

Night's latest 'Voyage' is a joy

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Music notes

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A few months ago, I had the privilege to interview Candice Night, singer for the Baroque-inspired, classically highlighted group Blackmore's Night.

Lady Night's partner in life and music, former Deep Purple guitarist Lord Ritchie Blackmore, formed the band — which includes lutes, pipes, reeds, mandolins, bodhrans and classical guitars — around the duo's love for the Renaissance.

At the time of the interview, the group, which is centered around Night and Blackmore, released a live CD/DVD called "Paris Moon," which documented the Blackmore's Night concert in Paris' famed Olympia Theatre.

Night told me that there would be a new studio CD released in a few months.

That time has come. The new Blackmore's Night CD, "Secret Voyage," is now available on www.amazon.com

And, like the past CDs, the new one is a joy to hear.

Blackmore and Night have added new touches and arrangements to traditional European melodies in works such as "Empty Words," "Gilded Cage" and "Locked Within the Crystal Ball," to name a few.

The medieval-folk progression unfolds through such pub and faire-story tunes as "Toast to Tomorrow" and "Peasant's Promise."

Full original compositions include the waltzing "Sister Gypsy" and the spell-binding "Circle." Also on the list is the haunting classical-guitar solo "Prince Waldecks Galliard," inspired by the Schloss Waldeck castle in Germany.

In addition, the group takes on a remake of "Can't Help Falling in Love," which, of course, was made famous when Elvis Presley took it to No. 2 on the Billboard Hot 100 back in 1961.

Blackmore's Night also touches up Kenn Machin's lilting "Far Far Away."

Speaking of remakes, the group has this tradition of reinventing old Deep Purple songs and songs from Blackmore's other band Rainbow.

This time around, it's my favorite Rainbow ballad, "Rainbow Eyes," that was revised.

Originally released as the closing track on the 1978 album "Long Live Rock and Roll," "Rainbow Eyes" was a guitar/recorder/vocal ballad of lost love. Vocalist Ronnie James Dio traded in his throaty rasp for the lonely lament on that version.

On "Secret Voyage," "Rainbow Eyes" becomes a sort of sublime sea chant, centered on Night's dreamy delivery, making it one of the sonic highlights of the CD.

An added bonus of the CD is the inclusion of a bonus video, "Village Lanterne," which tells the tale of a magical woman who emerges from a lake to save family being attacked by medieval vagabonds.

When it's all sang and done, "Secret Voyage" is a strong Blackmore's Night release in the fine tradition of 1999's "Under a Violet Moon."

Put it in and drift to the magical world of knights, castles and legend.