

COUNTING OUT TIME ...

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= 1994 =

MARILLION - Brave

*Staring out over the bridge
A million photo flashes from the water down below
Dawn light bouncing through the mist
Roar of traffic and the crack of police radios
When they ask her name
Would she please explain
She simply chooses to say ... nothing*

Life after Fish

When frontman Fish left the band in 1988, Marillion stood for the difficult task of finding an equal replacement. During the rest of 1988 and the beginning of 1989 they continued song writing with bass-player Pete Trewavas on vocals, while the lyrics for their new compositions came from writer John Helmer, they even played a few gigs in this four-men line-up. During the writing process they were however also holding auditions for new vocalists (among which were Galahad's Stuart Nicholson and Cyan's Nigel Voyle). Eventually their choice fell on the eccentric Steve Hogarth, a fairly unknown singer / songwriter / keyboard player who had previously played in eighties' bands The Europeans and How We Live. The band had realised that their only way forward without Fish would be with a lead singer who would in no way be trying to copy the two-meters-high Scot. But of course the 5'2" Hogarth was not only chosen for his height; his musical abilities would surely add to the Marillion compositions as well.

The first post-Fish album *Seasons End*, was musically a natural follow up to *Clutching at Straws*, but many fans had to get used to Hogarth's voice, which was entirely different from Fish's. Hogarth hadn't had too much influence on the writing of *Seasons End* as most of the music had already been written before his arrival, and most of the lyrics came from John Helmer. Only three songs were of Hogarth's hand.



The next album, the poppy *Holidays in Eden*, which followed in 1991, was heavily influenced by Hogarth's musical ideas and many fans considered this the biggest let down of Marillion ever. During a concert in Ahoy in Holland a substantial part of the audience even boo-ed when Hogarth announced they would be playing quite a lot from the new album. The

album lacked the complexity of eighties' Marillion music, and the mainly pop-orientated songs were definitely not what the fans felt related to.

Both the band, management and record label EMI realised that they needed to get their act together again and work started on their most pretentious album ever.

Marillouatte - The Brave Recordings

Let's have a chronological look at the development of *Brave*:

Nov. 1992: Marillion starts writing new material in their new Racket Club studio in Aylesbury, a rehearsal studio with just enough room to store the band's equipment. All ideas were recorded to DAT and compiled every week. The first songs the band wrote were *Runaway*, *Living with the Big Lie* (bits of the lyrics could already be detected in the recording of the Caracas concert during the Holidays tour) and *Hard as Love*. After several weeks Steve Hogarth proposes the idea of a concept album based on a news broadcast about a girl found wandering near the Severn Bridge (more about this later). The new songs could easily be fitted into the story.

Early Jan. 1993: At this stage the band already had a hand full of songs written: *Living with the Big Lie*, *Runaway*, *Hard as Love*, *The Hollow Man*, *Lap of Luxury*, *Falling From the Moon* and *(Tell Me I'm) Mad*.

End of Jan. 1993: Producer Dave Meegan was called in to make sure the recording process would go smoothly. Dave had worked with Marillion before as a tape operator on *Fugazi* had had since then learned the job in the Sarm Studios in London, working with people like Trevor Horn and Steve Lipson on a variety of projects ranging from Yes to Grace Jones and U2 (engineer on [The Joshua Tree](#)).

Steve Rothery: *'Dave had been suggested by our A&R man Nick Mander, with the idea of making an album quickly with the minimum amount of overdubs (little did he know).'*

What the big shots at EMI didn't realise was that Meegan would record every single note the band played and review all the recorded material endlessly in search of "that perfect take". He would then take those different takes he liked best and mold them into one song. Thus Dave recorded tape after tape of rehearsals, jam sessions and demos looking for the 'magic moments'.

Pete Trewavas: *'We would be in the middle of recording a song and he would suddenly play us a version we had done months earlier which we had all forgotten about and suggest a slight change somewhere. It became apparent that Dave was helping us to create the masterpiece that we all felt had been written and should be recorded'.*

In this period the band mainly worked on the rough versions of the new material or jammed away. All of this was taped and Dave spent about two hours every night listening through the tapes and logging them.

