

The Candice Night Interview



By Ralph Greco, Jr.

Candice Night, blonde and oft-bejeweled lead singer of Blackmore's Night, answered a few questions for Vintage Rock during the group's European tour behind their album, **Secret Voyage**. As you may know, the core of Blackmore's Night is Candice and her husband, famed guitarist Ritchie Blackmore. Together, along with a backing band, they play an updated form of Renaissance music, along with new and unique versions of some of Blackmore's back catalog from his days with Rainbow and Deep Purple.

Secret Voyage, the seventh Blackmore's Night release, is their most commercial outing to date, with a single called "Locked Within The Crystal Ball" making the rounds. Meanwhile, the album recently achieved a Top 5 position on Billboard's New Age chart — something older fans of Blackmore's have a hard time swallowing. The guitarist himself remains somewhat elusive, but it was a good time to catch up with Miss Night to find out where the troupe has been and, most importantly, where it's going. With a legend like Ritchie Blackmore in her life, as well as a appearing in films and even singing opera with former Deep Purple bassist Glenn Hughes, Candice Night is one busy lady.

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Can you give me run-down on Blackmore's Night tour dates?

Actually we are working on putting in a few dates right now for the end of November/beginning of December for when we re-release our holiday CD **Winter Carols**.

Any plans to tour the States?

The U.S. fans have been so amazing to us, keeping us in the Top 5 on Billboard New Age charts for 8 weeks and counting, so we want to be able to play for them as much as possible, even though our main exposure has been in Europe. We are checking halls and other band members' availability right now. If, for any reason, we can't make it work, we'll do our usual holiday charity show around Christmas time and then concentrate on a proper tour here next year. But my fingers are still crossed for November and December of this year.

Seeing as you and Ritchie play a bulk of the instruments on the recordings, I was wondering do you view Blackmore's Night as a band? Or is it just you and Ritchie with guest musicians for each new recording and tour?

When we're on the road, we definitely are a six-piece band. Each person brings something to the table from their own varied musical background. The keyboardist is a church organist and harpsichord player with opera training. The violinist/harmony vocalist is classically trained, but also adept in gypsy fiddle. The drummer has done everything from punk bands to Broadway shows. And the rhythm guitarist/bass player is also trained in eclectic instruments like the oud or the lute.

As far as recording, it's usually easier for Ritchie and myself to just go into the studio and flesh out the songs with our producer. Especially since the band members aren't local. I play about nine instruments and Ritchie does the same, and whatever we can't do the producer can fill out sound-wise on the recording. If we need something else added to the sound, we can always get someone else in to do their part.

I understand you have quite a few younger fans. What is about Blackmore's Night that you feel reaches that demographic?

Actually, I have never seen a band with a more varied demographic! I have seen two-year-old girls at shows in full princess costumes or fairy wings to 85-year-old jesters! It seems to me that the men love the music because they know that whether Ritchie is playing electric, acoustic or hurdy-gurdy, his name is synonymous with that Blackmore brilliance. He plays such varied songs and instrumentations that there is something for everyone. The women seem to like it because of the female singer and the lyrical content and the fantasy element of dressing up. The children like it because it's easy to sing along to and they love to wear costumes as well. The older people respond because it's melodic and not aggressive. So it bridges the gender and the generation gap.

Then we get the Goths who like it because it isn't commercial, and it's different. We get the hippies or pagans cause it's nature-based, and the culture crowd cause it's for independent thinkers braving their own path not force-fed by commercial radio or TV telling you what to like or listen to or buy. So you can imagine we have quite varied crowds at our shows. But they all have one thing in common: They love the music! It's funny how people so different can have common ground. I love seeing that.

I know you work on other projects outside of Blackmore's Night. For instance, you worked with former Deep Purple bassist Glenn Hughes. And you also have an upcoming film role. Do you seek out these opportunities or do you get offers?

Everything that I have done outside Blackmore's Night has been offered to me. I first got offered the role in the Beto Vasquez Infinity project, which called for me to do a three-way duet with the singers of Nightwish and Eden's Bridge called "Promises Under The Rain," as well as two other songs for that project. Then **The Story Of Aina**, in which I played the voice of Oria — that's the Glenn Hughes duet you are referring to. Sass Jordan was in that one as well.

