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Vocalist Candice Night lulls the senses on kid-friendly new album



Candice Night captures the imagination on new album.

Candice Night

To visitors at Great Wolf Lodge, Candice Night is Princess Amora of Magiquest. To many others she's the enchanting lead singer of Blackmore's Night—the folk rock ensemble she founded twenty years ago with her guitar hero husband, [Ritchie Blackmore](#) ([Deep Purple](#), [Rainbow](#)).

That's right: Mrs. "Smoke on the Water."

Imagine if Maid Marian had left Robin Hood to become a professional musician, and you'll get an idea where Night (a native

Long Islander) draws her inspiration. The blonde bombshell began singing medieval music with Blackmore on the 1997 album *Shadows of the Moon*. Since then, their Renaissance co-op has issued a string of acclaimed original and traditional world music albums, including *Under the Violet Moon* (1999), *Fires at Midnight* (2001), *Ghost of a Rose* (2003), and *Winter Carols* (2006).

The latest effort from Blackmore's Night, *All Our Yesterdays*, was released just last year. But that doesn't mean Night's just been sitting around waiting for the next jousting tournament or maypole dance.

On the contrary, rock's reigning Lady Guinevere has poured her passion into singing about her latest adventures—in *motherhood*.

Night's second solo project finds Blackmore's beloved lending her golden voice to thirteen songs specifically designed to calm children and soothe their stressed-out parents. *Starlight, Starbright* contains both enchanting originals ("So This Is Love," "Down in the Meadow") and familiar bedtime favorites ("Rock a Bye Baby"). But is also features clever covers of kid-friendly tunes by folk giants John Denver ("Annie's Song") and Kenny Loggins ("Return to Pooh Corner").

Written and produced with Ritchie in their home during downtime from their kids (Autumn and Rory), *Starlight* is a magical suite whose gentle notes waft over listeners like a morning mist. Toddlers will enjoy the soft timbres at tuck-in time and become enthralled by the narrative aspects of Night's lyrics by daybreak as well as candlelight.

That's because songs like "Fireflies" and "Once in a Garden" tap into a child's unchecked curiosity and boundless fascination—with both our natural world and any imaginative realms he or she fancies frequenting. The music beguiles and charms, encouraging one's spiritual and emotional exploration while fostering a sense of security in one's own skin: No monsters here.

Night's angelic pipes and acoustic arrangements also make good background music for meditation, Tai Chi, and bubble baths.

We discussed the making of *Starlight, Starbright* with Candice in a recent e-interview, wherein the sultry singer shared her thoughts on music, motherhood, and daydreams. She'll be heading to Germany this summer with Blackmore's Night, but may return to the States with Ritchie and friends come fall.

We're looking forward to it.

CLEVELAND EXAMINER: Where and when was *Starlight, Starbright* recorded? Do you and Ritchie have a home studio? How was the process different (or not) from making a Blackmore's Night record?

CANDICE NIGHT: We do have a studio in our home, although Ritchie said he wanted to be the only musician to *not* have a studio in our house. He concentrated more on the dungeon pub on the lower level, but there is a room off to the side of the dungeon that we have used since 1997 as a recording studio, ever since our CD *Shadow of the Moon*. The process is very different when I record my own CDs. With Blackmore's Night, Ritchie will come up with the music, then I come up with the lyrical content, then we map the songs acoustically before heading into the studio. Once in the studio we record a mapping version and then flesh it out and replace the parts we just did with the finalized versions, adding and subtracting instrumental parts or making changes to the arrangements as we go and see what sounds best for the songs. When I work on my own songs or CDs the decisions are my own so the whole application fees vastly different. I will bring my idea to the producer and sing the melody to him and explain what I want the song to sound like. Then we work on getting the sounds out of my head and on to the cd. We bring musicians in or go back and forth on what needs to be done to achieve the goal of what I am imagining it to finally be like. When it's completed it feels as if a new life has been breathed into the actual song.

EXAMINER: Clearly your children inspired you on this record. Can you briefly talk about how parenthood and the innocence of youth were a catalyst for this pure kind of music?

