

## *The Black Knight At 76*

Last October, the world lost the legendary guitarist [Eddie Van Halen](#), gone too soon at 65. Another legendary guitarist who has ten years on Eddie celebrates his seventy-sixth birthday on April 14, and although he has slowed down somewhat in recent years, it is because he has other priorities, in particular an angelic wife and two young ones.



Ritchie Blackmore was born at Weston-super-Mare on April 14, 1945. After leaving school early, he did session work and also played in two bands - Screaming Lord Sutch and the Outlaws (not to be confused with later bands of the same name). It was though Deep Purple that saw his rise to fame. Blackmore was a founder member along with the late Jon Lord, and although the two men were chalk and cheese they produced [some of the finest rock music ever recorded](#) as one of the three original great British heavy metal bands, the other two being Black Sabbath and Led Zeppelin.

Blackmore's first tenure with Deep Purple lasted until 1975 when he left to form his own band, Rainbow. If one read the music press of the time, one might have concluded this would be an ego trip for a lead guitarist, but

although he was known to be temperamental and at times mercurial, Blackmore put together a full band with a keyboard player.

While Rainbow was extremely successful, the lure of big money was too great for Ritchie and his former bandmates. Deep Purple had broken up in 1976 after the tragic death of Blackmore's replacement [Tommy Bolin](#), and they were persuaded to reform in 1984. Blackmore stayed with the band until 1993, but on Bonfire Night in 1989, he met a starry-eyed teenager on a soccer pitch in New York, a girl who was to change his life dramatically and lead to the forging of an entire new genre of music.

The stunningly attractive Candice Isralow was destined for a career in modelling or radio, but instead, she and Ritchie became an item. This must have been a shock to her parents, and any bookmaker would have given long odds against their relationship lasting more than a year or two. Although he was a music legend and obviously wealthy, he had been married and divorced three times. He was also 26 years her senior, and his son Jürgen, who had followed in his footsteps, was seven years older than her.

Nevertheless, Candice went on the road with him as a backing vocalist for Deep Purple. Then, although she had learned piano as a girl, she became his songwriting partner almost by accident, and in 1997 they formed their own band Blackmore's Night which although still playing rock combined it with ancient melodies and their own brand of mystical folk. Their debut album, *Shadow Of The Moon*, was released the same year, beginning their first world tour in Japan on November 2.

After one of the longest engagements in musical history, Blackmore married his Faerie Queen in New York on October 5, 2008. Their daughter Autumn was born May 27, 2010. Their son Rory was born February 7, 2012.

The rest, as they say, is history, but in spite of the ascent of Blackmore's Night, Rainbow is still very much alive. The former now has a substantial discography, and on March 12, Blackmore's Night released their first album for five years. Blackmore's first two wives were German; he is a fluent German speaker, and his influences include a German traditional band, so it isn't surprising that *Nature's Light* peaked at number 7 on the German official chart. Check out their [official site](#) for that and much more.

Because of the current worldwide lockdown lunacy, music tours have been largely put on hold, but last year Ritchie and Candice performed two *ad hoc* concerts from their home which can be found on YouTube. And next

**month, they will be celebrating her fiftieth birthday, difficult though that is to believe. The portrait in her attic must be in a terrible state.**

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