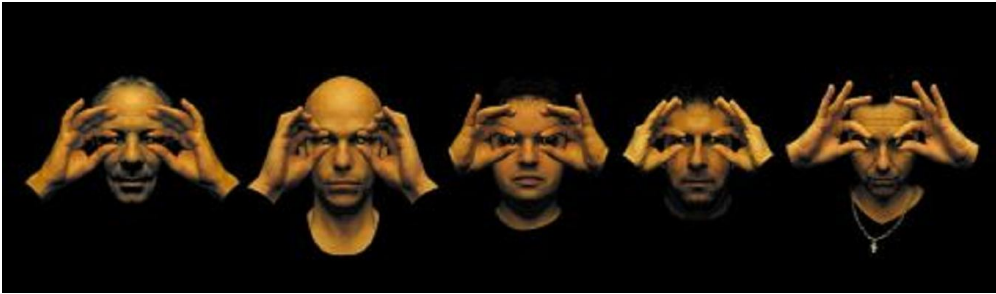


MARILLION

"The positive side of a band collaboration is that there's a lot of talent going into the pot"

(An Interview with Steve Hogarth, April 2004)



www.marillion.com

Hi Steve,

First of all thank you very much for taking time doing this interview. Before we talk about the recent record MARBLES, let's have a look back in time. When you hook up with MARILLION back in 1988, what was the first song you recorded together with the boys?

The King Of Sunset Town

You're married since 1980 and have two children (a girl and a boy). How do you deal with private life as a musician who's "on the road" for a long time?

There is no easy way to cope with this. When we tour we try to do it in 3-4 week sections with a week at home in between. If you don't do that and just go away for months on end, there's not much of a home left when you return. Even so it's difficult to get a marriage to work among a rock n'roll life. For the past two years I have been going to the studio during office hours and coming home each evening, so it's been relatively "normal". Soon we'll tour again and I'll live on the tour bus - I prefer these to hotels - 'keeps me out of harm's way.

On June 9th MARILLION will play in Switzerland (Salzhaus/Winterthur), so what can we expect? Will you guys play a mixed set or the full MARBLES album followed by some of the "greatest hits"?

We're currently planning one hour of "Marbles" followed by one hour of our favourite songs from the past.

On www.marillion.com the band offers a so-called "super ticket" for one Marillion fan to win a ticket for the whole MARBLES tour including travel and hotel. Aren't you scared that probably someone from Australia will win this ticket? ☺

A promise is a promise. It doesn't matter where the winner comes from. They have been chosen and have come from America.

Marillion brought this new idea into the world of music that fans can pre-order the album before it's even written, to create music on your own without being under "pressure" of the music industry. Looks like your fans put a lot of confidence into Marillion.

It all started out in 1997 when our american fans raised 60,000\$ for us to make a club tour in the states. This was the first time we realized just what lengths the fans would go to support us. We started up a web site and decided to create a one-to-one relationship with our fans. It astounds us how much our fans trust us with their money and we're determined not to let them down.

Some years ago you wrote a solo album on your own called ICE CREAM GENIUS. So what do you prefer: Creating music on your own or as part of a band with different influences?

I find it easier to create the solo stuff because I'm my own boss and there's no conflict of ideas and egos. I feel I can just get on with it and paint my own picture without someone else coming along and deciding that brown would be a better colour for the sky - if you know what I mean. When you write with a band, it's a constant conflict because everyone has a vision and everyone has their own perceptions of what is a strong statement. A producer is a crucial element in order to select the best input from each musician. Without Dave, I think the music would be weaker. The positive side of a band collaboration is that there's a lot of talent going into the pot, so there's the potential for something extremely strong to come out of it if it can remain focussed.



Is a follow up to ICE CREAM GENIUS planned in the near future?

They tell me (I'll believe it when I see it!) that I have November and December free this year. If it happens, then I'll go into the studio with Aziz, Richard, and Andy and see if we can jam something amazing together.

I did read a lot of your interviews and it's a fact that you take your time to give in-depth answers without losing your sense of humor. How important are interviews for you?

