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<https://www.forbes.com/sites/jimryan1/2021/03/05/ritchie-blackmore-and-candice-night-on-new-album-and-carving-out-a-unique-niche-outside-the-mainstream-via-blackmores-night/?sh=a28cfbd1d260>

Ritchie Blackmore And Candice Night On Investing Outside The Mainstream Via Blackmore's Night



(GERMANY OUT) Blackmore's Night - Band, Renaissance-inspired folk, GB - Ritchie Blackmore (guitar) ... [+] ULLSTEIN BILD VIA GETTY IMAGES

Over the course of about the last 20 years, as it's become more and more difficult to monetize recorded music, curating a unique experience has become crucial for artists seeking to engage their audience.

Blackmore's Night was far ahead of that curve.

Following his run as co-founder of one of hard rock's most influential group's, Deep Purple, guitarist, and Rock and Roll Hall of Famer, Ritchie Blackmore tied together some of his more diverse influences in rock group Rainbow.

While widely known as one of rock's greatest guitarists, Blackmore also took lessons in classical guitar, and Rainbow incorporated elements of his leanings toward the baroque and pop music that was a bit more anathema within the hard rock realm.

Vocalist and multi-instrumentalist Candice Night chipped in on lyrics and backing vocals of the, to date, final Rainbow album *Stranger in us All* in 1995 and the duo formed Blackmore's Night two years later.

With a focus on medieval and Renaissance music, Blackmore's Night puts a contemporary spin upon centuries old sound. Eschewing the arenas of days gone by, Blackmore and Night opted instead to deliver their music directly to fans via themed concerts in smaller venues where the music was more likely to resonate, places like castles or Renaissance faires, creating in the process a new, rabid fanbase that now spans generations. With both artist and audience celebrating the idea of escape every night on stage, in period appropriate attire, each Blackmore's Night concert stands out as a one of a kind experience.

I caught up with Ritchie Blackmore and Candice Night for a look at their latest album, *Nature's Light*, available for [pre-order now](#) via EarMusic ahead of a March 12 release, a conversation which hits on the benefits of investing in a unique fan experience outside the mainstream, while looking back on nearly 25 years of Blackmore's Night. A transcript of our email exchange, lightly edited for length and clarity, follows below.

Ritchie, I read that you were given your first guitar at 11 and the first lessons you took were actually classical guitar lessons. At what point did you actually start to embrace that sound and would that formative experience kind of loom large later as you and Candice started exchanging the ideas that would come to define Blackmore's Night?

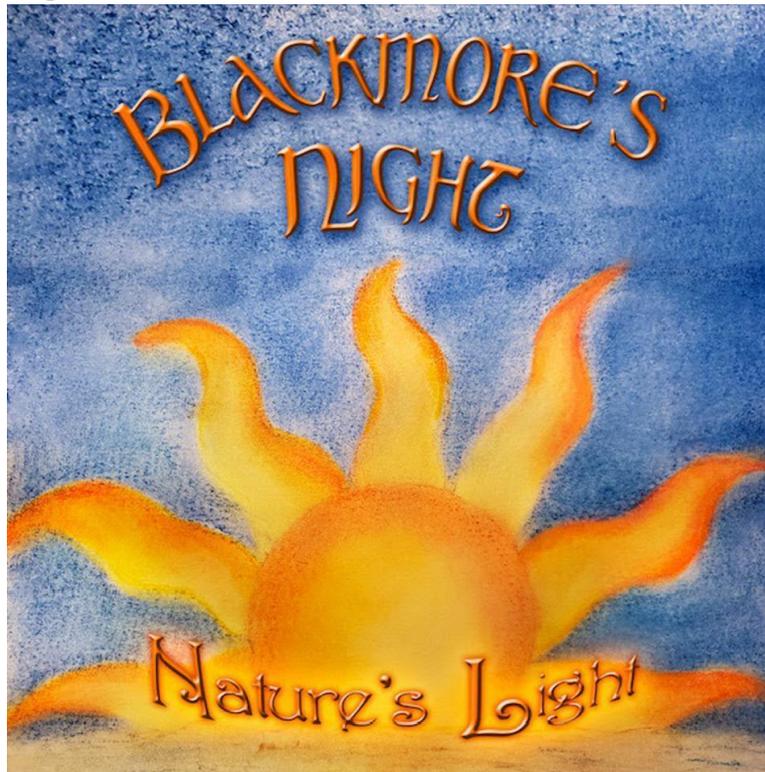
RITCHIE BLACKMORE: My friend brought a guitar to school when I was 11 and I just loved the instrument. I pestered my mom and dad to get me one: a cheap acoustic.

