

# Blackmore's Night

*For eighteen years now, ex-Deep Purple/Rainbow guitarist Ritchie Blackmore has, in tandem with his wife, vocalist Candice Night, released consistently excellent Renaissance themed albums under the name Blackmore's Night. The pair are very busy, with a series of dates in Europe, a brand new album out, a new release planned from Candice, plus several other notable things to discuss - including a return to Rock for Ritchie... James Gaden found out more.*

**I really like the new album 'All Our Yesterdays'. I loved the mix of stuff you have on here, it's a blend of instrumentals, upbeat stuff, cover versions, quieter moments... let's start with the title track. The press release suggests there is a theme going on.**

R: Right, yes. What the hell is behind that?  
C: (Laughs) It's one of our tavern songs, Ritchie always says you have the correct tempo when you can pick up a beer mug and swing along to it! We pay no attention to the drummer, it's simply down to swinging the beer mug. (laughs) We like to look back, through that veil of the past, hundreds of years ago. It's a fantasy, obviously it wasn't that great hundreds of years ago but living today, it's nice to incorporate elements from that different period. It also reflects on our past in this lifetime, the good times you've had and keeping that fire burning. We liked it and it ended up becoming the title track.  
R: It's a salute to all the alcoholics.

**You've followed it with a couple of instrumentals. The first one, I dread to think how I will pronounce this... 'Allan yn n fan'? I'm presuming that's Welsh?**

C: We're not sure how to pronounce it either! (laughs)  
R: You presume properly. It's a tip of the hat to my dad who came from there. I came from Weston Super Mare, on the border, most of my family are from the West Country, so we thought we'd give Wales an acknowledgment. I really liked it. We went in the studio one snowy day, because it was ridiculous in Long Island, New York, we couldn't get out of the house. Most of our instrumentals come from being inside on snowy days. We asked a few fans how to say it, but we got different answers. It basically means "Out there in the van". For most bands, all you do is spend time in the van, out there going places or out there mentally. It's interesting, because the melody was written by a German. So it's an Englishman, following a German's interpretation of a Welsh song. It's complicated, so I go back to drinking again! It's not easy to play, it's rigid, that's not my style, I like to play long notes and arpeggios. That was very abrupt and rigid, you have to be on your toes to play it, especially with the band. I was pleased with that one.

**I really enjoyed 'Darker Shade Of Black' too, the Strat comes out and it's got a great feel about it. There's some beautiful vocals in the background, are those real choral voices or are they synthesised?**

**You have some really good choices of cover versions here. I thought Candice did a tremendous job on Linda Ronstadt's 'Long Long Time'.**

C: Thank you! We're very lucky that once or twice a week we'll grab some friends and go this this local restaurant which is very dark, they shut off all the lights and let us take over this back room and just pass around guitars and play old songs, new songs, songs we've forgotten and we'll try out stuff. Sometimes on nice days we've done it outside by a fire but most times we're in this old restaurant. We'll do songs we absolutely love and that was how we rediscovered 'Diamonds And Rust', 'Moonlight Shadow' was another one, it was great to just mess around with friends and see how they'd like it. Or they'd play one and we'd say "Oh my gosh, 'Celluloid Heroes', I haven't heard that for decades!" You can be reintroduced to songs like that and 'Long Long Time' was one of those.

**You mentioned 'Moonlight Shadow' there, have you ever performed that before the version here on the record? I was sure I'd heard you do it.**

C: It's funny, when we first did 'Shadow Of The Moon' 18 years ago, the title was inspired by 'Moonlight Shadow', Mike Oldfield and Maggie Reilly have always been an inspiration to us. Occasionally when Ritchie kicks the rest of the band off stage and it's just the two of us and we improvise some songs and take requests, 'Moonlight Shadow' is definitely one we've done in that format. We've not done it often, maybe four or five times. You may have been at one of those shows, or there could have been a bootleg of it on Youtube. We have played it, but it was never a song we rehearsed with the band to be in the setlist.