Feb. 10th 1993: After an invitation by Miles Copeland (Sting's manager) the band moves their operations to Miles' Chateau Marouatte in France. Steve Hogarth: *'We went there with a truck full of technology and turned the place into a recording studio'.*

Indeed, the old building filled with Renaissance art was transformed into a studio, with the band in the main hall and Dave Meegan and assistant engineer Chris

'Privet' Hedge in the 'royal' bedroom with their two mixing desks, two multi-track recorders and other toys. Communication between the two rooms was done by cameras and monitors.



Two weeks of jamming and rehearsing followed after the band had settled. During one of these jams *The Opium Den* as well as *The Slide* evolved, which first gets the title *The (Sex) Groove Thing*. The title track *Brave* was also written during this period, by Steve Hogarth in his separated round tower, heavily inspired by the medieval surroundings.

Dave: '*I usually spent weekends at Marouatte locked away in my control room editing up the various different takes of the week's work into final masters or else refining the album running order, trying new cross-fades or arrangements.*' Privet and some of the band members often went out into the country to record the weirdest sound effects, some of them even originated in an underground cave, like the big splash at the end of *Paper Lies*, which represents a certain newspaper millionaire falling of a yacht.

April 8th 1993: The band returns to the UK, having only finished about 1/3 of the work ! Steve Rothery: '*The band and Dave had decided that we were in the middle of making a very special album and that it would be ready when it was ready.*'

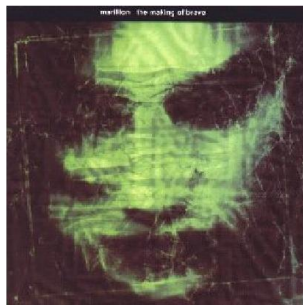
Work continued in the Parr Street studio in Liverpool. The writing of the album and recording of the backing tracks (drums and bass) have been finished in the French castle; *Made Again* was the only song that was fully recorded in Liverpool.

In Liverpool, Steve Hogarth met Tony Halligan, who was invited to play Uilleann Pipes on the title track.

End of May 1993: Dave Meegan's Frankenstein-esque way of working required way more time than planned. The Band realised they would not meet the deadline of end of June. Therefore EMI would not be able to release the CD in September. The release had to be postponed to February 1994.

June 19th 1993: Steve Hogarth and Pete Trewavas attend the Dutch fan club convention of The Web Holland. Among some older songs they play *Hollow Man*, *Bridge*, *Goodbye to All That*, *Runaway* and *Made Again*.

Early August 1993: After four months in Liverpool, the mixing of the album is continued in the Sarm West studio in London.



Early September 1993: The mixing of the album is finished at the Sarm West Studio, London. Almost a year after the first work on the new songs had begun

No less than 13 tapes of music (26 hours of music !) had been filled with jams, rehearsals and various track versions. The total costs for making *Brave* were about 375.000 dollars.

In 1995 Marillion released a fan club CD on Racket Records called *The Making of Brave* (see picture on the left). This double CD didn't only feature the full rough demo version of the album that was put together in France, but also included a disc with numerous fragments of the songs in various stages of development. This wonderful release clearly illustrates how *Brave* developed and features lots of alternative versions and bits and pieces of unused outtakes.

The Album and the Story

On **February 7th 1994** the album that had listened to the working titles *Seven*, *Throwing a Seven*, *The Great Escape* and eventually got the name *Brave* was finally released.

The story of the concept of *Brave* was inspired by a news flash about a girl wandering around the M4 near the Severn Bridge that connects England and Wales. Since she refused to or could not speak the police requested the public to contact them in case they knew who she was. Steve Hogarth worked out a story that explained what drove the girl to the bridge.

Parents identify M4 girl

A MYSTERY girl found wandering near the Severn Bridge yesterday has been reunited with her family.