My father insisted I take lessons as he thought it was just another phase I was going through and that I would lose interest after two weeks. The teacher that was teaching me to play lived the equivalent of seven miles away. So I would ride my bicycle, holding my guitar, to his place for lessons. In the winter when there was snow on the ground, I would often fall off the bike into the snow with my guitar.

I wasn't playing strict classical lessons. It was more standard songs with a lilt towards classical. I took some classical guitar lessons from Jimmy Sullivan who became a very good friend of mine and who was, incidentally, an amazing guitar player. But I realized the discipline of playing classical guitar was more or less out of reach for me. And I wanted to sound like Buddy Holly anyway.

However, much later, around 1972, I was listening to David Munrow and the Early Music Consort of London playing *Danserye* by composer Tielman Susato - a 16th century composer. I would just play that day and night for years. I never really thought I would be playing that type of music. I just loved listening to it. In 1986, I met a medieval group in Germany who were playing in a castle. I realized, hearing them play, that I had to get more into Renaissance and

medieval music. So I started fiddling on the guitar playing various pieces that sounded like Renaissance music, which was actually, again, by Susato. Then I met Candice. Her voice was perfect for the music of that period and we started Blackmore's Night. I had been playing hard rock since I was 15 or 16. So, by 1990, I was ready for a change of pace. I was tired of playing riffs and heavy music. I still like to blast out on the [Fender Stratocaster guitar] from time to time. But it's obviously a completely different way of playing the guitar. The Renaissance music is more finger style whereas the strat is more bending and playing blues notes - distortion is very important.



'Nature's Light,' the 11th studio album from medieval/Renaissance, husband and wife duo Blackmore's ... [+] ALBUM COVER ART COURTESY OF EARMUSIC

Candice, I've read that you were first kind of exposed to this music, and the Renaissance world, through Ritchie. From contributing to Rainbow to the lyrics you write, your vocals and the multiple instruments you play in Blackmore's Night, what's it been like for you carving out the musical niche you have alongside Ritchie over all these years?

CANDICE NIGHT: I always feel as if each step of the incarnations of music we do have been a completely natural evolution.

When I first started writing lyrics for the songs Ritchie created for Rainbow, it was because I loved to write and they needed a lyricist for that album. I hadn't written professionally in the music world before. But when I started doing that, I needed to be in the studio they were recording in. So when Ritchie had free time and the other guys were doing their tracks, Ritchie and I would sit by a fireplace, watch the snow come down and write acoustic music just for ourselves - in our own realm, without thinking anyone would ever hear it. It was an escape from the music industry and the stress and pressures that came with that world. Eventually, when our friends heard those songs, they told us if we had them on an album, they would buy them!

At that point, those songs became our first release *Shadow of the Moon*. We then toured with the music but realized we needed more upbeat songs to incorporate into the stage shows - so *Under A Violet Moon* was created. That got our fans singing along and participating. By the time we got to *Fires At Midnight*, I started playing shawms, and some other medieval, double reed woodwind instruments, and Ritchie wanted to incorporate more electric guitar. So those songs reflected that step. *Ghost of a Rose* was more orchestral.

[Each album](#) is a perfect snapshot in time as to where we were in our lives personally and creatively and where the music was leading us. We never lead the music; it pulls us in its own direction and we just try to channel it.

Ritchie, I've heard you say that you were a big fan of pop music, acknowledging that it wasn't necessarily a popular idea to convey early on as a rock guitarist. How does the pop fan in you and the classically trained guitarist in you kind of come together to inform Blackmore's Night?

RITCHIE: I would listen very much to heavily melodic, classically infused pop bands like Abba or other bands that have classical themes incorporated in their music like Jethro Tull.

In Blackmore's Night, we play very melodic music with various themes from many different resources. We enjoy the freedom and creativity of being able to be inspired by music from the 1500s and add new instrumentation and lyrics. But we're also able to play Joan Baez, Uriah Heep or Sonny and Cher covers.

We can pick and choose from a vast selection of material.



BERLIN, GERMANY - AUGUST 26: Candice Night and Ritchie Blackmore (L-R) of Blackmore's Night perform ... [+] REDFERNS VIA GETTY IMAGES

How important has it been historically for you guys to create in Blackmore's Night a musical experience that is incapable of being pigeonholed which allows you to follow your collective muse at all times?

RITCHIE: When we put the concept of Blackmore's Night together, we knew that it would probably never get played on the radio. But we didn't care because we just wanted to play our kind of music. We didn't care about playing to thousands of people - but we wanted to play to a hundred. It was so refreshing - a breath of fresh air compared to what I was used to before. We have a [record coming out](#) [March 12] called *Nature's Light*. This music is still challenging: to be playing arrangements where we have me playing mandolas, nickleharps and hurdy gurdys, and Candice playing shawms. In the old days, it was easy with guitar, bass, drums, keyboards and everyone did their part. It is tricky to know when to play a rauschpfeife and a guitar and sometimes a synthesizer, and how it balances out.