R: It's in my top ten all time favourite songs, I've always wanted to do it. It's hard to find a different angle to what Mike Oldfield did, he did such a good job on it and Maggie Reilly is a brilliant singer, so it was hard to do without just copying it. I think ours is a bit different.

**The other one is 'I Got You Babe'. You've done it with Candice singing it by herself, I'm so conditioned to hearing it as a duet it surprised me, it works really well in this form.**

R: We thought exactly the same. That's the way we've always done it when we've played it with friends, and we thought we should try it. Everyone seemed to like it, and then at first we laughed it off, thinking "No, we can't do that." But why not? I've always said this project is great because we can do anything we want. The next tune we do might be 'Woolly Bully'! We don't have that situation where the band say "I'm not doing that, I didn't write it, we're not going to make any money, what's the point..." The point is it's a great song! I've always loved it. Like you said, we thought there should be somebody else singing and we were wondering who we could get - but then we thought "Why?" It sounds great with Candy singing it alone.

**Was it difficult for you to interpret Candice, with it being so well known as a duet, to sing it alone?**

C: Once I got over the mental thing of thinking it had to be a duet, I realised the lyrics could easily be just a love song, one person singing about another, without having that back and forth thing. And ironically, Ritchie told me my voice and my range is actually lower than most of the male singers he has worked with, so I could do the male part as well as the female part! (laughs)

**I also wanted to ask about 'Where Do We Go From Here', because you've effectively covered yourselves there, that first appeared in 'Ghost Of A Rose'.**

C: When Ritchie changed the tempo of the song, I couldn't even imagine it, I thought the more melancholy version we did originally was perfect. But Ritchie said about this double time thing and making it more Rock, and I just couldn't hear it. Then he played me a backing track and it just clicked, it all made sense. We've been covering other people's songs a lot so after having Blackmore's Night for 18 years, it seemed fitting to cover ourselves. (laughs)

R: There's quite a few songs, when I look back, that I think we could have done better. 'Writing On The Wall' for definite, that's probably our worst song. I don't know what happened with that one. I think we were in a

hurry to get out, left it to Pat and he thought we wanted a disco thing.

**I have to say, I do like 'Writing On the Wall', but it's sound is very different to the rest of the album, it sounds a bit at odds with the rest of the material.**

R: I think the idea is good, but the finished product is nothing like we wanted. We should do that one again.

C: I think what Ritchie explained to Pat and how Pat interpreted it turned out to be two different things, and at that point we needed to be delivering it to the record label and didn't really have chance to go back and make it what we wanted it to be.

**You're a far stronger singer since the first album Candice, you have so much more range now.**

R: Yeah, that comes from shouting at the kids. "Rory, put that down! Autumn, stop punching Rory." It's the first thing I hear in a morning.

C: (Laughs) Yeah, I couldn't have been shouting at you! But really, the voice is a muscle and after years of building it up it gains strength and I'm glad I can use that on the recent albums. When I listen back, I think "Oh, I can do so much better!" but back then, it had an innocence. I'd never sung front and centre before.

R: I felt the innocence was very good, it suited the first record.

**You're touring Germany at the moment, but there's no UK dates at the moment. Will there be any planned this year?**

C: Next year I think. We definitely wanted to do it, but the routings and the bookings of the halls just wouldn't work out, sometimes the logistics don't allow it. We even planned for the album to be out as we were touring here, but now it's out in September so we're doing sneak previews of these songs because nobody knows them yet! We love the UK and we're hoping next year will work out.

R: Especially if we can go to Glastonbury or somewhere like that. Not when the festival is there, obviously.

C: We'd like to do Scotland, we get fan letters from a lot of the UK. Wales would be nice, we never play Ireland... so

the UK is a priority.

