first gold record in Japan and I find that Japanese fans are drawn to melodic music. That is why genres like grunge or rap don't do so well there. We get many of our melodies from European medieval, renaissance and folk music so maybe that accounts for our popularity in Europe. We take those old melodies and add new arrangements and lyrics to them to breathe new life into them. We hope people in today's world can recognize the spirit of the past, but feel the parallel to the present and relate to the songs on an emotional level."

We read on your website that your favourite place to be is in nature. Have you had the chance to see much of the countries you have visited on this 'secret voyage'?

As I write this, I am in an Italian castle where we walked the fields and vineyards for miles in the rain today. The air is never as fresh nor do I feel as alive as when I am breathing air from the mountains, forest or oceans. We are lucky in this band that we are able to take days off in between shows to rest. We reap the benefits of Ritchie's many years on the road. He spent so much time being exhausted, playing and traveling with no time off, so now he makes sure that we have time to rest and absorb the areas we are in. Some nights we play for three hours if we are feeling good so we need this time so we can give our all. I am very much looking forward to coming to Slovakia. I have heard that the castles are amazing and can't wait to wander the fields and forests and hear some traditional folk melodies."

Your first career was modeling, but we read you felt you could never put your heart and soul into it. Why do you think that was? Has Blackmore's Night enabled you to explore yourself heart and soul?

"I think that modeling is such a superficial pastime. It gives a false, unattainable image of people and is so unhealthy for your mind, body and soul. When I write or sing I wear my heart and spirit on my sleeve for the whole world to see. You may

or may not like it, but I sing about my most honest and deeply felt feelings, hopes, fears, dreams - everything. It is frightening doing this at times because it makes you feel vulnerable, but I wouldn't have it any other way."

Just as Aerosmith and Run DMC joined Hip-hop and rock with 'Walk this Way', so do Blackmore's Night with rock and renaissance music. Do you find sometimes that there is a prejudice against the music you produce even though it's just another kind of cross-over music?

"I think that the press is very youth-oriented these days. If you are 16 and have a bunch of dancers behind you, you get plastered all over every magazine and MTV. I can't even remember the last time I saw anything musically credible in any magazine, on TV or on the radio. What people think of us doesn't bother me at all. We once had a great compliment from an interviewer who told us our music wasn't bad enough to be on the radio. Yet *Secret Voyage* has been on the top 10 of the New Age Billboard Charts in the USA for over 18 weeks after spending 4 weeks at #1. The truth is we create this music for us first and foremost, because we love it. We'd rather sit around a bonfire under a full moon or watch shooting stars with our friends than sit in front of the TV or a computer. We brave our own path and do it from the heart, not because we want to be on MTV. We walk through the woods and the more we do, the more we look behind us and see more and more kindred spirits wanting to follow us down this magical music path."

So if any of you out there think you're one of the band's kindred spirits then
brave your own path down to the



PKO on Thursday night.

