

Blackmore's Night - Autumn Sky (2010)

Written by bluesever

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1 *Highland* 5:49 2 *Vagabond (Make A Princess Of Me)* 5:23 3 *Journeyman* 5:41 4 *Believe In Me* 4:25 5 *Sake Of The Song* 2:46 6 *Song And Dance (Pt II)* 2:03 7 *Celluloid Heroes* 5:27 8 *Keeper Of The Flame* 4:42 9 *Night At Eggersberg* 2:15 10 *Strawberry Girl* 4:05 11 *All The Fun Of The Fayre* 3:55 12 *Darkness* 3:21 13 *Dance Of The Darkness* 3:35 14 *Health To The Company* 4:19 15 *Barbara Allen* 3:39

Ritchie Blackmore - guitars, renaissance drum, nyckelharpa, hurdy gurdy, mandola, mandolin
Candice Night - vocals, harmonies, penny whistle, gemshorn, rauschpfeife, shawms, bombards, chanters, recorders
Bard David of Larchmont - keyboards, backing vocals
Gypsy Rose (Elizabeth Cary) - violin, harmony vocals
Earl Grey of Chimey (Mike Clemente) - bass and rhythm guitar
Squire Malcolm of Lumley (Malcolm Dick) - percussion and drums
Albert Danneman - renaissance woodwinds and vocals

Ritchie Blackmore has been a guitar icon for 40 years, most notably playing lead for the mega-successful hard rock band Deep Purple. His blistering solos and psychedelic colorations set many a music aficionado back on his and her heels, and the fiery gent's temperamentality is still the stuff of rock legend. Much of that, however, appeared to be somewhat leashed when he got together with Ronnie James Dio and formed Rainbow, which produced several chart smashes still studied by the newer generations of musicians. For my part, I caught Purple every time they blew into L.A., and Blackmore and his mates were never less than killer, truly inspirational musicians. Thus, it was with more than a little head scratching when, seemingly retiring after Rainbow, Blackmore emerged with beautiful new wife Candice Night and pursued a chart-rock course with medieval overtones and a heavily MOR slant.

Well, as this and previous releases evince, Ritchie's lost none of his skills, heavily subordinated though they may now be; nevertheless, the Minstrel in the Gallery tone of Autumn Sky may not be entirely acceptable to the headbanging crowd of olden days. On the other hand. Tull was well-liked by the 70s gaggle, so who knows? Matters not at all, pilgrim, because, by any accounting, this is great music, lying somewhere between Tull, Renaissance, Dead Can Dance,

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and a number of Englantine minstrel outfits. Night possesses a voice in a mid-ground running from Annie Haslam to Mary Fahl (October Project), and the surrounding band is melodically accomplished, lush, and warm. Candice also plays a number of elder instruments (pennywhistle, gemshorn, rauchepfife, shawm, bombard, recorder, etc.), joining in with everyone to create an instrumentally convincing country fair atmosphere...greatly updated of course.

Blackmore's nowhere near as omnipresent as his legion of adulants are going to wish, but when he throws his hand in, there's no missing it, Journeyman a ravishing example. Surprising, though, is the band's decision to cover Ray Davies' old gem Celluloid Heroes, here a much folkier take and vastly less cynical than ol' Ray would ever venture, bless his sotted soul. However, I mentioned Ian Anderson's post-Passion Play output, a period I was never all that enamored of, and Blackmore's Night thankfully vastly outshines those efforts by a goodly distance, doing much to reinvest the mode with the corporeality of the present. Hard to believe but the band has never, to my radio-listening ears, been featured on any of the new mello-rock stations even though it easily trounces much of the fare there, surpassing Clannad and such outfits. Come to think of it, they haven't been played on the few DJ free-choice venues either, such as Jim Ladd's gig here in Los Angeles. Ah well, the world's gone mad, and if that displeases, then this CD is just the remedy, a beautiful and soothing yet stimulating concoction of lilting vocals, exotic playing, and heady flavors. --- acousticmusic.com

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