

Steve Hogarth Speaks His Mind

Interview by Martien Koolen
Photographs by Jeroen Bos

After catching them at the Marbles tour last year and the performance at Bospop I am now at the rock temple of The Netherlands to witness the Not Quite Christmas Tour of Marillion. However before the show started I had an extensive interview with the always friendly lead singer of the band.



MARTIEN: So, there will be a new Hogarth solo album soon?

STEVE: Well, there will, yes. I still do not know when. I should imagine it would be ready this year, hopefully. I have just finished working on a new song which turned out great and I am quite tempted to upload it and sell it on line, which is better than sit on it for another year. I am seriously considering doing that, as there will not be an album for a while, so...

You have already planned a solo tour I heard?

Yeah, that is true, in March of this year I am doing a few shows with just the piano and voice. A one man show really, just me by myself, talking, reading from the diary, maybe even singing some stuff. I want it to be one of those things that goes in the direction of that the audience takes it of me, make it something of the moment. I will put together a list of songs that have been important to me through my life, you know, I am being totally selfish you know, it is all about me, when I was born, how I grew up and this is what I was listening to when I was a child, a teenager, etc., you know

So, you will be doing some really old songs as well?

Yeah, you know, songs from my older bands "The Europeans" and "How We Live" and maybe even some covers of songs that were significant in my life and I will explain why they were so important. I will probably read some diary excerpts of interesting days from the band on the road...

The new songs for your solo album will be very different from the Marillion stuff, I presume?

Oh, yeah, I mean, it tends to be more kind of Oriental and Arabic, really. I mean I can play something for you from the laptop if you like?

(Starts up the lap top, but unfortunately the battery is low!!)

Ha ha, anyway, maybe later, oh, well, yeah, it is quite dark and Arabic. I have been working with Ibrahim, he used to be with the Stone Roses, a Manchester boy, but he is a Pakistani boy, that is his culture and he is like the Asian Jimi Hendrix. An amazing guitar player who studied classical Indian music

for the first half of his life and then he switched to rock and roll; which means he can combine those two things without problems. He has fretless guitars and he is quite unique. The drummer I have been working with is Andy Ganggedeen from Massive Attack, so there is that kind of darkness in, even spooky at certain moments.

The lyrics are also dark?

Yeah, I have just written a song about oil, one oilman deserves another and it is about Saddam and George. Lyrically also heavy and no compromises either.

You always seemed interested in politics, so how were your feelings regarding the recent bomb attacks in London?

Well, I was at home and I just watched it on TV, of course it was awful, and you know senseless, in such much as if you target a London bus you are going to murder as many Muslims as Christians, Asians, Europeans, etc... The chances that you are going to murder a couple of Arabs as well is substantial, so there is no logic to it. Whatever these guys are trying to gain, they are not gaining any sympathy with anyone in the entire world. It is not a question of being white, rich or Western, I do not see how you are going to get any sympathy with this, so that is, you know how I felt about it, utterly senseless.

But then at the same time, the loss of life is something you cannot measure, to put it in perspective, there are 50,000 people dying every day in Africa, and nobody mentions that you know. 15 people dying in London and it is all over the world media for months and there are 50,000 people dying every fucking day, that is millions and millions dying for some kind of trade, or some kind of infrastructure for their country!

So, I am, you know involved in the MPH program, purely because of that. If you look at the numbers, they are just obscene, something has got to change and I think that something will change, because once the man in the street has these terrible numbers in his head and he is carrying them around, then suddenly there is an awareness in all the right places. I think then the politicians have to act because they are representing the people at the end of the day. It is so easy to point the finger at the politicians, but they are going to do what the people tell them to do, always. I think when anyone blames the bloody government or the bloody Prime Minister, really that is just an excuse for their own lacking efforts; they should be doing something! Even, if it is just spreading the word, which is basically what I am doing. What I am doing is almost nothing, I am just talking about it and putting it on our website. I will not stand up and make speeches about it....

Which you did however on Bospop this year....

Yeah, you are right, but because I had to, it was the day of Live 8 and it was really important that it was not forgotten. I do not want to bore everybody senseless and start patronizing and starting to tell them what their life should be and what their values ought to be. I know that it is disrespectful, but I am just doing what I can and in whatever way I think is best and sensitive without it being counterproductive.

We are going to make MPH manufacture many thousands of Christmas cards to send to Tony Blair and we are going to hand these out during our London shows. So, anyone who comes to those shows will get a Christmas card to send to Tony Blair, to remind him to keep the promises that he made at the G8 conference and also remind him to keep fair trade at the head office.

Even he is making some very positive statements about this, which is really encouraging. Blair has got himself into a situation where he is going to step down and he does not want to be remembered as that bastard that took us all into Iraq. So, he has got to do something, ha, ha, and he has got to do it quick. It has to be something huge and it has got to be good; so the fact that he is under that pressure to do something good before he steps down is actually a blessing for the world. Much as Iraq was an abomination and an obscenity and a LIE from start to finish, and a lie that is still going on!

