

A Few Words With...Candice Night

Interview and photos by John A. Wilcox

*Candice Night & Ritchie Blackmore formed Blackmore's Night soon after the dismantling of the last incarnation of Rainbow. Night had been both a vocalist and writer on the final Rainbow studio album **Stranger In Us All**. Taking a left turn from the heavy sound of Rainbow, Blackmore's Night took the path of traditional folk and medieval musics with great success. Albums like **Under A Violet Moon**, **Ghost Of A Rose**, and **The Village Lanterne** glow with creative energy. The DVDs **Castles & Dreams** and **Paris Moon** showcase the strengths of their live shows. Progsheet recently sat down with Candice Night to gain insight from the loveliest shawm player of all...*



PS: Tell me a bit about the Paris gig that was filmed for the *Paris Moon* DVD.

CN: You know, it's funny because it was the very first time we'd ever played Paris in ten years - we'd never been to that country. When you play a place, a region or a country for the first time - especially with music that's not particularly in a box, or commercially accepted and on the radio all the time so everybody knows what you're doing - you never know if they're going to have any idea what you're going to be doing on stage or not. It was kind of risky to say; "You know what? We're gonna go out there and we're gonna record it and we're gonna kind of just test the waters and see how the French audiences react to us." Because they've been known to throw rotten tomatoes at people that they don't like on stage. We went out there and we couldn't believe it, it was like they had studied our last DVD, **Castles & Dreams** and knew exactly when to stand on their feet, when to sit down, when to yell "Hey!" in the middle of some of the songs, what to sing along to. We were just blown away at the reaction and the acceptance of the French audience, we couldn't believe it.

Right before that, my dad flew over from New York to see the show. There was a lot of pressure because again it was the first time we were playing there. We had all these people who flew in from England and Australia that were videotaping. It was like a one shot deal and it had to be right, there was a lot of pressure. About a half hour before we went to step on stage, I came down with the worst stomach pains, I was doubled over, I was so sick! We got really close - We thought we were actually going to have to cancel the whole thing, which was even more pressure! They called in a local doctor and he diagnosed it. What he did was he just wound up taking out this big, huge hypodermic needle and giving me a painkiller - anti inflammatory injection 'cos at that point I was really crawling - There was no way I was even going to be able to step on the stage. I remember thinking; "As long as I smile and hit the right notes, I'm sure I can get through this." And sure enough, as soon as I stepped out there, I guess the medication kicked in - whatever he gave me, it was amazing. It turned out when I got home and went to my doctor she said that I had a really large cyst that actually burst that night.

PS: When I saw the band, I noticed that a portion of the audience were dressed in medieval costumes. I imagine that leads to some wild goings on!

CN: One of the funniest experiences I ever had was in England. These guys came over - they take the trains everywhere- "the tube". They went to this beautiful opera house and they got changed there. They had brought full head-to-toe armor. They wanted to be knights, but they couldn't wear it on the train, so they just carried it in this big bag and got changed in the office. They had spoken to the management and said, "Can we just change there? We brought these great costumes." Got changed there, head-to-toe in this amazing armor, walked in and then realized they couldn't sit down in it! So now, they're standing the whole time and it's getting hotter and hotter, and the show's going on like two and a half hours. Poor guys! They were so well intentioned, but sometimes you really have to think!



PS: Are people sometimes hesitant to come to the shows "in garb?"

CN: When you're first playing in a place - although they might have it in their closet, whether they want to admit it or not, a lot of times the first time people come to a show, they go; "What if nobody else is wearing it? What if I'm the only one?" Then they go; "Oh damn! I should've worn it!" When they see other people who were brave or crazy enough.

PS: It's like people never wanting to be the first on the dance floor.

CN: Exactly! Or on the dance floor wearing tights. For a lot of guys, it's a little bit intimidating, but incredibly comfortable from what I hear! I always find that with our audiences we have such an eclectic audience but we also don't have a particular set demographic. Except for the fact that I think everyone who comes to our shows are independent thinkers. I don't think they can be dictated to - what's in, what's fashionable, what's cool. They can't be fooled with that kind of corporate brainwashing that a lot of radio stations partake in, unfortunately. It's funny, because, especially overseas I find that they have a lot more variety of what they are playing on the radio, or what does get exposure over there. It's interesting, I actually find some of the people that I listen to daily here, you'd never hear of - Maggie Reilly, Sarah Brightman, Kate Bush. Brilliant artists that you never hear about here because they don't get that Sony backing, that BMG backing - because they're not sixteen - that's probably what the problem is. There's not a lot of dance moves that are going on.

