Ritchie Blackmore's Rainbow – Stranger In Us All (1995)

1 Wolf To The Moon 4:17 2 Cold Hearted Woman 4:30 3 Hunting Humans (Insatiable) 5:45 4 Stand And Fight 5:21 5 Ariel 5:40 6 Too Late For Tears 4:54 7 Black Masquerade 5:36 8 Silence 4:04 9 Hall Of The Mountain King 5:32 10 Still I'm Sad 5:24 Bass – Greg Smith Drums – John O. Reilly Guitar – Ritchie Blackmore Keyboards – Paul Morris Vocals – Doogie White

Guitarist Ritchie Blackmore resurrected the beloved hard rock band Rainbow in 1995 for the album Stranger in Us All. The new lineup -- technically named Ritchie Blackmore's Rainbow -- was not an all-star who's who of hard rock like the groundbreaking original version with vocalist Ronnie James Dio or the radio-targeted AOR version with vocalist Joe Lynn Turner. All incarnations of Rainbow, even the mid-period lineup fronted by bellower Graham Bonnet, are generally revered in hard rock circles. In its own way, Rainbow's music was just as influential as the music Blackmore made during his years in Deep Purple. Stranger in Us All feels like Blackmore's shot-in-the-dark, semi-inspired effort to reconnect with his hard rock fan base. Around this same time, he was gearing up his Renaissance-flavored new age project, Blackmore's Night. For Stranger in Us All, Blackmore recruited vocalist Doogie White, keyboardist Paul Morris, bass guitarist Greg Smith, and drummer John O'Reilly. Many songs, such as "Wolf to the Moon," "Cold Hearted Woman," and "Stand and Fight," are decent enough. The two standout tracks, "Hunting Humans (Insatiable)" and "Black Masquerade," are the best at recapturing classic Rainbow's energy, drama, and dynamics. Blackmore also proffers another cover of the Yardbirds' "Still I'm Sad." He clearly loves this song since it has appeared in studio and live versions on previous Rainbow albums. Does Stranger in Us All live up to the Rainbow name and reputation? Not really. White is a decent, fully capable hard rock vocalist, but he is not as distinctive as Dio, Bonnet, or Turner. Then again, few vocalists are. (On tour, White did do a fine job of singing all of the old Deep Purple and Rainbow favorites in the set.) Rainbow soon fell by the wayside as Blackmore concentrated on Blackmore's Night. Perhaps some variation of the classic lineup will reunite eventually; even without the late, great Cozy Powell on drums; something like Yes' 1991 Union tour, which gathered multiple members to celebrate its overall legacy, could be a hard rock fan's dream. ---Bret Adams, AllMusic Review

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