**Candice, I heard you were working on a CD of lullabies. Is that still ongoing?**

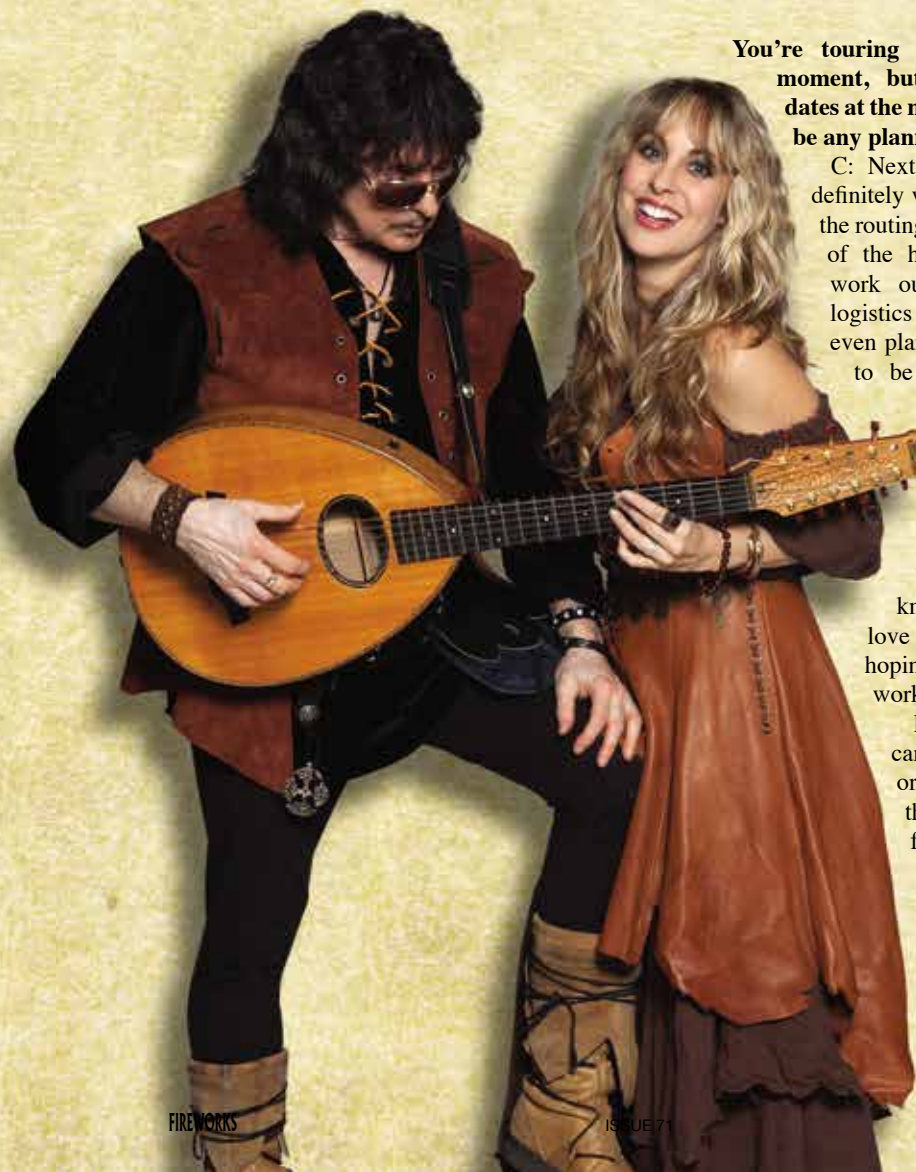
C: Yeah, I've done it. It's not out yet, but everything is done, the artwork is done, I'm writing the copy for the booklet on my smartphone as we're driving. It's a heavy year for Blackmore's Night this year. Not only do we have the album out, we're touring and I've got this... I call it a lullaby album, but really it was inspired by songs for my children. We have friends who had children around the same time as we did and they'd say "Oh, if I had a voice like yours I'd sing to them every night, but I don't sound like you." But it doesn't matter what you sound like, children connect with you. They don't care if it's good, bad, out of tune, whatever, they just want to connect with you. So I was inspired to put some relaxing melodies down to help children to sleep. I sing to my children every night. We played some of the songs to our friends and we found they enjoyed listening to the songs with a glass of wine after a stressful day at work. It's not just for children to sleep, it's a relaxing CD for anyone. So rather than just lullabies, I've called it 'Starlight Starbright' and it's a bunch of melodic songs. Some are originals Ritchie and I wrote together. Some are covers you will be familiar with. Some are covers you will never think of as lullabies. It'll be out this year, once we've done the booklet.

