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For nearly two decades, [Rainbow](#) and [Deep Purple](#) legend [Ritchie Blackmore](#) remained severed from the hard rock world -- a world that he helped create with his fiery, riff-based guitar playing and neoclassical leads. But he stepped away from it all in 1997, opting to dedicate his time to playing Renaissance folk music with his wife, Candice Night, under the moniker Blackmore's Night, touring the world and staying at several of the world's finest castles after performing inside their historic walls. Then in 2015 the itch returned as Blackmore announced that he would make his return to rock, resurrecting Rainbow with an entirely new lineup.

Ronnie Romero, Jens Johansson, David Keith and Bob Nouveau now flank the iconic six-stringer and, together, they brought Rainbow back to the stage with an exclusive series of festival performances in 2016, performing material from both the Rainbow and Deep Purple catalogs. The following year, Rainbow delivered three performances in the U.K., which were chronicled in the forthcoming [Memories in Rock II](#) live CD/DVD.

Since the reunion, the band has released "Waiting for a Sign," their first new single since 1996. It has traces of Rainbow's past, aligning more with the enchanting mood of songs like "Temple of the King" than burners like "Kill the King." Romero's resemblance to **Ronnie James Dio** also helps to bridge the past with the present.

It's the past and the present in which our interview with the guitarist is rooted. Blackmore discusses the current incarnation of Rainbow, a phone call with Deep Purple's Ian Gillan, his idea of "fun," his old days as a session guitarist and even names a pair of his favorite castles.

You've mentioned this is the best Rainbow lineup you've had, though you also said any current lineup is your favorite. Is this more of a reflection of where you're at in life - some lesser known musicians and less egos, etc.?

I looked for the best musicians I could find who I also enjoyed as people. I also get a kick out of people being unknown and discovering new talent before the egos set in.

You have a rich history of working with celebrated rock singers, many of them who made their name playing alongside you. Save for Ronnie Romero -- as you've said that the current lineup is the best -- who have you enjoyed working with the most?

The Blackmore's Night set up is what I have been doing for 20 years and I really enjoy doing that. I enjoy working with my wife Candice Night the most. We still have lots of ideas that I enjoy playing. Rainbow is an "on and off" band. Each one of the singers in Rainbow had their distinct qualities so it would be very difficult to say who is favorite.

How did you discover Ronnie Romero? His vocal character is obviously a bit similar to Ronnie James Dio, but he certainly has enough of his own style.

Candice was watching YouTube and asked, "What do you think of this singer?" I listened and it inspired me to revisit the Rainbow band for a few dates. It's not a fixed situation. A Rainbow has many colors, and I just thought some of the fans would like to hear some of the old songs played in venues. We wouldn't be going into the studio.

"Waiting for a Sign" perfectly captures the hallmarks of classic Rainbow on a bit of the gentler, less aggressive side. Are there plans to write more or does the less is more mentality with notes also apply to writing and releasing new music?

To me, less is more has always been more important than racing up and down the fingerboard. I like to move people with emotion, not just with technique.

Ian Gillan told us that you guys have buried the hatchet and are no longer the enemies many perceive you two to be. When was the last time you spoke to him and what was the conversation about?

Last time I spoke to him was regarding boats on the river Thames.

Before forming Deep Purple, you were an in-demand session guitarist. “Satan’s Holiday” with The Lancasters obviously stuck with you for many years - what other favorites (songs or experiences) do you have from this era?

I’d forgotten all about that particular tune that was done with Ken Fowley. I never knew it was called “Satan’s Holiday.” It was done more as a lark than as a serious piece. I can’t even remember who was on the session.

You’ve mentioned that you’re not one who intends to have fun, especially with music, and actively avoid doing so. What puts you at ease and helps you unwind?

I’m always wary of people who use the word “fun” when you're talking about music. Music should be something that moves, stimulates and excites you. “Fun” is a shallow word that has nothing to do with good music. I do have fun now and again by playing “Woolly Bully,” but it's not really on my agenda. I take music kind of seriously. I find relaxing pretty hard to do. Being at home and around my family and animals and going for long walks relaxes me.

After performing at so many castles around the world, which ones have proven to be your favorites?

It varies depending on who the owners are at the time. Sometimes we will stay at great castles with horrible owners. However I would say Schloss Waldeck and Schloss Gothenburg, but there are so many that I like the list would be too long if I went through all of them.

Thanks to Ritchie Blackmore for the interview. Grab your copy of 'Memories in Rock II' [here](#) and follow Rainbow on [Facebook](#) to stay up to date with everything the band is doing.