

10 QUESTIONS *with...*

STEVE HOGARTH (MARILLION)

Marillion are currently causing a stir with a Top 10 placing for their single 'You're Gone' and a world tour underway to promote the new album 'Marbles'.

The band's vocalist, co-songwriter and multi-instrumentalist Steve Hogarth joined the band in 1988 and tells us about his involvement, and his favourite tracks on the latest CD.



1. What are you currently up to?

I'm talking to Simon Lake our truck driver, in the back of a bus in Berlin. Last night, rocks fell on his truck, so he's in mild shock. We're sitting outside the "Columbia Halle" which is where we will play tonight. The sun is shining and it's good to be on tour. The rest of the band are in a hotel across town, but I was bored so I came over here with the crew.

2. What has been the highlight(s) and low point(s) of your career to date?

In career terms, I guess this is a high point right now. We/I have a single in the top ten in England and Holland! Low points are probably too numerous to mention, although I was once nearly murdered by a psychopathic bass player on a ship when I was playing in the band that provided entertainment in the nightclub. There was no doctor on the ship and I almost bled to death. I guess that was an outstanding low point.

3. How did you come to join Marillion and how long was it before you felt fully accepted by the hardcore following?

I joined Marillion after my (then) publisher, Rondor music sent the band a tape of my songs and they liked my words and my music. Believe it or not, I was accepted by the hardcore following almost immediately during the very first tour we made together. The fans made their mind up by the third song in the show each night and nobody has ever really given me a hard time about it, much to my surprise. I STILL get journalists asking me about it though even after 15 years and 9 albums. I guess I always will.



4. What are your influences, and musical preferences?

Beatles, Kinks, The Who, Iggy Pop, David Bowie, Joni Mitchell, Prefab Sprout, Blue Nile, Talk Talk, Glen Campbell, Massive Attack, Rufus Wainright

5. What are your main memories of the album 'Holidays In Eden'

Decadence, I guess. We spent 6 months living in a manor house just outside Brighton. We moved in after Duran Duran moved out. That was just to WRITE it. Then we moved to Hook End Manor - an even more beautiful place just outside Henley-on-Thames - to record it. I remember it was sunny enough to swim outdoors in the pool when we started, and by the time we finished, it was snowing.

6. What are your favourite songs on that album and why?

"Waiting To Happen". I think it's not a bad lyric, and I like the light and shade in it. Naturally, I have a weakness for "Dry Land" also as I co-wrote it with Colin Woore from "How We Live" before I joined Marillion. "This Town and 100 nights" is an interesting lyric although musically, it all sounds a bit dated when I hear it now.



7. Why did the band move away from the commercial sound and almost singles-based structure that's on 'Holidays In Eden'?

"Holidays In Eden" is without doubt the band's most overtly commercial sounding album. This was due largely to the choice of producer Chris Neil, who EMI had suggested. We were initially reticent about using him, but he assured us that he was really excited about producing us as his son was a big fan of the band! I think we were Chris's acid test as we were the first artist he probably EVER produced who didn't have a top 5 single.

After that we figured there was little point in chasing the pop charts, so we reverted to type and created a brooding 70 minute concept album, "Brave", with a producer who is much better suited to our art, Dave Meegan. Dave produced our most recent album "Marbles". It is our nature to react to each album we have made by attempting something very different from it. "Holidays In Eden" was a reaction to previous album "Season's End", just as "Brave" was a reaction to

"Holidays In Eden"

8. Marillion have endured some mixed reviews in recent years - very unfairly in our humble opinion. Did you consciously set out to win back the critics and gain new fans with the new album 'Marbles'? Were there any constraints?

We don't have a manager. We don't have a record company. We don't have to finance a millionaire lifestyle. We are self-sufficient. So we don't have any constraints on our music at all. We write, record and play exactly what excites us and we have no rules. We don't even make this music for our fans. We make it for ourselves.

We have explored prog-rock, latin american rhythms, dub, rap, funk, jazz and rhythm and blues, electronic music and even flirted with arabic and chinese scales in the last four or five albums. We are LONG past caring about the critics.

We have NEVER won an award of any sort anywhere in the world and we have never even been nominated for a Mercury Music prize or an Ivor Novello, so critical acclaim means absolutely nothing to me personally. I can see how it helps as a marketing tool and that's all very well, but I don't need someone else to tell me what is good and what is bad about what I do. I'm hard enough on myself as it is, and as a band we pull no punches in commenting on each other's input.



9. What are your personal favourites on the new album and why?

My favourite songs are probably "The Invisible Man" and "Fantastic Place". I think these two represent two extremes of our writing and yet they are probably the strongest ever examples of each style.

"The Invisible Man" has a "progressive" structure i.e. it's a story, and the music moves forwards without repeating itself for the duration of the song - over 13 minutes!
"Fantastic Place" has a more conventional structure of verses and choruses although is still an unusual arrangement and still lasts 6 minutes although, to me it feels like 3.

The writing process is usually the same. I write words, the band jam, and we try to create accidents which are interesting. The accidents become the songs. Dave Meegan worked with us during the arrangement process (when the song structures are written). Anoraknophobia was written and arranged in this way. The recording process of "Marbles" was similar except that new technology enabled us to take work home and contribute to the album via laptop computers. I recorded some of the lead vocals at home in my kitchen!

10. What next for Marillion, after the world tour?

We're enjoying a resurgence of public awareness of the band at the moment, so it's possible that the tour will be extended. I'm hoping to get into a studio at the end of the year to start work on a new h album with Richard Barbieri, Aziz Ibrahim and Andy Gangadeen. I guess when Marillion finish touring we'll do what we always do - start work on writing something new and as different as possible!

11. What do you and the guys do in your spare time?

Interviews!

12. Message for your fans...

Thanks for supporting us. Thanks for understanding us and for trusting us with your money. Take care and don't lose your last marble.

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