Ritchie has got a documentary coming out too, his own story in his own words. Rather than just copy from magazines and have people talking about him, it's Ritchie sat down with a guy in front of a camera, talking about his beginnings, we have old, personal pictures in there, archive footage, videos, stuff from way back in the 60s to now, his whole career. We have great commentary from some of the great guitarists and stars out there too, talking about Ritchie and his influence on them and the Rock world. So there's three pretty big things coming from us this year!

**That sounds fantastic! I've had the privilege of speaking to you both three times, but you don't do much in the way of interviews, Ritchie.**

R: That's right, I'm basically an introverted person. I'm shy, that's why I took up the guitar, I don't like speaking. Since getting the guitar, I find now everybody wants to talk to me! If we appear on TV or radio, they always say "Oh, can you tell us..." and I'd rather not talk, I'd rather just play. Now I seem to be talking more than ever! People ask me why I played certain things on the guitar, and honestly, I have no idea. It just seemed like a good idea at the time. I'm always interested to hear what other people say about things they've written, when they say "Oh, I was thinking about..." and I think they make it up, deep down I don't think they were thinking about anything. Looking out the window, as John Lennon would say, watching the world go by. I like doing that, I spend a lot of time looking out of the window.

**We had David Coverdale in FW#69 and**





he told us how he'd reached out to you, wanting to bury the hatchet. There was talk of you working together again, but that didn't pan out. Were you pleased he got in touch?

R: It's always good to be friends, we're all getting older. I'd still like to know where he buried that hatchet, I've been looking for it! He's a nice guy. It's just he wanted to do something with the Deep Purple thing and I wasn't ready to do that, I was iffy about it, back and forth. We talked every now and again, threw around some ideas but I take what I'm doing now very seriously, I wasn't particularly that interested in getting together to do something Purple related. He was very nice about it and very patient because it went on for about nine months, and he eventually decided to do those songs with his own band.

**Did you hear what he did?**

R: No, but that's because I tend not to listen to Rock music, as cliché as that sounds. I'm so caught up in my own strange music, in this day and age I like silence too much, I like to think. When I was twenty, I was really excited by Rock N' Roll. Now, I'm not really, because I've heard so many generic bands. It got a bit repetitive, which is why I'm in my Renaissance world. I get excited when people hand me a medieval or Renaissance CD. I love to hear things like bagpipes. My musical compass has changed quite a lot.

However, I'll probably do something next June, doing all the Rainbow and Purple songs for a few nights, maybe four nights. I don't know whether it'll be a festival or what yet, but I'll pick some people to do those old songs and jam some Rock N' Roll, that I would find exciting. I won't know who the singer will be yet for a few weeks. I have a good idea who it is, but I want to try and recreate the sound... there will be a lot of Dio stuff, but he can't be the singer, obviously. That would have been something! I noticed when I wrote the list of songs I wanted to do, it was a lot of Dio stuff. There was some Deep Purple, and probably 'I Surrender' would be in there too, that kind of thing. That's still in the talking process at the moment, but yeah, looking at doing three or four festivals or shows in June. Hopefully somebody will be interested and turn up.

**I don't think there's any danger of apathy!**

R: Well, you never know. Death Metal is in, that's not what I play, I play Melodic Hard Rock.

**The fact you stopped doing Rock music didn't bother me as I've really enjoyed what you've done since. However, I'd love to hear you play Rock again, and all those fans who maybe didn't get on board with Blackmore's Night will feel the same.**

R: I think sometimes there's a danger of nostalgia, people were younger and they were maybe having a better time then so they enjoyed that music more. People have come to shows we've played and said "I had the best time at that show, do that again!" but they might have

been drunk, with a new girlfriend, so everything seemed better. I find that quite often, we'll have had a bad show but people thought it was great, and vice versa. I'm digressing, but we all have nostalgia. That's why we did 'I Got You Babe'. The past is safe, the future certainly isn't. We'll see what happens, I'll know more a few weeks from now.

