

Kweevak

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The Haunting Blackmore's Night Casts a Halloween Spell in New York City

This year we got Ritchie *and* Candy for Halloween. That is Richard Hugh Blackmore and Candice Night of **Blackmore's Night**. These two talented namesakes founded this unique band in 1997 and have grown it into an international sensation known for the passion, pageantry and musical prowess they have brought to their medieval folk music revival.

Ritchie is best-known for his work in classic hard rock. Candice Night is a former model and now the lead singer, composer and multi-instrumentalist in Blackmore's Night. The pair married in October 2008 after a long courtship and both share an intense interest in Renaissance music. Their signature sound melds classic sounds of the past with present textures and tones for their own spellbinding brand of traditional music. Ritchie, Candice and their group of minstrels dress the part evoking the fashion of days gone by while playing both modern and traditional instruments.

The band also includes Bard David of Larchmont (keys, organ, harpsichord, accordion and pipe organ), Gypsy Rose (violin), Earl Grey of Chamay (bass, mandolin and guitar), Squire Malcolm (drums and percussion) and Minstrel Albert (bagpipes, flute and wind instruments). The group performs at Renaissance fairs and stand alone shows in theaters and often in castles, especially in Europe. Many of their subjects wear period costumes (garb) to concerts adding to the flavor and festivity of a Blackmore's Night concert and the sold out gig at the Fillmore Theater in New York City on October 29, 2009 was no exception.

This marquee date on the band's *Secret Voyage* Autumn Nights 2009 Tour marked a high-point for the group who has been sailing higher than ever on the strength of the 2008

CD release of the same name. The album landed in the number one spot on the Billboard New Age Charts and has remained in the top ten ever since.

Prior to Blackmore's Night taking the stage, two of their minstrels performed to open the show. Earl played a medieval string instrument plucking a pretty piece that was well received by the aptly attired audience. Albert entertained the fans with a short set utilizing a mix of tools including the bagpipes, the hurdy gurdy and wind instruments. The crowd enthusiastically applauded his art and antics.

The intro to "God Save The Keg" was heard before shadows graced the stage and the spell was cast immediately with "Locked Within The Crystal Ball". The tune was vibrant and was enhanced by the visual backdrop behind the stage, which was used subtly throughout the evening. Candice was enchanting and the instrumentation was engaging propelled by daunting drumming.

"Good to be back home again... you look gorgeous," said the effervescent Mrs. Blackmore jokingly in a Long Island accent when greeting the crowd for the evening. She acknowledged her betrothal to Ritchie since the last event in New York before plugging the Kitty Kind organization set up in the Fillmore lobby. Blackmore's Night is supporting several local no-kill animal shelters during their U.S. run.

Taking the fans back to a more simple, more magical time the band launched into "Queen For A Day" with its royal riffs and tambourine taps for rhythm before the tune took a rigorous turn as the crowd responded with enthused clapping. "Under A Violet Moon" was a vibrant sing-a-long featuring a vivid violin passage from Gypsy Rose. It was followed by the festive "Renaissance Faire" which had rows of fans clapping and swaying.

Green lights and a picture of lush forests crafted the mood for "Durch den Wald zum Bach Haus". The medieval instrumental was whimsical and wondrous while David's keys cascaded like a gentle rain as the piece progressed into a lively lilt.

Blackmore's Night's interpretation of Joan Baez's "Diamonds & Rust" was delicate yet dynamic with Candice center stage adding to the stately seriousness of the song. "Far Far

Away" - written by a friend in the front row - flowed from faint to flourishing.

The concert was mystical allowing people to get caught up in the fantasy of medieval times and masterful musicianship. The set list was a mix of mesmerizing songs and motivating rockers. "Toast To Tomorrow" was spirited with its feisty flare and was followed by "World Of Stone" a bold ballad about banding together and standing up for what is right and was inspired by Joan of Arc.

The instrumental by the minstrels included a passionate piano part from David and a full fledged rock drum solo from Malcolm, which set the stage for "Black Night". Ritchie was lavish on his leads that ranged from intricate to intense, demonstrating that he is still a master of the hard rock guitar as well as a Renaissance man.

"The Circle" was potent with a powerful solo from Blackmore. "Wind In The Willows" an old English folk song started off wispy than expanded into weighty instrumentation. Blackmore's Night closed the set with the timeless "The Clock Ticks On" with Ritchie playing the hurdy gurdy producing strange haunting sounds as it was cranked. Candice and the others added animation to the piece with various instruments.

Blackmore (bass, guitar, hurdy gurdy and mandolin) is best known for crafting hard rocking riffs for Deep Purple and Rainbow from the late sixties into the mid nineties. But to this day and on this tour he still has moments where he will pull out the famous white Stratocaster and transform himself into the Lord of the Licks.

On the Chicago date the band dusted off Deep Purple's "Woman From Tokyo" and "Smoke On The Water". In Cleveland they offered up the deep cut "Soldier of Fortune" and New York got a Blackmore's Night staple of "Black Night" with its signature sing-along section. In fact, a massive song book rested at Candice's feet with no real setlist in sight meaning you just never know what you'll get at their concerts, but you can bet that it will be good.

Blackmore's immersion into full-time medieval music has confounded his fan base to a degree and is viewed as a trick and questionable move away from rock stardom by many. But, for fans of the band who have discovered the group over the past twelve years the

current musical direction has been a rewarding treat.

In fact, Ritchie's work in this band marks the most stable and consistent period of his long and storied career. Perhaps fans who may have passed initially due to the perceived quirkiness of his chosen path should perhaps give the outfit another try. Blackmore and Night have passionately pursued their craft with true determination that is now richly paying off as far as the concert goers are concerned. In a live setting followers are rewarded with an eclectic evening of music that fuses old and new in a completely compelling manner.

Fillmore attendees were treated to the light yet lavish "Village Lanterne" as the encore to close the two-hour show in New York that left patrons wanting more. Candice was a lovely leading lady who had an easy manner with Blackmore and the fans throughout the performance. The various medieval instruments that Night played enhanced the magic of the music and her use of the tambourine enticed more crowd participation. All in all - Blackmore's Night was spellbinding and enchanting - and a musical light in the season of darkness!

BLACKMORE'S NIGHT SETLIST - 10/29/09 God Save The Keg, Locked Within The Crystal Ball, Queen For A Day, Under A Violet Moon, Renaissance Faire Durch den Wald zum Bach Haus Diamonds & Rust, Far Far Away Home Again, Toast To Tomorrow, World Of Stone Black Night, The Circle, Ghost Of A Rose, Wind In The Willows, The Clock Ticks On *Encore* Village Lanterne