For many years to come...

Yeah, you are absolutely right, but I do not know anyone, who believed it, do you?? That is actually quite funny and it is almost like the old communism where you know there would be a party line that obviously nobody bloody believed but everybody kind of told it because they could not oppose it. It went like that, nobody believes any of that bullshit.



At Bospop you played a great gig, but tonight the set list will be different right?

Oh, yeah, much longer of course, 2,5 hours actually. Much more stuff, varied and we are going to introduce some fun to it later in the show.

Maybe something special for the Dutch fans?

Yeah, why not. Last night was a good show in Cologne where a few things happened that were not planned. I think that is what people like best, something unique! Maybe we set fire to the place, whatever, ha ha....Yeah, let's do something memorable!

Will there also be many songs from Marbles on the setlist?

No, there are actually 2 or 3 songs from Marbles in the set. The way we chose this set was: we wrote down a list of everything we composed since I joined the band and you know what, it were a hundred songs! Then each member of the band put a star before the one they like to play and we counted the starts later on and the songs with the most stars got on the set list. Simple, right?

Are there still Marillion songs that you have never played live before?

Yeah, loads, I guess, ha ha... For instance: Walk On Water and At The End Of The Day, there will be a few more...

And from the Fish period?

When we get into that, there are a few of those we never played, Fugazi, Chelsea Monday....

But most of the fans (including yours truly) do not really want to hear songs from the Fish period anymore, or...

Well, I have got to a point right now where I say to the band I do not want to do them, you know. Jesus Christ, we have made nine albums together, so what reason is there to do Fish songs. I found even while listening to Season's End and Holidays In Eden, the first two albums with me, that quite a lot of that on those two sounded terribly dated, so...

Really, I beg to differ.

To me, it sounds a bit you know. When we listened to This Town for instance we thought, my God, we have come a long way since then and then you kind of feel - oh, let's not even bother with that - so, certainly, there really is no reason to go back to those first four albums. I think that if I had been the singer in those days we would probably play one or two, you know. I do not feel the need doing them. I am not saying it will never happen, I just don't think we need to do them at the moment.

Any new songs written already?

We have recorded and mixed five new songs already, but we decided instead of releasing a single in January, or an EP, we thought hard about that and the more we thought about it the more we felt that whatever we do, if it has any success at all, then to not have a new album to follow, it is kind of not a good idea. So, what we decided to do, is even as we have already 5 finished songs, is to put those on a shelf and start recording in 2006 so that by January 2007 the new album will be ready. We are not playing any of the new songs tonight by the way. We have new material, it is strong, it sounds good, good words and really good tunes.

Will it be material like the Marbles album, as that is one of the best albums you have made for a long time.

Do you think so? Thank you for that. Some people said that, but it is hard as an artist, you do your best and hope to feel that people get off on it or see something in it. Sometimes you release an album that you are very proud of and people go: that was just okay and then you do another one and they go berserk, you know. To me, it is like comparing your own children and somebody says: that is the best one! But they are my kids and I cannot choose between them, they are mine, they are my flesh and blood that is what the songs are.

How did it feel to have 2 hit singles?

Ha ha.. It was funny, we laughed and laughed. When the news came through that "You're Gone" had entered the British charts at No 7, and in your country also very high...

Yep, at number two..

Jesus, wow, that was great feeling. It is hard to explain the feeling because it is so incredibly significant and at the same time so utterly meaningless. It is like being given a MTV award, you go we are so proud, but who gives a fuck, you know. What does any of it mean at the end of the day? It was a huge lift, it was great that it happened here in Holland too, because Holland is really OUR country; it is Marillion's place. And it has been, Holland stood by us while other countries had faltered, Holland has always been there. They have not grown out of us, they have decided we are not out of fashion, or that it is not being cool being a Marillion fan, you know, all these things you get in England. To have a lot of airplay here is fantastic and to have a number 2 here is crazy.

I think that you gained quite a lot of new young fans here because of these hit singles.

Do you think so? I mean that is just heavenly news, that is all you ever want, to be reconsidered, to be appraised and be not written off. And as long as young people get into it, then you will not be written off because of this new generation coming along. And they will talk to their friends and the word of mouth thing will go on and so it will spread again to a new generation and that means we can keep doing what we do, which is all we really want to do. Artistically we are completely free, there is no pressure whatsoever from nobody, there is nothing that pollutes what we do. There are no compromises and that sounds a bit pompous but that is just the way it is. We arrived at a place where we are totally free to do what we like and want. And it is still amazing that people keep coming back to our concerts and none of us really knows why. All the shows are sold out!

The trouble with being a musician really is that it cannot be understood; the process cannot be understood. If I was a carpenter and I had been a carpenter for 30 years I would understand everything about carpentry. But with music, how does that work? I have absolutely no idea, I cannot even tell you how to write a song; I really cannot tell you, I do not know how to do it. I obviously seem to do it somehow, but I could not tell you that, I wish I could because that would make my life so much easier, if I knew exactly how to go about it.