Most recently, I did Halloween's first duet ever called "Light The Universe." We did a video for that at the castle we shot **Castles And Dreams**, our DVD, in. That was a blast. And a great song. I just recently finished a track for a Russian band, which will be out early next year called "When I Want To Fly."

The movie I will be in will be shooting later this year and out early 2009. It's a psychological horror film with flashbacks to the superstition of the times of the witch trials. I loved the screenplay and am really looking forward to shooting the part of Emily. The film is called *Pray For Light*.

When Blackmore's Night first got together, did you make a concerted effort to concentrate on Europe more than the U.S.? Or was it that when the albums were released, you just got more attention over there?

We concentrated especially on the German market because they don't have the blinders up over there about music as much as we do here in the USA. Many of the songs that we have been inspired by were ancient melodies from the Teutonic era that went throughout certain parts of Europe, so the people are vaguely familiar with the spirit of the songs. Of course, then we take those melodies and make them into something you may be able to connect with more today. But the spirit is still there if you are listening for it.

On European radio, you can hear a folk song back to back with a rock or pop song. Over here I pick up seven rock stations where I live and they are all playing exactly the same thing. So, because they are more open with the musical categories overseas, it was the place we thought we could get heard a little more easily than over here.

What is it about the Renaissance that fascinates you so much?

Ritchie originally introduced me to the music of that era, which I became entranced by. He's more obsessed with it though — it's all he listens to. He's also a historical purist, reading about that time period all the time. For me, it is the fantasy element. It's my escape from the stress and pressures of today. Everyone has their own escape — going to a baseball game, reading a good book. For me to transport back to a time where the world was lit by bonfires on the hills; where all you hear at night were crickets instead of cars and bass drums from discos and airplanes overhead; where there were castles on mountaintops and knights riding off into the distance on great horses into a night filled with stars — what a beautiful place to escape to. So that's what I write about. But I do it in a way that parallels my life today also so it's not so distant or far away. It's still relatable.

I sense a fair amount of whimsy and fun with the music. Am I missing the mark here, or do you want that feeling to come across?

We are having a great time with what we are doing. If nothing else, music should have the ability to make you feel. Our songs are so varied and we have such a great sense of creative freedom that we can play whatever we want whenever we want to. If we feel like doing a rock song, we will. Same for folk, renaissance, ballads, instrumentals or drinking songs. Our shows are more like an event or a party, so we want everyone to have the same sense of enjoyment that we have when we are on stage.

There is no separation between us and the fans. We are aware that we are all likeminded so we consider them as friends. We take requests — we've played shows for over four hours on requests alone. We are enjoying ourselves and want everyone else to be on that same journey — if only for the night we are in their town. Plus we feel that we are doing a little bit to help heal the world by putting some positive energy out there. People leave our shows smiling — they feel good. That kind of energy is contagious. There's enough negativity in this world already.

Where does one learn to play the Renaissance shawm?

Lots of practice in a locked room far away from anyone who can hear you. Preferably a basement of some sort. With padded walls. Because you know you can't go into Sam Ash or Guitar Center and ask them to advise you! You're all on your own baby. You have to figure it out yourself. A little like life.

Do you find it difficult to record such interesting and 'old' world instruments?

There are tricks you wind up learning. Mic placement. Which reeds sound best. How the reed instruments sound when you layer them with perfectly tuned electric instruments that are tuned to standard A440. Medieval or Renaissance woodwinds sound the best with other instruments of that period because they all fluctuate a bit so it sounds natural. But when you play it over a keyboard it can clash due to the tunings. There are challenging things about playing and recording these instruments. But those challenges keep it interesting and keep you on your toes.

I heard some interesting statements you've made about video, MTV and the like, yet you still have made videos. What part do videos play in the music business today?

I feel that the videos are strictly for Internet promotions — the only place that may still be open enough to have no walls and to allow different types of music to be played until they figure out how to shut that down so we can only see Beyoncé and Rihanna. Till then, you can only hope that people looking for something different than what they will normally hear will somehow stumble across you on some portal and think, “Hey this is something I've never seen before” and get intrigued.