I do them because they're there. I like talking to people, especially if they ask me intelligent questions, and I'm fortunate that, on the whole, I seem to get interviewed by people who are sympathetic to what we're trying to do. When I was young, I used to dread interviews, but these days I just don't worry. My conscience is totally clear about

the music I make with and outside Marillion so I feel pretty relaxed in any interview situation. If it gets heavy, I can give back as good as I get.

Aren't you tired of answering the same questions again and again?

Sometimes it's frustrating to sit down opposite one journalist after another when they're all asking you the same thing. It would be better to do a 20 minute press conference so that you just answer the obvious questions once, then do a series of 10 minute exclusives where you fill in the gaps with something more imaginative.

So what question people ask you the most?

"Tell me about your new album." This is a nice easy one for journalists who haven't done any preparation. "Is it a concept album?" They always seem to imagine it's going to be.. "How is your relationship with Fish?" How is YOUR relationship with your wife's ex-husband? You haven't seen him for years? No, me neither.

Well, we don't want to waste your time with questions about all the records you did with marillion over the years, so let me just ask you one question to every album since you're in the band.

SEASONS END (1989)

Who's got the idea for the Video of UNINVITED GUEST? And did it take long to make this video?

It was the director's idea. We shot it in a day. I was on the set from 7.00 am til 2.00 am the following morning. When I returned to my London hotel at around 3.00 am, they'd put someone else in my room and I found them sleeping in my bed!

HOLIDAYS IN EDEN (1991)

DRY LAND is a song you already released with HOW WE LIVE. Did you come up with the idea to put it on HOLIDAYS IN EDEN or was it the idea of the other guys?

It was the idea of the producer, Chris Neill. He thought it was a hit single. He hadn't reckoned on the state of radio though..

BRAVE (1994)

Was the idea of doing a movie to BRAVE already in your minds while writing the album?

It might have been at the very back of my mind. I tend to compose songs which make pictures in my head anyway.

AFRAID OF SUNLIGHT (1995)

There's one big epic atmosphere through the whole album (except the uptempo CANNIBAL SURF BABE). Was there a concept behind AFRAID OF SUNLIGHT?

Not really. Many of the songs were related to the idea of the hero self-destructing as a consequence of his/her own success. I was thinking specifically of Elvis, OJ Simpson, Mike Tyson, Curt Cobain, Donald Campbell. Ironically, it would be this album which would eventually be responsible for the return of Donald Campbell's remains from the bottom of lake Coniston. It was also this album which led me to have lunch with Neil Armstrong.. Funny old life.

THIS STRANGE ENGINE (1997)

80 DAYS sounds like you wrote this one on tour. Is it an exception for MARILLION to

write songs while touring, means, are you guys more kind of a "let's write the songs in the studio" band?

I wrote the lyric for 80 Days at the Astoria theatre in London. I was staring down into the street from a dressing room window up high in the building watching the people queuing to get into our gig. No-one seems to write songs about their fans (with the notable exception of George Harrison's "Apple Scruffs") and I wanted to say thanks. We have never written a song on the road - we just don't work well under pressure and we need to take a lot of time, so it's always a studio process.

RADIATION (1998)

With Songs like CATHEDRAL WALL, THESE CHAINS, THREE MINUTE BOY and NOW SHE' LL NEVER NOW this one is one of my favourite MARILLION records. But what the XXX do you guys did with the (average) production of this record? With a better production this one would be a real masterpiece.

I guess you could say it was an experiment that failed from the point of view of the sonics of it. I'm proud of the songs though. The remaster of "Radiation" which was done for the US release, does sound a lot better. Perhaps you could find it on import..

MARILLION.COM (1999)

To be honest, absolutely not my favourite Marillion record. Yours?

Not our best album. Worth the money though for "Go" and "House"

ANORAKNOPHOBIA (2001)

How did you guys came up with the idea to name this record ANORAKNOPHOBIA - any deeper meaning behind this title?