**What prompted the idea, was it nostalgia, was it talking about those periods on your documentary?**

R: Just my frame of mind at the time. Like when we did 'I Got You Babe' it was a good time had by all, everybody was young and it had good memories, you tend to forget bad memories. Music takes you back, like certain smells can take you back to when you're a child. As a child you're much more innocent, when you're older you get caught up in problems. You look back at music, even if it was bad music... I could, for instance, look back at 'Woolly Bully' and go "Oh, that's great!" because it was from when I was much younger. At the time, I hated it, it was a horrible song played every minute on the radio. But you look back and go "Oh yeah, 'Woolly Bully!'"



**You're not going to tell me who the singer is when you haven't got anything confirmed - is it someone you have worked with before, or somebody new?**

R: Somebody new. I like finding new singers, I like to think I've done a good job of that in the past.

**Now I'm intrigued! Last time we spoke, you told me a story you'd never shared before, which was you were preparing to play some Rainbow shows and two members of the band held you up for ransom, saying they wouldn't play unless they got more money. You drew up contracts to make clear what the pay was and asked for them back within twenty four hours. Two guys signed the contracts, the two who wanted more money didn't. So you cut your losses, and did Blackmore's Night instead.**

R: That's right.

**If it had been an ideal world, would you have run the two bands, and flitted between Rock and Renaissance, or would you have had to have concentrate on one at a time?**

R: Deep down, I was getting bored and

becoming sterile doing the Hard Rock, so when those two members decided to play that game, that actually was quite convenient. It gave me a chance to do something else and it all worked out really. Had they committed to the tour, and we'd gone out for another three or four months, I still think that would have been it. I was getting stale and bored just coming up with heavy riffs. I needed to get away from it. Before I told you about what happened, people had never heard that side of the story. Sometimes I hold back on stuff like that, but other times I feel like I am getting pointed at for doing something wrong, so I'll say what really happened.

**You told me which who it was, and Candice groaned, so because Fireworks isn't into mud slinging, I omitted the names and simply wrote "two members". When the article came out, two members took to the internet to say that what you told me wasn't true and you pulled the plug simply to start Blackmore's Night. It was the same two members whose names I omitted.**

R: Yep. We had agents breathing down our necks, asking for us to commit to shows, I didn't want to if things like that were going to be pulled on me at the last minute, so I had to have contracts made up. The contract offered a price I thought was fair and they basically walked away. They then called me up later asking when we were going on the road! I told them we weren't.

**Talking of farewell tours, I recently watched Rainbow in Japan 1984, playing stuff from all eras, and you didn't seem to have an array of effects pedals like most guitarists have. You seemed to rely mostly on rapid changes on your tone knobs.**

R: That's right. I don't have any effects pedals. When I switch, it's a way of taking a pause. I do it in the studio too, I switch from the bass pickup to the treble pickup, quickly, to get an effect. I might do two notes on the bass pickup, switch, another couple of notes on the treble and back to the bass pickup. It's a way of pausing. I sometimes use the tremolo arm and this is the same type of thing. Rather than play just a bunch of arpeggios, you can take a pause on certain notes, and I do that flicking the switch over and back, almost like a nervous thing. It gives a sonic effect, switching from pickup to pickup. I don't like the sound of the middle pickup, so I usually take those out. I don't like the thin sound it has. Flicking from the bass to the treble pickups is like using a basic wah-wah peddle.

**Was that influenced by anyone, or something you adapted?**

R: As usual, I just adapted it myself. I've not seen anybody else do it. Even if I had, I wouldn't be able to copy it, so I'd be back to square one. I must use the wrong side of my brain or something! Even when we appear on TV or on radio stations, and they ask us to say thanks, I can never remember the name of the show or the number of the station, Candy has to do all that. I just say my name... which sometimes I get right!