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October 28th, 2009

Talking with Candice Night

She's beautiful, extremely talented and married to one of rock and roll's greatest guitarist. Long Island native Candice Night is the lead singer, lyricist and multi-instrumentalist for husband Ritchie Blackmore's renaissance band "Blackmore's Night" since 1997. Her beautiful enchanting voice along with Ritchie's masterful guitar work take you back to the simpler times of kings, queens, knights and old medieval yore. *Secret Voyage* is the tenth and latest album from Blackmore's Night. It entered at #1 on the New Age Billboard Charts and stayed there for four weeks! Blackmore's Night is currently in the midst of the American leg of their 2009 tour and will be appearing at the Fillmore Theater at Irving Plaza in NYC on 10/29/09. I spoke to Candice recently about her life and her music...

MICK: You and Ritchie [Blackmore] just celebrated your first wedding anniversary. Congratulations! **CANDICE:** Yes, twenty years together and our first year being married! A lot of mixed messages and kind of strange! It's funny because we were saying the only thing we haven't done together was get married so now we've crossed that off the list and we can move on to other things! It really is strange that being with somebody for two decades and we still have that newlywed type thing! It's very cool. Actually, the first anniversary he took me on the World Yacht where we had dinner on the boat and went around where Ellis Island is and saw the city from the water. He did good!!

MICK: What type of music did you listen to when you were growing up? **CANDICE:** Well, my parents had very different tastes in music than I did so I guess I was rebelling when I was a teenager. Around the house, they had a lot of stuff from musicals. My mom was a huge musical fan. My dad was really into big band sounds, Benny Goodman kind of stuff, very good music for Sunday morning to cook eggs to and dance around the

kitchen which my parents did every Sunday morning! A very musical family! That was almost like comfort music to me because I grew up with it. I hit the teenage years and it was perfect because the 80's were my teen years with all those heavy metal hair bands. Right up my alley! I still enjoy that music. It's my nostalgia! Ritchie often comes in and shuts those cds off. Not his type of music! He kind of laughs at me when he walks out of the room!! What we do is such a departure from that. But it was fun to grow up with that music and still listen to it. I still have my Camaro, put the top down and crank up songs from the 80's!

MICK: How did you meet Ritchie?

CANDICE: We actually met when I was working for a radio station out here WBAB. I was working for them for about a year and a half when I was going to college. I loved music so much growing up and going through high school. My books were just covered with names of bands, lyrics, everything! Not mine but other people's lyrics that really inspired me and touched me. It was like nobody really understood me except the people writing these songs! So I thought what was I going to do for a living when I'm an adult one day and had to make a career choice? I figured it would be working for a radio station or a record company. So I got a job at the radio station. One day, Deep Purple came to town and they called up WBAB and asked if they wanted to come out and play a charity soccer match. Sure enough, all the DJ's came and we played the game. It wasn't that much later that we discovered Ritchie had stacked his team with a bunch of ringers, like these European amazing players. The guys from overseas are incredible players. We kind of had a bunch of overweight DJs who pressed buttons and ate pizza real good but not so much about running around the field and scoring goals. They beat us mercilessly. I tried to be the sportswoman afterward and went over congratulate him on his win with about 100 other people looking for autographs. It was funny because you could see who was there and for what reason. Loads of girls wearing mini-skirts and high heels sinking in the mud which was hilarious because we were on a muddy soccer field! There's me in my jeans and sneakers and a big winter coat because it was November. I just went over and congratulated him and asked for an autograph. The first picture I ever took with him was him signing for all these people and there's me with my face stuck in! As I was

leaving to get back in my car, he actually sent three of his roadies to find out who I was and asked to meet me later at a local tavern. It's funny because when I first asked for the autograph, he was signing and he only looked up for a second and said in his English accent "You're a very beautiful girl" and I thought that was going to be my famous Ritchie Blackmore story. Later on I met him and we ended up talking for hours. We found we had the same interests, had lots in common, we were both fascinated by the paranormal, amazing things. We really connected on so many levels. He said when I walked into the tavern that night it was like seeing an old friend again. So it's been 20 years since that day and still going strong.

MICK: What made you and Ritchie go in a different direction musically after Rainbow?

