

## Interview with *Marillion*

interview by: [Bart Jan van der Vorst](#)

### STEVE HOGARTH



***In recent years the ticket price for concerts has nearly doubled in Holland, whereas the price has remained the same in countries like Belgium or Germany. During the This Strange Engine tour the tickets cost about £12, whereas for last year's tour that price was £22 - in the same venue!. I know you haven't got a lot of influence on this, but what I'm wondering is, does this hefty increase in price mean you are earning nearly twice as much for a gig, or does this money go elsewhere?***

Are you sure? To be honest I don't think we could come to Holland for a £12 price. Maybe it's an exchange-rate thing. (*Unfortunately it isn't --BJ*) All our tour costs are paid by us in pounds sterling. We do earn more money for gigs than we used to. In the past (**Brave** Tour is a good example) we toured for several months and everyone except the band got paid (manager, agent, crew, trucking, bussing, promoters, dry cleaners, cooks, all received thousands of pounds. Me, Steve, Mark Pete and Ian got nothing.) I used to be poorer at the end of a six-month tour because it had cost me so much to live on the road. I was also mentally and physically exhausted. In the mad old days, we could afford to subsidise touring with our record advances etc... Those days are over so we have to make our tours profitable or stay at home. This is why we no longer play in America, and why we have tried and failed to find a way to play Scandinavia for so many years. We have just cancelled a Scandinavian tour last week as we can't afford to lose the money. The increase in ticket prices in Holland hasn't deterred people from coming to our shows - ticket sales were up for the Anoraknophobia tour - so it seems that our Dutch fans think we are worth the money. We're sorry if it seems like we are taking advantage of fans' loyalty, but we

are NOT rich rock stars and touring is very expensive. We could put on a cheap show with only a few lights and compromise on sound equipment, but we won't consider that because we care about the quality of our live shows, and we care about our audience.

***Your promoter in Holland, Mojo, is enjoying a near-monopoly on big acts. However, when bands use a different promoter, prices can drop to nearly half the price. (the recent H-gig was a very good example) If further increases result in fans not being able to afford going to your concerts anymore and thus resulting in declining ticket sales. Would you consider using a different promoter?***

The h gig was promoted by Natasja Gravendaal. She did a fine job and charged me nothing. It was a LOT of work. Promoting a Marillion show, however is not something that can be done by one individual for no fees. You have to remember that we have worked with MOJO all along - it's not like we changed promoters and our ticket price went up.

A monopoly thing isn't a good situation because it can lead ultimately to extortion and I'm sure that's not what MOJO are doing. If the live music market goes that way then the Dutch government should legislate to prevent any monopoly that exists. Our crew usually look forward to the Dutch gigs because they're efficiently run shows in good venues. If there comes a time when we feel that MOJO are making too much money out of you AND us, then we'll find alternative ways of touring in Holland.

I've addressed this ticket price issue before in interviews, and to be honest, I bore myself going on and on about profit, loss, monopolies and earnings. I'm a singer and writer. I've said about as much about this as I can, because I don't have the facts, so I hope it helps. It would be a tragedy for us if a time came when we couldn't tour here. Vredenburg in Utrecht has always been a worldwide band favourite and the show last year was amazing. The other shows were great too. (The Heineken hall was a blast - especially the chaos during the aftershow. It took me an hour to get up the stairs.)

I'd like to thank everyone who dug deep and came to them. I know we weren't cheap, but we had a good time didn't we? :o)

*(I have to make a side-note here. It wasn't really clear from my wording above, but it is not just the price of a Marillion ticket that has exploded in recent years - all concert tickets have - in fact, Marillion is actually one of the cheaper bands! -BJ)*



***I noticed there are no John Helmer compositions on the new album. Is there any particular reason for that?***

No. I think he's been busy doing other things and I wasn't really desperate for lyrics, so I didn't feel the need to hussle him. It doesn't mean an end to John's contribution..

***Ever since '89 you're responsible for the lyrics, with some lyrics by the hand of Helmer. Before you joined the band this used to be Fish. Do none of the other members in the band ever have the desire to write lyrics to songs?***

No one else in the band has expressed a desire to write words, so far. They're welcome to have a go. Mark K contributed that line "You're only happy when you wind me up" to *Quartz*, which is a good line. No one else has shown up at the studio with an entire lyric idea, yet. Obviously, I'm happy to sing someone else's words if they move me in some way - hence the covers at the h gigs. I'm quite choosy though.



***The song Separated Out features fragments of the Tom Browne movie Freaks. Who came up with that idea and is the song based on the movie, or did the lyrics already exist?***

The lyrics already existed. It's loosely about a bad dope-eating experience I had with **How We Live** at Edinburgh Playhouse. We'd had this really long boring drive from Manchester and I'd made the mistake of eating a sizeable chunk of resin at 2.00 in the afternoon. Now the thing about eating that stuff is that nothing happens for two or three hours, so you eat a bit more. By soundcheck I had officially left the planet and by show time at 8.00 that night I had lost my memory completely and didn't know any of the songs. The place was sold out and Colin Woore's mum and dad were in the audience to see him play for the first time in his ten year career - Nightmare, all round really. So the song is based upon that feeling of isolation, terror and generally being at odds with the rest of humanity. I think it was Dave Meegan's idea to incorporate the movie clips.

***So if the song is not based on the film, then how should one interpret the following lyric: "Am I enough of a freak, to be worth paying to see?"***

Well, to some extent, anyone who commands a fee for their presence obviously has something unusual going on.. To be a performer is a freak situation to be in - metaphorically as well as often literally. So I can't help wondering. I occasionally feel like a freak - I suppose everybody does - but am I enough of a freak to be worth paying to see? I suppose that's what this interview is about really, eh?.. we shall see..



***You have (finally) announced a live album of the H-band, however, since that announcement I haven't seen anything else about it. Is there a planned release date yet? And what can we expect to be on it, besides your own compositions off Ice Cream Genius of course.***

Well anyone who saw my outrageously-low-priced gig at the Paradiso will have a good idea what might be on the live CD. It was recorded live at Dingwalls, London in August 2001. I think there's a set list on my [website](#). I will release it hopefully in the Spring i.e. as soon as I can persuade Dave Meegan to mix it!

***And how about a second studio outing as H?***

Well - it's a firm intention. I have been accused of being frightened of writing a follow up! Perhaps I am! The truth is - if anyone can show me when exactly I'm supposed to write all these songs, then I'd be very grateful. I have tried on a number of occasions to pin Richard (Barbieri) and Aziz (Ibrahim) down to some writing time, but they're about as busy as I am with their own music. It shall happen.

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Go to:

- ▶ **Next part: [Full Band](#)**
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- ▶ **Part 2: [Ian Mosley](#)**
- ▶ **Part 3: [Pete Trewavas](#)**
- ▶ **Part 6: [Competition](#)**

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