We come out this time for the tour and all the concerts are sold out - on the Marbles tour not - and we do not understand why. There may be reasons, but in theory it should be less, but it is more, it is a mystery. We expected less as there was no new record.



Last but not least, could you please comment the following bands/artists.

>>> Radiohead:

uh, briefly, you mean, ha ha... OK Computer was a total masterpiece, extremely creative. I saw them on the OK Computer Tour and I was completely blown away, what a fantastic live band. So, yeah, a great fan, although I do not get their latest album.

>>> Yes

I admire Yes immensely, especially what they did in the beginning. I heard The Yes Album when I was 17 and it completely blew me away, I had never heard anything like that. It came out of nowhere to me as I was listening to the Beatles, The Stones and The Kinks, and then this amazing music, slightly jazzy, totally experimental with this guy with his amazing high voice and the bass guitar sound. They also had a fucking incredible drummer and I was wondering how he did know what he was doing. Bill Bruford was a genius and I have massive respect for Yes.

I sometimes kind of wonder what they have become, because they do not really get on very well as people. There is always the suspicion that when they go out and tour they are just doing it for the money. It begins and ends there, it becomes a kind of what I call "a chicken in the basket" band, you know. Playing their old hits, like Kayleigh, you know we could play that song tonight, but, no, we are not going that road again. I really could not. But, never say never, ha ha. You have to be really desperate to be able to justify doing that. Create something new, please!

>>> Porcupine Tree

Ah, the Porcies. Well, I am very biased about PT because I know them very well. Richard Barbieri has become my brother (I have two sisters) I have never had. Steven Wilson is extremely talented and I respect the band an awful lot. I wish them well.

>>> Marillion

What I think about Marillion... Well, it is the best band in the world and I could leave it at that...

How long will you be going on?

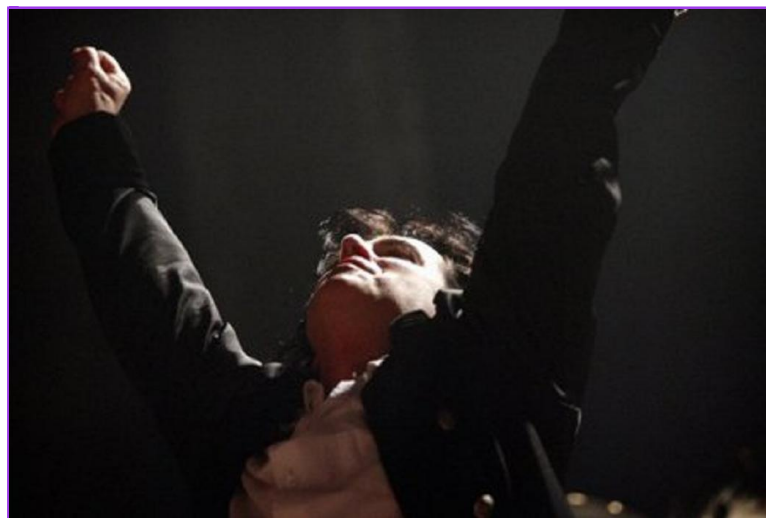
People have asked me that before and my stock answer to that is in ten years time Marillion could have made an Iggy Pop album or written a symphony, because we are creatively totally free. Still new fans will be coming in, provided that we are not stupid and split up over an argument about ice cream, then there is no reason for us to stop. We are not a glamour band, it is not about what we look like, the band never had an image to speak of and so getting old is not really going to affect us in the market. I can see us doing this till we drop down dead on stage or something must change dramatically in the future.

Last words for the Dutch fans.

uh, eat more chocolate, keep the faith, thank you for sticking with us for all these years. We will not let you down if you will not let us down. That's the deal. Always a pleasure to come here. Cheers

Thanks for the interview.

Thank you for your time and effort.



INTERVIEW FOR DPRP BY **MARTIEN KOOLEN**
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TOUR DATES:

Day	Date	City	Venue	Tickets
Fri	24 Feb	Paris, France	Cafe de la Danse	Ticket Net
Sun	26 Feb	Zoetermeer, Netherlands	De Boerderij	SOLD OUT
Mon	27 Feb	London, England	Bush Hall	SOLD OUT
Tue	28 Feb	Birmingham, England	MAC Theatre	SOLD OUT
Wed	1 Mar	Liverpool, England	Cavern Club	SOLD OUT
Thur	2 Mar	Sheffield, UK	The HUBS	+44(0)114 2254142
Sat	4 Mar	Aachen, Germany	Roncalli Grand Cafè	SOLD OUT

NOTE:

These shows are one-man solo performances by Steve Hogarth only.
They are not Marillion or H Band shows.

LINKS:

[The Steve Hogarth Official Website](#)
[The Marillion Official Website](#)
[The Rainbow Room - Europeans Fansite](#)



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