PS: What's the story behind the song *Play Minstrel Play*?

CN: The way that we write, is that Ritchie will usually come up with a melody - that actually was a traditional melody which was written in the 1500s - and then Ritchie will arrange it. When he's complete with the idea of the music, I'll take it and I'll go into another room and close my eyes. I close my eyes and really try to absorb the song and see if it's trying to tell me a story. The way that I felt that one was going - It was kind of a mix between the Pied Piper of Hamelin... But then when we were going to get Ian Anderson involved, I thought it was so

brilliant because it's kind of like he embodies that part so well. So we did have the larger myth of the Pied Piper, but also to me it was important because music had always done that for me. Music was kind of like the Pied Piper. It's like the great puppet master of emotion. It can build you up, it can make you melancholy. It makes you feel excited. It evokes emotion. It's incredible magic that goes on in your head whenever you hear a song. So it was really the concept that the music was that puppet master of emotion brought together with the legend of the Pied Piper. And then with Ian Anderson playing on it, it was the perfect coming together of everything because he is sort of like the Pied Piper of rock music.



PS: How about *World of Stone*?

CN: **World Of Stone** is an interesting culmination of a lot of different ideas. I do a lot of correspondence with my fans on my internet site. One of the things that I found was that I'll get emails from - it doesn't matter if it's from Siberia or Iraq or Massachusetts - it could be from any place in the entire world. I always wind up hearing from people who feel so incredibly alone because they are independent thinkers. Because they want to wear something different that reflects themselves. They have different thoughts. They have the heart of an artist or the soul of a poet and because of that they feel very alienated like they don't fit in with the rest of the people that are around them. And this is every age group. It's hard for people to fit in to some other groups where they feel so different. Some of these people are on the verge of running away - either as kids or on the verge of suicide. They're really that desperate that they feel so alone that nobody else understands them, nobody else is out there. They write in to my site because they feel that what we're putting out there is the strength of individuality and you should be proud of your persona and your personality and you shouldn't want to be like everybody else. So it was kind of a mixture between that idea of just lo

ound the corner, there are more people like you that are out there, I promise you - and you should be proud of your feeling the feelings that you're different. That's a wonderful thing to have, it's not a curse, it's a wonderful thing. People like you change the world. You're the future.

I was actually doing a lot of work with the town and our local area to try to preserve open space so not every single square inch is built upon with gray paving or skyscrapers or neon signs. Trying to keep all these trees and nature - it's getting built upon so quickly. I always find that in trying to do what I think is fighting on the side of right, I find that a lot of these people - if you're not talking to them through money or through favors, you just get a lot of slammed doors in your face. So, to me, **World Of Stone** represented not only the coldness of these gray stone buildings that humankind is just out there covering every piece of breathable land. Every forest, every meadow is being paved over and built with these big stone walls. But it's also the people within them having their hearts of stone as well. It's so hard to try to get through to these people and make them see that nature was here long before we were and if you pave over everything you're not only killing us and our environment, you're killing the future of our society.

I found I was just beating my head against the wall and continue to. I keep fighting the good fight - I'm not going to be put down that easy. They say *you* have to be the change you want to see in the world. So **World Of Stone** to me was representative of a lot of different things. It was these people who are really feeling so alone - that was the kind of battle cry within that - we're not alone, and if we all band together we can teach the world. We can break through this world of stone. We can make a difference. We can make things right and keep the beauty and keep the spirit and keep your poet's heart and don't get turned away and don't get discouraged.

PS: I always ask artists to name 6 albums they never get tired of listening to, and today is no exception!

CN:

Buckingham Nicks - Buckingham Nicks

Sarah Brightman - Eden

Mike Oldfield - Elements

Maggie Reilly - Midnight Sun

Jethro Tull - M.U.: The Best Of Jethro Tull

Blackmore's Night - The Village Lanterne