CANDICE NIGHT: I feel as if it was always important to me to see

through the eyes of a child. I always tried to retain that childhood innocence because I feel this world tries to rob us of that too often and while we're too young to lose that wonder. For me it was always important to see through the eyes of a child and never take for granted the simple beauties and magic and miracles that exist all around us and to always see those things with wonder and awe. The colors of a sunset, a sky of stars, the wind in my hair, the grass beneath my feet, snow falling from the sky, the changing flame color of autumn...so many amazing magical things present themselves to us every day, and I have deep appreciation for them all. I think that outlook has helped me in my craft of lyric writing and certainly in the musical world where the melody must have a perfect marriage with the lyric. To have that perfect balance between the visual and the audio is a very strong emotional force. So, to have my children be a part of this amazing journey called life where we can now discover and appreciate things together is just the most amazing experience. I feel so blessed every moment of every day with watching them look at the veins on the back of a leaf or pick up wiggly worms or we all go splash in puddles and catch rain drops on our tongues. It's a wonderful place to be—this earth, the nature, this life. Doing these things by yourself as an adult is necessary, but not as much fun as when you are doing them with your children and laughing and making memories the whole time.

EXAMINER: On “Rock A Bye Baby” you change the words a bit so there's no bough breaking or baby falling anymore. Was that deliberate? After all, the thought of a tree branch snapping and dropping an infant to certain injury or death isn't a pleasant picture!

CANDICE NIGHT: Of course it was deliberate! More than deliberate; it was necessary! I can't believe someone hasn't done that before now! Sending your children off to the land of dreams should be one of the most peaceful times ever for them. To have the comfort and security of mom's arms circling them, knowing everything is fine, being safe and warm, hearing your parents' heartbeat and surrendering to sleep after a busy day. You never feel that safe and secure and comfortable again in your life as in those moments of childhood. So you have to choose the songs you sing and the lyrical content so very carefully. I can't believe those words have been around as long as they have and somehow it became OK to sing

them...and to children! And at bedtime! My head is swimming...even the fairy tales have such morbid endings or parts to them. And nursery rhymes! Did you hear the end of Old Mother Hubbard? Makes you wonder what is going on out there that that became so accepted that it is a generally known nursery rhyme... Thanks, Mother Goose! My mission is simply to relax the child so they have the best journey to the land of dreams imaginable. That included changing various lyrics on songs that I wanted to use in order to have the child be surrounded by words of complete love and adoration. They need that foundation early on in life...and probably many years after. My kids are 4 and 5 and I am still singing them to sleep every night. I choose the songs and lyrics very carefully to depict what I want to accomplish, which is them being totally loved and comforted. If those songs don't have those words, I'll change the words to make it right for them.

EXAMINER: I love Kenny Loggins. What made you decide to revisit "Return to Pooh Corner" (from Kenny's 1994 kids record) as opposed to just doing the original "House on Pooh Corner"?

CANDICE NIGHT: It was a song I heard on the radio and just instantly fell in love with. I have a very strong inner child spirit so it resonates with songs that bring me back home to my childhood and this was a perfect one. I also love the fact that when a song like that gets radio play because it's always sandwiched between songs that you commonly hear today from whatever is cool and trendy now so it always feels like it doesn't fit and therefor stands out to me a lot more. It's like the little engine that could. Or the tuft of grass that grows between cracks on a city sidewalk. Just showing the world a little beauty and that yes, it can be done! That song just fit so perfectly at home on this CD.

EXAMINER: Can you discuss the enduring appeal of John Denver and how you came to cover "Annie's Song"?

