

CELTIC CROSSINGS

Tryskelon with Victoria Lynn Schultz
Harpspun Productions
 CD #: 86851-1374-2



Probably the best CDs of its kind of the past couple years, *Tryskelon's Celtic Crossings* is an enthralling collection of traditionally-styled pieces that will bring joy to any fan of the harp, flute, or fiddle. With aplomb and talent aplenty, the musical triptych of Victoria Lynn Schultz, Robin Etter, and Daniel Flick craft intricate pieces that transport the listener to a place of harmony and delight.

Appropriately enough, "Travelers' Journey" starts off this sonic odyssey. A reel in the classic vein, its vibrant fiddle melody is a relaxing overture that captures the feel of the CD within a few brief notes. "Heather Dance" adopts a slower tempo, and its sleekly elegant arrangement cuts right to the heart of what one expects from Celtic music.

All but two of the tracks on the CD are original compositions by Victoria Lynn Schultz, but their classic style and the superb performance by all three artists makes it difficult to tell the old from the new. Yet traditional does not have to be synonymous with boring, as "Mackintosh Jig" amply proves. With the fast-paced lilt of its musical forebears, the piece adds a modern air that will keep toes tapping. "Song of the Chanter," one of the two traditional pieces on this album, adapts an ancient melody, but its fast pace keeps it lively and contemporary.

Although most of the tracks are purely instrumental, the two exceptions—"Breath of Angels" and "Cordelia's Eyes"—incorporate sounds from nature and unearthly vocals to convey a sense of wistful longing. Despite

the few instruments that are used on the CD, the sound is never monotonous, revealing nuances in every track and infusing them with a sense of peace and balance. Throughout, the instruments mesh seamlessly together, each picking up the tune and accompaniment at just the right point, and this extraordinary symbiosis between musicians, instruments and melodies heightens one's sense of pleasure that comes from music that not only entertains but moves its audience.

A superb collection of songs, *Celtic Crossings* conveys a timeless spirit of calm and warmth with its melodies and masterful performances.

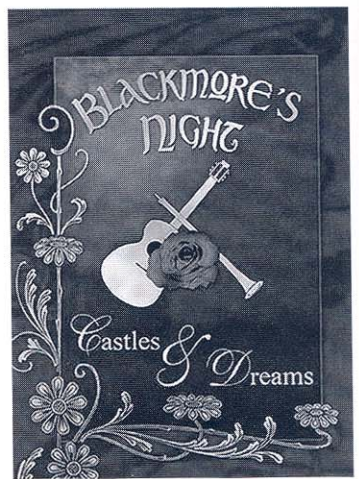
—Richard Mackenzie



**BLACKMORE'S NIGHT'S
 CASTLES & DREAMS
 (2006)**

As the sun sets on the village, the smell of roast boar lingers in the crisp, twilight air. At the local inn, kegs of ale are broken open and everyone's thoughts transform to merriment and whimsy. It is the simple pleasure of enjoying one's self with good food, song, and company. These are the quintessential ingredients to a good time and this is the feeling conveyed by Blackmore's Night's newest DVD, *Castles & Dreams*.

In some regards, it is amazing that such wonderful minstrel and folk music comes from a guitar legend known more for "Smoke on the Water" and raising hell with Deep Purple and Rainbow, than for renditions of "Greensleeves." But that is what makes this two DVD set—and Blackmore's Night's music in general—so special.



Ritchie Blackmore and Candice Night's music is a surprisingly rich tapestry of sound and is reminiscent of the soundscapes created by Clannad, Steeleye Span, Fairport Convention, and even Jethro Tull, but their music subscribes to a uniquely original excellence.

Castles & Dreams is filled with over four hours of live music, interviews, and behind the scenes looks into the lives of Night, Blackmore, and the rest of their Bardic ensemble (Lady Madeline, Lady Nancy, Squire Malcolm of Lumley, Bard David of Larchmont, Tudor Rose, and Sir Robert of Normandy). This DVD is also a multi-language offering, with English concert lyric subtitles and all of Blackmore's Night's best songs. Surprisingly, there is even a cover of Bob Dylan's "The Times They Are a Changin'" and an acoustic version of a Randy Newman song, "I Think it's Going to Rain Today." The best performance, however, is the haunting "Ghost of a Rose."

Castles & Dreams is a must-have for fans of RenFaire music, folk, or folk music, or the hybrid combinations of these genres interspersed with classic rock. It also makes a perfect milestone documentary for the near decade that Blackmore's Night has been together. (Oh, and before your eyes get too blurry from all that mulled wine, see if you can find former Whitesnake vocalist David Coverdale in the audience!)

—Michael Lohr

