

4-STARS

It's been over a decade since Ritchie Blackmore left the rock 'n roll world behind to form the group, Blackmore's Night. An amalgam of medieval folk fusion cavorting with rock 'n roll and spiced to peak with olde world sensibilities, Blackmore's Night is a musical lover's pleasure. Not just a dalliance, but a full on addiction for those that love true musical achievement, Blackmore's Night have established themselves as the preeminent Renaissance music troupe on the globe.

"Paris Moon" superbly captures the band in all their Renaissance-brandishing glory. Recorded live at the legendary Olympia Theatre in Paris, France, this video celebrates the band's musical legacy, while capturing one of their stunning performances. Like a bunch of mummers looking for their next gold piece or tavern stage to play, Blackmore's Night embrace their heritage, celebrate their fans and the concept of the Renaissance Faire with gusto and passion. This dedication shows in their music and it shows on this video.

On "Paris Moon" you will hear many of the songs that have made Blackmore's Night a staple of Renaissance Faires everywhere. This includes such illustrious back-catalog tunes as "Past Times With Good Company", "Play Minstrel Play", "Under A Violet Moon" and "The Village Lantern". Candice Night's emotive, almost sacred vocals and Ritchie's multi-instrumental playing soar high. And though on "Ariel" and "Loreley" we get to experience a bit of Blackmore and his über-famous Fender Stratocaster, his musical ability far exceeds just the guitar. On "Paris Moon" we see Ritchie as he embraces a whole range of instruments, from the hurdy gurdy and mandolin to the mandocello and mandola. But Candice too, performs on many period piece instruments including the rauschpfeife, pennywhistle, chanters, shawms and the cornamuse.

And let's not forget the remaining musicians that make the band, Sir Robert of Normandie plays his bass with precision. His solo effort alone is most entertaining, as he jostles from familiar Deep Purple riffs to Mozart melodies. Bard David of Larchmont (keyboards), Squire Malcolm of Lumley (percussion) and Fair Lady Madelaine (backing vocals) all get to shine in the spotlight.

There are a few well-selected cover tunes on "Paris Moon", from Jethro Tull's "Rainbow Blues" and Joan Baez' "Diamonds and Rust" to Joan Osbourne's stirring hit "Saint Teresa" and even the Deep Purple song, "Soldier of Fortune" appears. Candice takes to these cover tunes with ease and makes them her own. One of the highlights of the DVD is when Candice sings the song "Streets of London" in French, while we view a collage of photos taken from the performance.

What is evidently clear here is that Blackmore's Night are superb entertainers and put on an excellent performance. One of the most poignant parts of the video is when Ritchie Blackmore takes a moment to discuss the "snobbery" he and Candice, as well as the rest of the band, deal with from both rock and folk music critics alike. The reality is that Blackmore's Night are making high quality, rock-folk hybrid music that in a sense is its own genre. They are doing the music they love and we are the better for it. If you are not a fan of theirs, then you should be.

The DVD was shot in wide-screen and captures the essence of the Renaissance-styled performance stage show beautifully. This is a must own DVD/CD set for all fans of good music, not just Renaissance music.

- Michael Lohr