CANDICE: It's funny with Ritchie's fans they are either completely die-hard fans and they saw this coming for years or they are completely shocked that he did this. It was totally out there in left field stance in music. He started Deep Purple in 1968, so they were doing stuff like *The Book of Taliesyn* and a lot of the stuff alluded to medieval things. He's been listening to that type of music from the late 60's early 70's and really getting into the music of that time period. Not just the lyric and visual of it or the historical accuracy. He started listening to things like David Munrow's *Early Music Consort* in 1971 which was of course the year I was born so I had nothing to do with it! It happened way before I was here! Then he started incorporating medieval modal scales into his songs. If you listen to "Smoke on the Water" for example, it's not just a riff that's written in singular notes. It's actually done in fourths and fifths which is medieval modal scales and it gives it that kind of dark and ominous sound. There's all these things he weaved into his music. And of course whenever he'd go into jam sessions, whether it was early Purple or with Rainbow later on, he's be jamming on "Greensleeves" or writing songs like "16th Century Greensleeves" or "The Temple of the King". Die hard Ritchie Blackmore fans saw the reflections of this kind of music that he was inspired by, being weaved into his music that he's been doing for decades now. When we started our stuff, which we never thought was actually going to be a project; it was when he started Rainbow. It was up in a farmhouse in Massachusetts where they were recording. There was like 6 feet of snow, really nothing around for miles and miles. The singer in the band

at that point was a Scottish guy who had never seen this much snow in his entire life! He was a little shell shocked and having a hard time coming up with inspiration lyrically. I was doing some of the background tracks and Ritchie asked me if I could come up with any lyrics for some of the backing tracks. That's how I wound up co-writing four of the songs on the *Stranger in Us All* album. It was a really natural progression. While the rest of the guys were in there doing their backing tracks, Ritchie and I would be sitting in front of this big blazing fire just watching the snow come down. He'd have his acoustic guitar so we started writing songs mainly just for us just to pass the time and pure enjoyment!

MICK: I really like your new cd *Secret Voyage*. Did it take long to record?

CANDICE: Not really. We actually have this producer from Los Angeles and we fly him out to us probably twice a year. He will stay with us for about two months at a time in our house. It's taken us forever to get a studio in our home because Ritchie said he wanted to be the only musician not to have a studio in his home. It was more important for him to have a bar! He finished the bar and it's kind of old dungeony, stone walled with this medieval torture device hanging on the wall. In a tiny room off to the side of the bar we have our studio recording equipment. We've done our last few cds here. When we go in, we usually have the skeletal arrangements, lyrics and music. We kind of flesh it out with the producer as far as the instrumentation is concerned; change anything that needs to be changed. We'll go on the road for a month and when we come back, we revisit the songs. We do that a couple times a year. It's a lot better than locking yourself in the studio and banging your heads when you get stuck! So we take a breather, go on the road, play some for the audience and see how they react to it, if it needs some energy injected in certain areas. Then take it back to the studio. I think this is the winning combination for us!

MICK: Besides vocals, you play a multitude of medieval instruments as well! How did you learn to play them?

CANDICE: I play all the stuff nobody's ever heard of!
It usually stops conversations dead in its tracks! People

say “Oh, you’re a musician! What instruments do you play?” and I say “the shawm, the rauschpfeife”; they say terrific and run away! Actually, that started because Ritchie had bought a pennywhistle when we were in Los Angeles in The Bodhi Tree, a new age book shop. He brought it home and it sat on the kitchen counter for about six months collecting dust. I said “Look, are you going to play this thing or am I going to have to throw it out?” He picked it up and decided it was useless and was going to toss it. I said let me give it a shot. For some reason, it came so naturally. All the notes were exactly where I expected them to be! We started collecting some of the more difficult double reed woodwinds from around the world. Obscure music shops down these old cobblestone streets in Prague, the Czech Republic. You know you won’t find these at the local guitar center here! We found a couple in New Hope, Pennsylvania! There’s some great early music shops over in England as well so we continue to grow our collection larger! It definitely adds a new dimension into the music. The sounds are just so different and it feels right when you’re taking music from the 12th, 13th or 14th Century. If it was played only on electric guitars or even acoustic, it really feels like it’s missing a dimension. We are retaining the spirit of the melodies but we are adding new lyrics new arrangements and new instrumentation. When you add a shawm, a rauschpfeife, a hurdy gurdy, it feels like you’re giving a nod to the spirit of what the song was originally intended to sound like.

MICK: You are working on a new album now?