CANDICE NIGHT: My husband and I met in 1989. We got engaged in 1994 but we didn't get married till 2008. Mainly because I knew there was a lot of planning involved and that I would be the one doing it all and we were always recording and touring so it was hard to get it all done. So, when I finally did it mainly by texting on

my Blackberry overseas while on tour, the only thing I got overwhelmed by was choosing the wedding song. There were just so many options I had no idea where to start to narrow it down to 1 song for our 1st dance. I asked my husband to choose. And he chose “Annie’s Song.” And I cried because, he is not a lyric guy! But *this* choice, music and lyrically were just so perfect. So it was our first dance at our wedding and the only moment at that point that I had ever cried happy tears. It holds a very special place in my heart. So when my children were born I started singing it to them as a lullaby. It was just a full of emotion love song between my children and myself that took on a whole new meaning. My daughter’s favorite line is the “sleepy blue ocean.” They now sing it with me at home. It is just a pure beautiful moment provided by an incredibly beautiful song.

EXAMINER: Autumn obviously inherited some of her parents' creativity. How did she start making up her own stories, like the ones that appear in the liner notes (*Stories to Dream By*)?

CANDICE NIGHT: Autumn has always been otherworldly. She is wise way beyond her years. She makes up songs and stories all the time. We do it throughout the day and night at our home and she is constantly inspired. I don't know how she does things, and I don't even want to try to figure it out. I just love being on her journey and observing her.

EXAMINER: I've noticed a theme with Blackmore’s Night—and now your new record—where there is a certain mystical magic to the sky, and specifically to the night sky (the stars, the moon, etc.). What is it about the night that makes it so special, as opposed to daytime?

CANDICE NIGHT: I heard, as we were creating *Shadow of the Moon*, that there was an ancient oriental philosophy that said that the daytime sky has false boundaries. The night sky is limitless and that is why we are creative at night. No boundaries, no ceiling, no limitations. It really resonated with me. I always feel almost weightless at night. I am at my most creative while under a night sky. You feel so small but so full of wonder. And the moon is just the most powerful force. Ever constant, ever changing. She affects the tides of the oceans of the worlds, and our own emotions as well.

Illuminating the dark of night. She's our only really source of light in the blackness, always watching over us, following us as we drive. There is just so much you can say about the moon, but you're better off just closing your eyes and feeling in in your own heart.

EXAMINER: How did you become involved in Renaissance music? You certainly found your niche and are an expert in that area with Ritchie and Blackmore's Night.

CANDICE NIGHT: Thank you! I never heard Renaissance music before I met Ritchie. When I moved up to Connecticut with him in his old Tudor home in the woods he would play it around all the time. I remember looking out the window or going for walks and thinking this is the perfect marriage of sound and visual. It was as if it was the soundtrack for nature and everything just clicked. He is much more into the realism of the time period. I enjoy the fantasy visual: The bonfires on the hills, the knight riding off on horseback and promising his return, the maiden patiently waiting at the window of the stone castle or cottage. The simplicity. The world lit by stars and by flame. The fantasy aspect feels better to me than the reality of the plague and the unsanitary living conditions. So we began taking tunes from the 12th-15th centuries and updating them with new instrumentation, arrangements and lyrics that people could relate to today but with an acknowledgment of the ghosts and fables of those past times. It has really resonated with our audience. We appeal to independent thinkers—to those not following trends or fashion. Those looking for something different, who brave their own paths through the woods.

EXAMINER: Rainbow has a tour coming up overseas. Will you be circling back to the USA, either with Rainbow or Blackmore's Night?

CANDICE NIGHT: Yes! We come back to the USA for some dates in August and then again in October. All dates are always listed on our web pages and Facebook pages when confirmed.

EXAMINER: Congrats to Ritchie on his Rock Hall induction with Deep Purple, at last! He must be pleased.

CANDICE NIGHT: He is honored that the fans worked so hard to get him this award. But I think it a general concurrence that to wait until after Jon Lord passed away to actually get around to inducting was a horrible oversight for many years from the Hall of Fame. Ritchie and Jon started the band together so it was strange to see that they got around to finally inducting them this year. But honestly, Ritchie and his fans have unconditional love, not validated by a panel that deems when it's time for him to get an award or not. So he didn't really pay much attention to it. He'd rather be playing his guitar than standing on a stage talking. That's not his comfort zone. He is a guitarist, not a schmoozer! Though we loved Steve Miller's speech! But thank you for the congratulations.

Starlight, Starbright on Amazon: <http://tinyurl.com/hxqpc85>