

Blackmore's Night – All Our Yesterdays (2015)

Written by bluesever

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01. *All of Our Yesterdays* 02. *Allan Yn N Fan* 03. *Darker Shade Of Black* 04. *Long Long Time* 05. *Moonlight Shadow* 06. *I Got You Babe* 07. *The Other Side* 08. *Queen's Lament* 09. *Where Are We Going From Here* 10. *Will O' The Wisp* 11. *Earth, Wind & Sky* 12. *Coming Home*

* Ritchie Blackmore – electric & acoustic guitars, mandola, hurdy gurdy, nickelharpe
* Candice Night - vocals, chanter, cornamuse, shawms, rauschpfeife * Bard David of Larchmont - keyboards * Earl Grey of Chimay - Bass and rhythm guitar * Lady Lynn - harmony vocals, shawm, flute, recorder * Troubadour of Aberdeen - drums

Moody, perfectionist, innovator, demanding, leader and control freak. These are only a few traits that have been attributed to Ritchie Blackmore throughout his career. Even more interestingly, from all the legendary artists he has cooperated with, Candice Night is the one who has lasted the longest. And even though the man-in-black's decision to abandon the realm of rock more than 18 years ago has still left a bitter taste in some of his loyal fans' mouths, there's no denying that there is quality in the folk/renaissance duo's work.

Nevertheless, the aforementioned quality can be found mostly on their early releases and unfortunately *All Our Yesterdays* is not an exception. To begin with, the album follows the pattern of shorter time and fewer tracks that began on 2008's *Secret Voyage*. While this is positive, the fact that 5 out of the 12 tracks are covers, highlights the band's major issue; limited inspiration. Blackmore's Night has always included covers of traditional songs on its albums and even modern adaptations of classic rock songs like "Child in Time" or "Self Portrait", for example. However, they always added something to the original, in terms of arrangement or simply their own interpretation of the song. On their latest release, the band's decision to place three of the covers in a row is weird by itself but even more discouraging is the selection of tracks combined with the fact that Blackmore and Co. adds absolutely nothing substantial to them, apart from a couple of tasteful guitar licks. "I Got You Babe" is even cornier than the original, "Moonlight Shadow" is fine but doesn't deviate from the original, while "Long Long Time" at least explains the slight change in Candice Night's voice. From the very first track, the

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Russian heritage influenced “All Our Yesterdays”, one can listen that the female vocalist sounds raspier on the high notes as if she utilizes a country rock approach rather than the delicate/romantic one she used in the past.

What is more, one of the band's strong points has always been their instrumentals. Out of the three of them, the oddly titled “Darker Shade of Black” (opposed to “A Whiter Shade of Pale”) is the most interesting. Even though it sounds a bit flat for the first 3:20 minutes, the introduction of harpsichord and Blackmore's performance make it one of the standouts of the album. In addition, the traditional “Allan Yn n Fan” brings to mind Fairport Convention while the melancholic “Queen's Lament” is a nice track but slightly incomplete.

Hopefully, all is not lost because the second half of the album is much improved. “The Other Side” and “Will O' the Wisp” are both prime examples of the songs that made Blackmore's Night popular among their fans. Renaissance inspired folk with meticulous instrumentation and attractive guitar playing. In addition, “Earth, Wind and Sky” is a medieval influenced delicate ballad that would have benefitted if Candice had sung in a slightly higher register. However, “Where Are We Going from Here” is the album in a nutshell; an upbeat cover version of their 2003 song from Ghost of a Rose. Even though it's not a bad track by any means, the original had more of a substance as its charm was due to its melancholic nature combined with a much better vocal performance by Night.

Overall, All Our Yesterdays is not a poor experience. It's upbeat with careful arrangements and generally an easy listen. But “easy listening” is not what we've come to expect from Ritchie Blackmore; the fact that the maestro is 70 years old certainly plays a role. But his desire to release new material every 2-3 years has finally caught up with him for good. From guitar hero, he turned into an awesome folk guitarist overnight because he's that good compared to the standard. However, the duo's last release is disappointing not only because it lacks fresh ideas but because Blackmore's playing isn't that interesting anymore. One might wonder, if he did put any effort or if the band is on auto pilot these days... --- manosg, sputnikmusic.com

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