CANDICE: Yes! We have about 5 songs already done and when we finish this leg of the United States tour, we will have the producer come back out. He usually comes in the winter so he probably thinks Long Island is like this year round! I tell him it’s really nice in the spring, summer and fall and all he ever sees is winter! Either way it beats LA! He comes out and stays in our guest bedroom and then he goes downstairs and works in the dungeon area. There’s no windows where he works! We go out, we play soccer once a week, we’re doing our social stuff and when we come back, we yell down “Pat, is everything OK in there?”! He keeps busy!

MICK: When you’re not touring or recording, what do you like to do?

CANDICE: We go ghost hunting! I don’t like the word “hunting” but we do look for

ghosts. We are big nature people, completely in awe of the beauty and simplicity and magic of nature. We walk through the woods every day; we feed all the animals that come into our yard...raccoons, opossums, deer, squirrels, all kinds of birds. We go owl prowling at midnight through the woods here. Ritchie has lanterns that we use with walking sticks and put our cloaks on, bring the binoculars. We have this little box that makes owl sounds and they actually answer them and come from all over! It's pretty amazing!

MICK: I know Blackmore's Night is playing Irving Plaza on Oct. 29th. You have two more dates after that on this American tour. When will you be back in the States?

CANDICE: It's funny because it's rare for us to play in the United States. Hopefully around the same time next year. We do so well over in Europe although the people here are amazing! You can't beat the fans here, especially the New York fans! We are playing home this week so half the people in the audience is family or friends of ours! It's a perfect time of year too! I know we usually request people to come dressed in Renaissance garb but it's Halloween! Wear whatever you want! It's like an event, a costume party!

MICK: I've also noticed you are involved in many charitable causes, especially those dealing with animal rights. Do you always invite animal shelters to your shows?

CANDICE: Yes, especially in America we like to pay attention to local charities because there is so much attention given to the big charities like PETA and all those. The attention is not really being given to the local animal charities. These people are working so hard 24/7. They don't get the funding, they don't get the attention or publicity from the press. Whenever we come to town, it's important for us to invite an animal charity, usually a no kill shelter. They can set up a booth, hand out pamphlets or brochures to raise the awareness that they are out there. I'm hoping that if we set it up next to a merchandising booth, people will throw their extra change to the animal shelter. These people have to make it work year round so we try to bring attention whenever we are in their town. They are real angels! What they have to see, what they have to fix! I could never do that myself! It breaks my heart just thinking about it so knowing there are

people out there doing something about it is truly amazing.

MICK: I will bet you are a vegetarian!

CANDICE: I'm a guilt-etarain! I eat meat and then I feel guilty! I don't eat a lot of meats though. I'm more of a pasta girl! And I love animals!

MICK: Who do you listen to today?

CANDICE: I listen sometimes to country stations! For me their lyric lines still make sense to me. I come from an era where music gave me this emotional roller coaster! It would make you melancholy, reflective, happy, joyous. It had all these dimensions to it! Today, I'm hearing a lot electronics, a lot synthesized drumming where everything is studio magic. Everything is fixed! You turn on the TV and everybody is choreographed and wearing mini mini skirts. I'm missing that music that really inspires me and makes me feel something besides being annoyed! A lot of the commercial stations are caught up in that. I'm interested in country because it still has that lyrical line that paints a picture in your head of a story! Not every country song though. When they start singing about a tractors and stuff I kind of turn it off!! There's some songs that actually make sense! As far as vocalists are concerned, I think Pink has probably the best voice out there. I wish she would do a rock album because I think she has an amazing voice to do it. If I really want a departure from that, I listen to something totally different like Sarah Brightman. Her voice is amazing. She has this incredible range. I was actually turned on to her from watching a PBS station. I've seen her a bunch of times in concert. She is unbelievable! The show she puts on is just amazing. When we went over on tour, she lives in Hamburg, Germany, and she came to our show! I heard she was going to be there and I said "I can't go out there! Sarah Brightman is out there! I can't sing in front of her, are you crazy!" I looked out from behind the curtain and could swear I saw her in one of the opera boxes. I said to Ritchie "I don't think I could do this!" He said "She's not here, that's not her. It just looks like her, she called and said she's not coming". That made me feel better but found out later he was completely lying to me! That was her sitting in the box! Afterward, she came backstage and she was the most lovely person, so warm and friendly. Completely down to earth! She loved the show. She told us how much she

enjoyed the show. It was a huge honor that she came to our show!