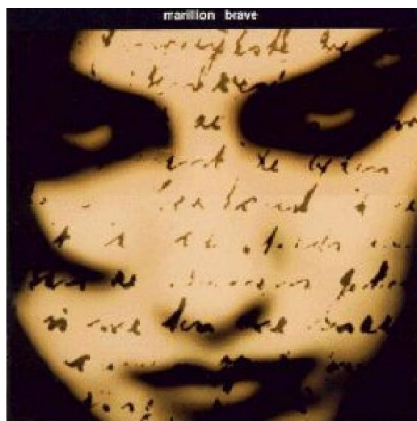
Her parents, from Cradock, have recognised her description after publicity about the girl, whom police thought was deaf without speech because she did not respond to questioning.

A police spokesman said: 'She is not deaf and dumb and she is perfectly sane. She is just a bit depressed.'

He said the parents had identified their 18-year-old daughter at a Bristol hospital. They had requested that her identity was not disclosed.

The album starts with the atmospheric *Bridge*, in which the police pick up the girl on the bridge. What follows is the first flashback. In *Living With The Big Lie* we hear how she is born and gets to deal with all of the strange sensations in her years as an infant and the frustrating experiences with 'the system' as a teenager. *Runaway* tells us how she tries to run away from her parents, of which the father seemingly sexually abuses her. As in the previous song, the anger grows while the song proceeds. Back in the 'here and now' the police is trying to trace her identity in *Goodbye to All That*, which musically follows the melody of the vocal part of *Bridge*. The second flashback tells about her experiences with the use of drugs in *Wave*, *Mad* and the psychedelic *The Opium Den* and *Slide*. In *Standing in the Swings* we're back in the police office where she wonders why they waste their time on her while there's more important things to worry about ('murder on the street'); they're too late to save her anyway.

In the heavy *Hard as Love* we're told about her bad experiences with 'love' from her parents and boyfriend(s). The ballad *The Hollow Man* describes the empty and emotionless state that has resulted from her past experiences. *Alone Again in the Lap of Luxury* tells us more about the situation within her family; the abuse by her father and the ignorance of her mother. Eventually she gives up hope in *Now Wash Your Hands*.



Paper Lies is rather irrelevant to the story and deals with the lies and misinformation in the media. The title track *Brave* is another atmospheric mood piece describing the emotional state of the girl. The story ends with one of the best pieces of music Marillion ever wrote; the three-piece *The Great Escape*. The opening of the song builds on the melody of *Bridge/Goodbye to All That* and tells us how the girl decides to commit suicide. Part two, *Last of You*, is a final statement to her father ('How could you hurt the very one that you should have protected?'). In part three, *Fallin' From The*

Moon, she tries to explain why she wants to commit suicide.

On the album it's not 100% clear if she does or does not commit suicide (in the movie she definitely does). Anyway, the album closes with an unconnected positive song to cheer the listeners of this intensely emotional trip back up again; *Made Again*.

The combination of Marillion's atmospheric, emotional and sometimes extremely powerful music with the touching lyrics by Steve Hogarth and John Helmer results in one of the best concept albums in prog history.

The Cover



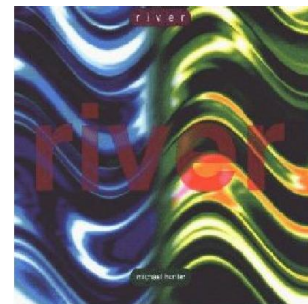
The artwork for the CD was done by the Bill Smith studios. Initially they planned to use the collage on various smaller pictures that ended up on the back of the CD as the cover for *Brave*. Fortunately, this typical bit of 'Smith-ery' did not make it to the front side in the end. Instead a picture of a model was zoomed in and slightly blurred. Scribbled, almost illegible handwriting was laid over this picture, resulting in the very atmospheric cover you'll see on the left.