There's a slang word in England "Anorak" which describes someone who is obsessed by some non-mainstream pursuit (trainspotting, archaeology, stamp collecting, steam engines, etc..). If you're an anorak it means you've crossed that line from being an enthusiast to having an obsessive knowledge to the point of being boring. Our fans are often called anoraks by those in the media who wish to be dismissive of them. I think it's good to be an anorak. We're anoraks too. We called the album AnorakNoPhobia as a way of showing solidarity with our hardcore fans who, after all, had financed the record.



So we arrived in the here & now of MARILLION. The new album MARBLES will see the light of day in May. Are you guys still kinda nervous putting out a new record or is it more kind of "same procedure as every year..."?

I'm always nervous about the response from the fans. We don't write and record these albums for anyone other than ourselves. We just create what comes naturally from whichever accidents happen in our minds or in the studio at the time. For this reason we can never design our work and so we don't know what we're creating til it's finished. At the end we cross our fingers and hope that our new stuff is received favourably. You just never know..

In my opinion, MARBLES is not really "easy listening", even for fans. Aren't you scared of getting some bad reviews from music magazines, just because people don't take the time that it deserves to listen to the album?

We've never won an award from the business or the media. We've had great albums given poxy three-star or two-star reviews in Q, so I have little regard for external criticism. The music is what it is. Some people are going to love it and some are going to think it's utter crap. Personally I can only protect my feelings by avoiding all reviews. I don't read any of it.



It's a long road from SEASON'S END to MARBLES. So what's the biggest difference from then to now, regarding to the songwriting?

The honest truth is that the process hasn't changed at all. We wrote them all by jamming in the studio and keeping any good accidents that happened. Then we took the accidents and formed them into arrangements. If I had a lot to say, the songs got longer, and if I didn't, they were usually short. I think the only big difference is that the five of us changed with the passing of time and the new influences coming into our music and our lives.

Since SEASON'S END MARILLION always did some great videos. How important are videos for a band like MARILLION and have you already did a video for the new single YOU'RE GONE? If so, can you tell us something about the video?

We shot it like a live production although it looks quite like a TV studio. The verses are quite ghostly and all about my vocal performance straight to camera, while the choruses are all about light and the band playing. It's simple but I think it suits the song. We wanted to get away from having some airy-fairy pretty girl wandering around in a movie-esque style. We thought we should just keep it real. And we never had time to work out a dance routine..

At the end of our interviews we always have some kind of a game. Now we have a special one for you. I'll give you some words and you tell us what comes to your mind.

Switzerland

Chocolate, Cheese, Gigs that blow down in the storm. Pierre Michel Meier.

"prog rock" and people who call Marillion prog rock

A millstone.

"And if the bottle's no solution - Why does it feel so warm" (a song lyric Steve wrote)

Gosh - is it that time already?

Bootlegs

If music were free, there'd be no music business. Imagine a world without the music business.. Heaven.

Holidays

I have to have them in my head.

Music Star / Pop Idol / World Idol a.s.o.

You can't blame the kids for dreaming. And you can't blame them for wanting a fast-track to success. What I object to is the way those bastards who invented it are being paid tens of millions annually, to generally screw up music, peoples taste, and make good stuff seem so "last year".

Best Of - Compilations

Once upon a time, if you wanted a great song, you had to buy the single or the album it came from. Then one day, a desperate capitalist had the brilliant idea of buying up "catalogue" from people who owned the rights to the songs. NOT the artist, of course - he/she'd already had to sign the rights away in order to make a living. So then the general public got into the idea of buying compilations and then they didn't want the rest of the artists work any more so the artists sold less records and the music business put little clauses in the artists contract saying that their royalties were halved for compilations etc.. etc.. They screw us every way they can and then they don't understand why record sales are in decline.

Well, that's it.. any final words to our readers?

Eat more chocolate and I'll see you down the road...

(Interview by [Ralph Leuenberger](#))

Questions/Thoughts? (or whatever):

[Mail us!](#)

[back to "Interviews"](#)