MICK: Growing up, were you into medieval music or medieval times at all?

CANDICE: I never heard medieval or Renaissance music until I met Ritchie! He was my introduction to this music. I didn't know anything about it. It's almost like a comforting flashback. As children, one of your most safe and secure times is when your parents are tucking you in at night. Nothing in the world is going to hurt you. You don't think there are any bad things out there that can harm you. A really safe mode. My parents sitting on the edge of the bed reading bedtime stories. A lot of those stories are from Renaissance times like 'Cinderella' and others. I think the visual probably stayed with me from my parents reading fairy tales to me as I was falling asleep. Later on I started going to Renaissance fairs and thought that was amazing that you could just walk into this place and look through the gates at this veil of another time period. It's another world! There's such a huge underground following for renaissance fairs. There's at least one Renaissance fair in every state. The larger states have anywhere between 3 to 8 fairs each year. These fairs are only open about two months during the year, only on the weekend. They get between 200 to 500 thousand people! It's a huge amount of people who come to escape the pressures of today. Everything is so instant society and cyber world and one dimensional. There's so much anger and stress. You can go out in your backyard and look at the stars and the ambient lighting. But it's hard to see the stars anymore. Everywhere you go there's a bass drum going or a plane going over or somebody is blowing leaves! Noise everywhere! Even talking about ourselves. You could just pick up the phone and deal with whatever is on the phone. Then it was the phone and the fax. Now it's the phone, fax, pager, IM, Blackberry, Blue Tooth, iPhone!! Nobody can escape anymore. Nobody turns off! Most people feel uncomfortable when they do have to turn off. We are losing that intimacy, that purity, that spirituality of just standing outside and watching a sunset or walking through the woods and listen to crickets. Being amazed by a field of fire flies! These are just the simple pleasures that have me in awe all of the time! If I go outside and feel the breeze blowing through my hair, I feel completely cleansed! You don't have to go on a plane and look for it, it's right here! So many people are just programmed to ignore it because we are in survival mode all of the time. People are just

getting angrier and angrier and nobody's unplugging and getting away from the source of all that anger! There's something incredible that's so soulful and spiritual about sitting around a campfire with a bunch of friends with acoustic guitars and getting back to the old fashioned form of communication and just talking to each other! Not emailing or texting but pondering about where we are going, what the universe is about and where we've been, reincarnation and all these amazing dimensional things that are out there. It's so important to see things through a child's eyes!

MICK: Are you close to your family?

CANDICE: Very close!

MICK: Are there any other musicians in your family?

CANDICE: Not professional! Everybody in my family plays something. I was brought up playing piano, my dad and mom both play piano, my brother plays saxophone, my sister plays clarinet. I don't know how we didn't end up being the Partridge Family! We needed that old Volkswagon van thing going on! It was typical to go on road trips together and everybody singing together! Even when you turn teen aged and you start to think this is so lame, by the time you hit your twenties you think "wow, those were some great times!"

MICK: Are you religious?

CANDICE: I am more spiritual. We are not really into organized religion. There's so much bloodshed and all about the money. I'm really not into other people telling me what to think or believe. I'm fine just finding my own way and I think Ritchie's doing the same thing. We both strongly believe in God. We feel there is a strong God presence out there. I personally believe everybody is waiting for a miracle and they're thinking there's no signs being sent to me because there's no miracles. If you see the sunsets we get, there are miracles every day.

MICK: What advice would you give to an up and coming performer?

CANDICE: I often listen to Ritchie answer this question and he says "After you learn

your first three chords, get a good lawyer!” I love that one! It really is important in this day and age when everybody’s trying to rip you off. Record companies, publishers, agents...I just want to play! I really think it’s important not to follow trends and be true to yourself. There’s so many people I see that are like carbon copies of what came before or they sound so similar to what other people are doing. That might be a quick fix for a lot of people because you get in on a trend or a fashion. But those trends and fashions change within five minutes. You can go back 15 years and the Spice Girls were taking over the world. They had Polaroid endorsements and they were in your face every five seconds! Then it was Brittany Spears, then Beyonce, now it’s Rhianna. Everything changes really fast unless it’s you and you’re being true to yourself. Do what’s right for you. It’s going to be a longer road and a road that’s less traveled but it’s going to be your own road. When you look behind you, all these people will be on this journey with you following to see what you will do next!

Thank you Candice!