The source of the scribbled handwriting was unknown to the band, and when they were informed about it after the actual release of the album they decided to keep it quiet for a while. The source was the original diary of Anne Frank (*Het Achterhuis* or *The Attic*). The band did not want people to think that the album had anything to do with Anne Frank or that they had used the horrible experiences of

Anne Frank as a cheap way to create a concept album; something which definitely wasn't the case. The fragment belongs to Anne Frank's writings about July 15th 1944.

The Concerts

For the live performance of *Brave* the band made the wise decision to play the piece in smaller venues that would have the necessary intimate atmosphere. The tour started on February 20th in the UK and ended on September 2nd in Mexico City.



The *Brave* concerts started with a long piece of instrumental music which slowly build in tension and atmosphere while the varilites searched the concert hall. This music featured many samples of previous Marillion albums and was recorded by assistant sound engineer Michael Hunter, whom the band had first met in the Parr Street studio. It was later released as a Racket Record fan club release called *River*. *River* created the perfect ambient atmosphere for the full-length performance of Marillion's masterpiece.

The live performance of *Brave* was a very impressive thing to experience and will probably go down in history as one of Marillion's best live shows (if not *the* best). Three small projection screens set up behind the band showed various slides (album artwork and stills from the movie) that illustrated the story.



In the meantime Steve Hogarth, who came on stage dressed in a sort of priest outfit, slowly transformed into the main character of the story. Among his amazing theatrics were a scene with a bouquet of flowers in *Runaway* while lipstick and eyeliner transformed him into a girl in *Goodbye to All That*. During *Wave/Mad* he pulled the spookiest faces while being lighted from below by a spotlight and reflecting the beam into audience with a small mirror. After putting in ponytails and playing rhythm guitar in *Hard As Love* he was dragged off the stage by two masked man.

During *The Hollow Man* slides of candles and real chandeliers created the right mood on stage. *Paper Lies* featured Steve as a show master in a glittering jacket.



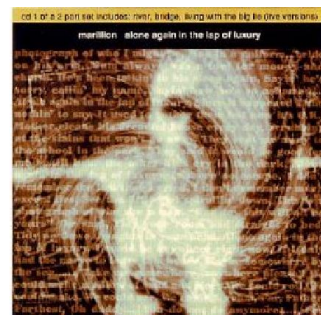
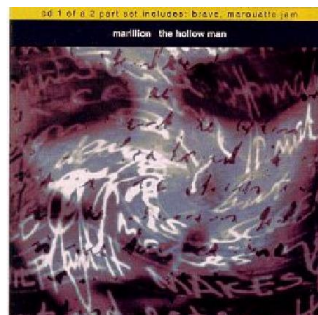
A full recording by Dave Meegan of the performance of *Brave* in Paris on April 29th 1994 was released on the double live CD *Made Again* in 1996. Unfortunately both the film footage that was shot during the Polish concerts and an Argentinean TV broadcast were not considered to have the right quality by the band and were never released. A visual replay of the concert would have made much more of an impression than the note-by-note copy of the studio version on the live CD. Various copies of the video of the Argentinean broadcast of the last Mexican show, featuring one of the most impressive setlists ever, are now popular items in the bootleg circuit.

The Singles

Although *Brave* was considered to be a non-commercial concept album, no less than three singles were drawn from the album. The first one, *The Great Escape* was released on January 10th 1994, a month before the arrival of the album. This would be the most interesting of the three because the single contained a re-recorded, alternative version which did not include the *Falling From the Moon* segment, but did feature an alternative, happy ending. The CD single also included the interesting *Marouatte Jam* that had formed the basis for *The Slide*.

The second single, *The Hollow Man*, was released on March 14th 1994 and included an instrumental orchestral version of *The Great Escape* and a short previously unreleased piece called *Winter Trees*. In the UK a second version of the CD single with *Brave* and *Marouatte Jam* was released as well. Finally, *Alone Again in the Lap of Luxury* was released on April 25th. The cheap trick to release two CD singles (both with live tracks) shortly after each other was tried to get and keep the song in the charts for a while. It failed, and like the other two singles *Alone again ...* flopped (only *The Great Escape* was a very minor hit in Holland).