CANDICE: I think Blackmore's Night is just a true reflection of our creative process. We don't follow trends or fashions. We brave our own path through the woods. And when we look behind us, we find that others are following along and enjoying the journey. The music we create is a very personal process for us. It's not based on commercial success. Perhaps because of that, we have a very strong grassroots following that is very loyal and grows vastly each year worldwide. We always wanted to keep the shows small so we could maintain an intimate connection with the fans - as if you were at a party at our own home. We're able to take requests from fans and include the audience in our concerts. We connect with the independent thinkers that aren't impressed with repetitive play on major radio stations who just appreciate discovering new music themselves and sharing it with friends and family.

Being able to play this type of music - where we are able to play anything from folk rock to Renaissance to ballads and instrumentals or tavern sing-alongs - is an incredible creative freedom. Once you kick down the walls of the box of a genre people try to place you in, it is very difficult to go back inside that box and be restrained to just one genre.

We feel as if our genre is simply good, melodic music. No other labels are necessary.

One of the things that has always amazed me about Blackmore's Night is the way in which you've both created and fostered a project like this that isn't at all dependent upon how many bodies you can squeeze into a room or how many albums get sold. How important has it been for you guys creating something like this that does resonate with people but that you can still guide entirely on your own terms?

RITCHIE: We wanted the freedom to be able to play anything we wanted to. At the same time, we knew we were going to lose a lot of hard rock fans. But the music was more important than big audiences.

I'd always been a little bit envious of guitar players being in a restaurant who could play to maybe 10 people and keep them entertained without Marshall [amps] or light shows or running around the stage. So part of my personal challenge was to see if we could hold the attention of a small audience without all the trimmings. Just the music. I was pretty uncomfortable at first. I wasn't used to just playing an acoustic guitar and not having a wall of sound behind me. Now, 25 years later, I'm more comfortable playing the acoustic guitar than I am playing the electric guitar.

CANDICE: I think one of the most amazing things is to look out to your audience in a concert and see a few thousand people, many of whom are dressed up in garb like a giant costume party. They're showing what identity they feel most akin to at that moment in time - be it kings and

queens, minstrels, monks or knights. And some just show up in regular clothing. But everyone is singing along to the songs you created.

The men are usually fans of Ritchie's from way back, knowing that whether he plays electric guitar, acoustic, hurdy-gurdy, or mandola - and he will play all of those instruments at some point during the show - it will be equivalent to Blackmore brilliance. No one plays these instruments like Ritchie. They are now there with their wives, who like a softer female vocal. Their children are there dressed like princesses or Robin Hood and they love singing along to the catchy, family-based choruses of the songs. The grandparents are there because they simply like melodic music. So, we've gone from appealing to one person to entire extended families. When you see the smiles on their faces and the positive energy that is being shared, it's incredibly powerful.

Add to that the fact that we perform in 12th to 15th century castles or historical venues. Seeing these amazing, like-minded fans beneath a rising moon, singing each word, is a totally magical experience. Our fans follow us around the world and take their vacation times to see each show we perform. They've met many other fans that have turned into dear friends that they connect with and reunite with them through our shows each year. They know that each show we perform is going to be different - different songs performed with different solos and different intros and interpretations of each song. You never see the same show twice.

Our songs resonate on a deep emotional level with our fans and the concerts bring it to a whole other personal level. Seeing people from so many different walks of life, who you would have thought you had nothing in common with normally, bonding together through our music is incredible.



BIRMINGHAM, UNITED KINGDOM - OCTOBER 05: Candice Night and Ritchie Blackmore of Blackmore's Night ... [+] REDFERNS

From the unique ways in which you've presented your music live to the songs themselves, I've always thought of the music of Blackmore's Night as an escape. During turbulent times like this, just how important of a role is that for music to play?

CANDICE: It's something that we always needed in our own lives anyway. From the stress and pressures of everyday life; being in an increasingly over-sensationalized society with emphasis on needing to be always available - being in survival mode and relying on screens constantly without taking a break to calm your spirit. It got to the point where we went from phones to faxes to emails, texts, DMs, and social media - and we forget to look up and see the miracles that occur before our eyes every day.

We were watching an increase of road rage, air rage, light pollution, and so much anger and frustration everywhere. No one was taking the time to unplug, watch the colors of a sunset, see a shooting star or feel the wind in their hair. Our music was our escape from the pressures of an increasingly high pressure world and a call to return to nature to renew our spirits.

If anything, this pandemic has taught us a similar thing. We're now unable to be in highly crowded areas. And although you could take that as a reason to be on screens even more, I hope some people will take to the woods or the beaches for walks. Or to sit outside and breathe the fresh, clean air, and enjoy the beauty nature has to offer. It can be a sanctuary.