

In the old days you were known for using specially designed 300 watt Marshalls. Now I believe you use Engl. What prompted this change? Was it a big decision being one of the true original Marshall endorsers?

RB- It was a 280 watt extra output stage. The output stage wasn't for volume it was for distortion. I was looking for a smaller amp with a lot of sustain. That prompted the change to Engl. It wasn't a big decision because the 1st endorsers of Marshall were Hendrix and the Cream.

Do you still play loud to get your overdriven but clear, distinct sound?

RB- No. My set up at the moment can be quiet or loud and within the context of the band we play a lot quieter.

What is your tone-philosophy in these days of high-gain and ultra saturated distortion?

RB- My tone philosophy is to have a clean sound but with good sustain. I noticed a lot of guitarists use a lot of effects which tends to thin out the sound.

How has your electric guitar tone ideals changed over the years?

Rb- They haven't. Same old me.

Your relationship with the Strat is iconic, but these days you also favour other guitars and various string instruments. Is it liberating to have a bigger palette of sounds to choose from?

Rb- Yes. It is fascinating to learn different especially organic instruments. To hear the sound that people might have heard 500 years ago.

Do you feel a different (maybe more natural) musical connection, playing acoustic?

RB- No- I like them both. I am fascinated by the sound of an acoustic guitar. It is still a challenge to me to be able to try and play that way whereas with the electric you get a lot more help from the amplifier. The acoustic is good for discipline and bettering one's technique.

Did you have to work at your technique on acoustic? (Or could you play a piece like The Messenger equally proficient 30 years ago?)

RB- The Messenger is a relatively easy piece to play- but I did have to work on my technique from plectrum style to fingerstyle- the transition took quite a long time. I am still learning. Sometimes, you can pick up an acoustic guitar and play and it just lends itself to being acoustic- whereas if you electrify and plug in an acoustic that is where the trouble starts and all the frustrating things that go with it.

Do you still practice? (How and what?)

Rb- I still practice. Playing is like breathing.

Over the years your solos have often been a combination of structured arpeggios/melodies as well as (emotional) outbursts that often goes against or are "on top" of the rhythm? Can you elaborate on this and your general approach to soloing?

RB- General approach to soloing is to extend the reason behind the song. So one has to instil the melody within the context of extemporization without losing the thought process and the reason for the melody being played in the 1st place.

The instrumentation in Blackmore's Night seems more intricate and sophisticated than ever in your career. Do you feel you have developed as an arranger? (How?)

Rb- I suppose I have developed a bit as an arranger. I just like playing simple melodies that the postman can whistle. While we still have postmen. It is a dying breed.

Where and how do you find inspiration to the music you compose in Blackmore's Night?

Rb- Inspiration comes from anything. It comes from having a coffee in the morning, looking out of the window, looking at trees and the rain and the sun, the night, the moon, and drinking alcohol.

I hope it's true to say, that there are traces of Middle Eastern sounds and passages in your music.

When composing do you consider and imagine how there used to be an monumental cultural influence of travelling traders and crusaders centuries ago?

Rb- Yes, I am aware of the trading routes and what came from the east. Although I relate more to the wandering minstrel walking everywhere. Relaying his messages.

What is it about the medieval times that is so fascinating? Is there a life philosophy behind the music? (Dissatisfaction with modern times?)

Rb- I initially got into the history of the past through music. Hearing such instruments as the shawms, hurdy gurdys and bagpipes. As well as being fascinated in the instruments of the time, I also do research on how people lived at that time too. Its an extension of my interest. The reformation and renaissance period, the 14th and 15th centuries. Today's times can be disappointing in the way that architecture seems to have changed for the worse, values have changed for the worse, there is more pressure, more keeping up with the Joneses, more pollution, more congestion and higher taxes. More crooked politicians.

Is there some degree of escapism or romance involved? (Or a longing, a search for something?)

Rb- I think we are all searching for something. One has to search for something, otherwise you remain in one spot.

You seem to often go against the grain. Is it on purpose and just the right direction or is there some degree of spite and rebellion against conventions and what is expected of you?

RB- It is a little bit of all of the above.

How do you see your role as a guitarist nowadays as opposed to the days of Rainbow and Purple? (How is it different?)

Rb- Its probably the same, its just that the instruments have changed, and the volume.

Do you listen to and find joy in any of today's contemporary music?

Rb- No. But then again, I really don't know what is being played as I kind of stopped listening to fashionable music 30 years ago. After 1975 music changed to become more of a business and I think its still about business more than music. Music you find in a small pub or just traveling around. You don't really hear it too much on the radio as they have their quota of money by playing what's a well tried formula.

What's in the future for Blackmore's Night?

Rb- Not being played on the radio.

Is there anything else you wish to do musically in the future?

Rb- Yes, but I don't know what it is yet.

Again, thank you very much!