The video clips for these three singles used footage taken from the movie.



The Movie

When the band proposed to EMI to make *Brave* into a movie their reaction was very positive and they started to search for the right director. Eventually the 27 years old Richard Stanley, director of cult-movie *Hardware*, was chosen to do the job. Stanley was very enthusiastic about the job, especially since he had a schizophrenic friend and therefore was fascinated by Marillion's concept. Marillion did not ask him to make a close visual version of the album but gave him the creative freedom to create his own version, as long as he stayed within the boundaries of the story. As a result the movie version is slightly different and broader than the album version. For instance, the movie version features new characters like a social worker who tries to help her and a psychiatrist. It also features a 'shadow theatre' in the 'dream time' that symbolizes parts of the story. Unlike the album, the movie makes it very clear that the girl (played by Josy Ayers) eventually does commit suicide.

The movie, which had cost 100.000 pounds to produce (an incredibly low budget), was first shown to an audience on the 9th of February at an old EMI production facility. The film missed *Paper Lies, Made Again* and part of *Goodbye to All That*. The movie was an impressive visual adaptation of Marillion's concept and the emotional and sometimes shocking content obviously moved the audience. The only bit of the movie that was rather out of place was *The Hollow Man*, which was more like a regular video with Steve Hogarth miming the lyrics behind a steamy window.

On June 5th the (uncensored) version was shown on RTL Television.

The version of the movie that was eventually released on videotape was slightly different from the one that was shown in February and on a couple of TV stations previously. Some scenes, like a suicide attempt and a drug abuse scene, had to be removed from the movie or were cleverly altered before the British committee gave their approval for release. Mark Kelly: *'Richard Stanley isn't really known for making children's TV'*.

The tape hit the shops on the 6th of February 1995. A year after it's premiere ! Besides the 50-minute interpretation of the story by Stanley the video also contained a 30-minute documentary on the making of *Brave*.

The video closed a chapter in the history of Marillion that had spanned almost two and a half years, from the first writing sessions in November 1992 to the release of the video in Feb. 1995.

In 1998 a remastered version of *Brave* was released. The bonus CD that came with the album featured lots of additional tracks like the orchestral version of *The Great Escape*, *Winter Trees*, *Marouatte Jam*, acoustic versions of *The Hollow Man*, *Runaway* and *Alone Again in the Lap of Luxury*, an instrumental version of *Hard as Love*, the 'happy ending' single version of *The Great Escape* and previously unreleased demo recordings of *Living With the Big Lie*, *Alone Again in the Lap of Luxury* and a track called *Dream Sequence*. The expanded booklet featured all lyrics plus extensive liner notes by Steve Rothery, Steve Hogarth, Pete Trewavas and Dave Meegan.

The lack of success

There is no doubt that *Brave* was much more an artistic than a commercial success. Although it restored faith among the die-hard fans and sales did go up slightly, EMI would rather have seen a second *Kayleigh* and for its follow-up, the much more accessible *Afraid of Sunlight*, EMI didn't seem to have any budget left available at all. This resulted in the obvious decision of the band to leave EMI in favour of a smaller, independent record label.

Unfortunately the chosen label, Castle Records, felt even less need for a promotional budget and relied on the solid sales through the loyal fanbase. The band, disappointed in Castle's way of operating procedures, seems to be trying to get out of their contract as soon as possible, as in recent years they have been releasing a new album each year. Seemingly taking more comfort in speed and quantity, rather than quality. And whether they are doing this because they feel so creative, or because they try to get out of the contract, so far their last three albums have only resulted in a decline in their fanbase, which makes the future of this once great band even grimmer.

Written by [Ed Sander](#) with prologue and epilogue by [Bart Jan van der Vorst](#).

Sources:

Various magazines of The Web Holland.

Liner notes of the remastered version of *Brave*.

Band and live pictures taken from The Web Holland magazines.

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