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Marillion



Steve Hogarth - vocals
Steve Rothery - guitar
Mark Kelly - keyboards
Pete Trewavas - bass
Ian Mosley - drums

In 1997, it looked as if England's MARILLION, who were without a U.S. record deal at the time, would be unable to tour in the States to support its then-current album. But that state of affairs was unacceptable to the band's fanatically devoted and remarkably well-organized network of fans, who took it upon themselves to raise more than \$50,000 in donations over the internet, making it possible for the band to undertake a successful 22-date, tour of North America.

More recently, while mixing its new Velvet album RADIATION in the tiny village of Oswestry, Shropshire on the edge of the Welsh hills, the band decided to play a casual acoustic set in a local restaurant. It didn't take long for word to leak out via the internet, and before the band knew it, fans from as far away as Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Germany, France, Holland, Brazil, Israel, Canada and the U.S. had flown in for the performance.

Such examples of the intense and intimate relationship between Marillion and its listeners are common, and it's not hard to understand why the quintet has inspired such unswerving, deeply-rooted loyalty. The band has spent most of its decade-and-a-half career operating on its own uncompromising terms, consistently defying expectations while ignoring the dictates of popular fashion to create music that's as adventurous as it is expressive.

That sense of iconoclasm is readily apparent on Marillion's tenth album (and second Velvet release), Radiation. The self-produced effort is one of Marillion's most ambitious and personally-charged efforts to date, demonstrating an impressive level of musical invention while maintaining a playfully humanistic energy that belies the fivesome's image as ultra-serious prog-rockers. Indeed, the album is in many ways a landmark for the group, and finds the quintet taking a radically different approach to its songwriting and recording process.

Radiation's memorable new songs like the Beatlesque "These Chains," the uplifting "Cathedral Wall" and the blues-inflected, punningly-titled "Born to Run" compellingly confront issues of personal crisis, changing personal values and the longing for spiritual transcendence. "Now She'll Never Know" hauntingly addresses the specter of personal betrayal, while the cinematic ten-and-a-half-minute "A Few Words for the Dead" is a two-part meditation on the duality of existence. Elsewhere, "Under the Sun" and "Costa Del Slough" draw dark humor from deadly-serious environmental issues, while "Three Minute Boy" takes a ruefully humorous look at the pitfalls of the rock 'n' roll business and the anarchic, punk-folky "The Answering Machine" showcases the band's twistedly humorous surrealist sensibility.

Radiation's American edition also includes alternate versions of two songs from Marillion's previous album *This Strange Engine*, namely an acoustic version of "Estonia" and a radically reworked dance remix of "Memory of Water."

"Every album we've ever done has been a pretty radical reaction to its predecessor," says Steve Hogarth, the band's frontman and lyricist. "But Radiation seems to be a bit more radical than usual. It's a much more electric album, and there was an effort to take some different approaches to the guitar, keyboard and vocal sounds. Some people have been calling this album a complete reinvention of the band, but I think it's just a natural desire inside the band to create something that wasn't a repetition of anything we've done before."

Radiation's exploratory vibe extends to the album's lyrics. "I'd been dealing with a lot of personal pain over the last two or three years, so it's only natural if that comes out in the songs," states Hogarth. "There's definitely a long hard look at life in these songs, and in some ways it's quite a dark and introspective album. But at the same time, I think the overall feeling is of a band having a cracking good time, which is what the vibe was when we were recording it."

That combination of dedication and restlessness has helped to keep Marillion vital since the band's 1983 debut *Script for A Jester's Tear*. That album's complex yet melodically accessible approach stood in marked contrast to the image-obsessed pop then dominating both the American and British music scenes, and the band further raised the musical stakes on the subsequent LPs *Fugazi* and *Misplaced Childhood*.

The latter disc spawned the international hit "Kayleigh," which hit Number Two on the U.K. charts and won the group an expanded following in the U.S. The subsequent *Clutching At Straws*, containing the British Top Ten single "Incommunicado," was similarly successful. But the band surprised its fans by parting ways with original lead singer Fish in 1988.

Marillion again defied expectations the following year, regrouping decisively with new frontman/lyricist Hogarth, formerly of A&M act *The Europeans*. The new lineup made a strong debut with 1989's *Seasons End*, which revealed a fresh new creative chemistry that continued to thrive on the subsequent albums *Holidays In Eden*, *Brave*, *Afraid of Sunlight* and *This Strange Engine*. Those albums found Marillion continuing to stake out new musical vistas while remaining blissfully inunune to transient pop fads-much to the delight of the band's hardcore fans (self-dubbed "The Freaks" after an early song lyric), whose unwavering support has outlasted any number of shifts in musical fashion.

"We like to write music that has a certain level of sophistication and moves around in a more interesting way than music with just three chords," says Hogarth. "But we're not anal

about it, and we don't feel like music has to be complicated. If Marillion is progressive, I'd like to think that we're progressive in the same sense as The Yes Album or Side Two of Abbey Road or Sgt. Pepper or Pet Sounds or Quadrophenia. Those records were making quantum leaps into the unknown, but they also had quality songwriting, which is a combination that we aspire to.

"I don't want to be mindlessly entertained by music," Hogarth continues. "I want something profound, something that resonates with my emotions, something that changes the way I think. And it's good to know that there are other people who share that point of view. I think that part of the reason we have such a dedicated fan base is that they see in us something that's true and honest and from the heart. That's a two-way thing 'cause the people give it back to you. It's very inspiring. We've found ourselves in the middle of something really unique and precious within rock'n'roll."



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