

Interview with h (Steve Hogarth)

Vocals - (Marillion)



Interviewed by Rob Benaquista

Date: March 2007

www.marillion.com

Rob Benaquista: Talk a little bit about the brand new album, "Somewhere Else." What can your fans expect upon hearing it?

h: A more direct-sounding album than previously, with a broad sweep of influences & honestly assembled from naturally occurring new musical accidents and true words & Our fans can expect a peach.

Rob Benaquista: I've noticed that you are not having a big pre-order campaign as you have done with some of your past albums ("Anoraknophobia" and "Marbles" included) and will be having it more normally released. Was there any reason in particular to decide to take this route?

h: Well, we didn't need the money this time so we thought we shouldn't ask the fans to pre-order so far in advance. The recording process was self-financed.

Rob Benaquista: As confirmed on the official **MARILLION** website (marillion.com), the first single that will be released is "See it Like a Baby." Will it be released around the same time in North America as in Europe?

h: We will send it to any radio station in N. America who wants to play it. There will only be "hard" copies of the single released in Europe.

Rob Benaquista: The "**Marbles on the Road**" world tour was one of your biggest tours in the past decade, which even made it onto a DVD release. What are some notable highlights and memories you can think of regarding that tour?

h: It was a great tour. We have the most amazing fans and the atmosphere at each show was always affectionate and very stimulated. I broke a tendon in my little finger during the Turin show in Italy and spent the rest of the tour with my finger in a splint. I think you can see it on the DVD. The tour bus broke down in France and we woke up in a scrap-yard. We later borrowed buses from **SIMPLY RED** and **Rufus Wainwright**. Those are the memories that stick out most.



Rob Benaquista: What are some of your biggest all time influences as a recording artist and musician?

h: Speaking for myself - I'd say **THE BEATLES**, **THE WHO**, **TRAFFIC**, **Joni Mitchell**, **Paul Simon**, **Leonard Cohen**, **PREFAB SPROUT**, **MASSIVE ATTACK**, **TALK TALK**, and **Jeff Buckley**. In my early years as a singer I particularly admired **Peter Gabriel** and **Darryl Hall - Peter (Gabriel)** for his amazing tone, and **Darryl (Hall)** for his tone and technique. These days my favorite singer is **Paul Buchanan** from the **BLUE NILE**. He's got maximum soul, **Jeff Buckley** too. I admire **Ray Charles** as a singer and as a human being.

Rob Benaquista: Your musical direction has, in some ways, shifted greatly since you first joined the band in the late 1980's, yet has also retained the trademark sound that kept **MARILLION** unique from the countless other Progressive Rock bands. What are your thoughts about your subtle, yet effective shifts in sound?

h: They probably feel like bigger shifts to us. We deliberately tried to break out of our own sound in order not to stagnate. We've tried to keep the widdly synth solos to a minimum and concentrated more on subtleties of sounds. **Steve Rothery** has (*I think successfully*) experimented with redefining his guitar sound without ever losing his inspirational spark. We've explored many musical areas over the last 18 years including blues, gospel, soul, Latin-American, eastern, Arabic and even an attempt at dub-reggae. Everything is allowed. It always seems to sound like us though, no matter how far we move. I guess we'd do a techno/trance album if we could. Hang on a minute - we already have.

Rob Benaquista: What's the first thing that comes to mind when discussing the following songs?

"Cannibal Surf Babe"

h: THE BEACH BOYS. "Happy Days". Twin Peaks.

"Berlin"

h: During the Cold War there used to be this "corridor," a long, broken, road that you had to drive along to get to Berlin from West Germany. There was barbed wire, machine gun watchtowers and minefields either side of it. It was very oppressive. I often spare a thought for those who tried to escape into the West and never made it.

"The Party"

h: I played this one at **The Cavern Club** in Liverpool on my piano/voice solo tour last year. The crowd sang nearly all of it including the guitar solo.

"Quartz"

h: A song about two people being unable to exist together, this song contains **MARILLION's** first and only "rap."



Rob Benaquista: Many of the albums during the era in which you were part of **MARILLION** have a common theme or motif running throughout (with "Brave" being a full-blown concept album). Does "**Somewhere Else**" also have a common theme throughout, or is each song designed to be thematically separate from one another?

h: Separate, but I guess the breakdown of my marriage (just before the writing sessions) and, later on, the blossoming of a new relationship with my girlfriend played a major part. Hence "**Somewhere Else**." Also, increased awareness of poverty and injustice in the world following our involvement with "Make Poverty History" and the "One" campaigns. Please check out One.org. Also, the geopolitics of greed and the increasingly urgent issues with the environmental aspects of the planet. Global warming and the rapid erosion of bio-diversity. It's a mad world. We'd better wake up soon&

Rob Benaquista: Each of you has been involved in solo and side projects in recent years. Do you keep your creative ideas for your side projects completely separate, or do some of your ideas carry over into the creative process of **MARILLION's** music?

h: All my words are true and personal things so they tend to come out during whichever project I'm working on. I don't hold anything back from **MARILLION** unless the rest of the band rejects it.

Rob Benaquista: Of all the bands that you have toured with throughout your career, who were you most delighted to share the stage with?

h: We shared a stage with **PORCUPINE TREE** who are good friends and also a very good band. And **DREAM THEATER**. In 1994, we played a gig in Munich called Terminal Eins. The last band to have performed there before us was **NIRVANA**. It had been their last show before (**Kurt**) **Cobain's** suicide. That was an honor, although somewhat spooky.

Rob Benaquista: You've always been successful in reaching out to its audience through its e-bulletins and fan club since the rise of the internet in the 1990's. How do you feel about the overall response and reception from your audience and their support for your recent album and tour campaigns?

h: Our fans are amazing. They have supported us spiritually and financially for such a long time - even buying albums we haven't recorded yet and collecting large amounts of money (\$60,000) so that we could tour the US. We don't take this for granted and we celebrate it occasionally by hiring a holiday camp for the weekend and having a **Marillionfest** with them. People fly in from all over the world for these. The most recent was this year at the beginning of this month. 3000 people attended - many fans made the journey from the USA.

Rob Benaquista: What's currently in your CD player as of now?

h: The Best Of **TALK TALK**.

Rob Benaquista: If you can go back and relive one moment in your career, what would it be? If you can do go back and undo one undesirable event of your career, what would it be?

h: Walking out at the Morumbi Stadium in Sao Paulo to 80,000 Brazilians going nuts in front of us is a moment I'd relive. I'd go back and undo the moment when my first guitar player "Des" contracted leukemia.

Rob Benaquista: Where do you see **MARILLION** within the next 10 years?

h: Now that's just **ASKING** for trouble.

Rob Benaquista: Finally, how would you sum up what you personally feel about the outcome of the new album, "**Somewhere Else**," in one short sentence?

h: The five of us are rarely unanimous, but we're all very pleased with this album. The title song represents all five members of the band at the top of their game at once.

Rob Benaquista: Thank you very, very much for the interview it's been a pleasure. Best of luck on your upcoming tour. Cheers!

h: You're welcome.

