

I married a Rock God

[Sunday Mirror](#) , [Nov 17, 2002](#) by [Words: Simone Noakes](#)

Blinded by the flash of cameras, you're rushed from the plane into a limo. Fans push against the windows trying to catch a glimpse through the glass. Young girls are screaming for your husband, who's in the car ahead. This is the rock 'n' roll life. You have the love of a man millions of women want, you rub shoulders with the showbiz elite and lead a jet-set lifestyle. But is it worth it?

Candice Night (right), 31, is married to Ritchie Blackmore, 57, who was the guitarist with Deep Purple and Rainbow. They have been together for 13 years.

I was 18 when I met Ritchie. I was working for a radio station in Long Island, New York, at the time and there was a charity soccer match between the station and Deep Purple. Afterwards, I asked Richie for an autograph and he looked up and told me I was beautiful. That was going to be my big Ritchie Blackmore moment. But it went on - after I walked off, he sent three roadies through the crowd to ask me to meet him at a local bar.

Obviously, I was immediately impressed by him. He seemed very mysterious and intense - and in need of a good friend. He did magic tricks and mind-reading on me all night and I was totally captivated. The fact he was 44 seemed irrelevant. We talked till 9am the next morning and my parents were absolutely livid when I got home.

I didn't tell my friends who I was dating for a long time. When I finally did confess, I don't think they were jealous - although they are now because we still have such a strong, lasting relationship. When we first went out, my best friend accompanied me to his house in Connecticut. She was very wary of him and overprotective of me. She wouldn't leave my side all evening. And when Ritchie asked me to stay over, she grabbed my arm and said, "She's coming home with me!" She wouldn't even drink a soda in his house unless it was opened by her and no one else. We all look back and laugh about it now.

It would be so easy to go on about all the good aspects of being with Ritchie, like the big house, the parties, the nice cars, the money - but with big houses and the money come bigger taxes and more rooms to clean, and with parties come hangovers.

Groupies weren't ever really an issue. Well, not really. Ritchie's as crazy a party rock star as some of the other members of the band. There have been women who've come on to him right in front of me but he just says, "You're making me look really good in front of my girl, thanks!" then puts his arm around me and we walk off. He's incredibly loyal and, besides, he knows I wouldn't tolerate any messing around. The first time I went on tour with him, I was nervous about the whole groupie thing. He'd promised that all their European audience were men, but I hadn't believed him and packed my suitcase ready for competition - only spandex, leather, minis, stilettos - I went all out. Unfortunately the first date was in Italy and he was right about the audience - all Italian men. I think I got more of an ovation than Purple that night.

The hardest part of being a rock wife is when Ritchie went on tour without me, but he always called and wrote and brought back presents.

I love rock music, always have, but Ritchie never listens to it anymore - he walks out of the room when I play it. It's understandable. If you'd listened to and played rock music for 40 years, you'd probably want to get away from it, too. Now we perform together in our own band, Blackmore's Night - and it's probably about as far from heavy rock as you can get. It's based on medieval music and we dress in Renaissance clothing for the shows.

Ritchie's very sensitive - which is why he can play like he can - but that sensitivity can make him very touchy, too. We both have terrible tempers and neither of us like to admit we could be wrong, so arguments can last for days. We even take different hotel rooms on tour when it gets too bad. Ritchie loves to complain about everything - it's too hot, too cold, the person behind him is driving too fast, the one in front too slowly - it gets very arduous. So, on the road, we get our own hotel rooms so I can watch what I want on telly, listen to the music I like or just have silence. Plus, there's no snoring.'



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