

MARILLION



LOOKING BACK WITH MARILLION

LINDA LABAN TALKS TO STEVE HOGARTH AND STEVE ROTHERY AS MARILLION ISSUE A RETROSPECTIVE ALBUM, "SIX OF ONE, HALF A DOZEN OF THE OTHER"

To mark the tenth anniversary of their signing to EMI, a choice collection of Marillion's singles was released last month under the banner of "Six Of One, Half A Dozen Of The Other". Essentially a retrospective, the fifteen tracks also include two new recordings, "Sympathy" and "Walk On Water".

Marillion's history divides into two distinct periods, of course: the Fish era and the post-Fish years. The departure of their charismatic frontman and lead vocalist nearly four years ago seemed to many observers to spell the death-knell for the band who had outgrown their early 'progressive revivalists' tag. Instead, Marillion weathered the storm very well, and although they've never threatened to become darlings of the critics, they still have a loyal and extensive fan following.

With a retrospective, of course, the band had no choice but to include material by both line-ups, although they're obviously keen to stress the vitality of the current band and its superiority to the original Marillion.

REVEALED

"Six Of One" kicks off with "Cover My Eyes (Pain And Heaven)" from their last album, "Holidays In Eden", which Marillion's present-day vocalist, Steve Hogarth, mysteriously revealed to me is "a song about fear and beauty". We were talking at EMI's London headquarters at the beginning of May, joined by the band's longest serving member, guitarist Steve Rothery. "Cover My Eyes" was more or less written in the studio," Hogarth continued in a less analytical vein. "When we started work on 'Holidays In Eden', producer Chris Neil picked it out as a half-formed idea and we glued all the bits together."

Steve Hogarth joined Marillion in 1989 after the departure of Fish, who had been their frontman since 1981 and had taken them to their glory days of Top 10 singles, and a No. 1 album in 1985 with "Misplaced Childhood". Hogarth had his work cut out following in the footsteps of his predecessor, whose charisma both onstage and off was in many ways a perfect foil for the more subdued band members. But Fish's forceful



personality was also a contributing factor towards their acrimonious split in 1988, which resulted in bitter feelings and a tedious lawsuit with EMI.

Still, Hogarth has stood the test of time, and with their new singer the band have produced two LPs of notable songs which bear all the hallmarks of classic Marillion material — "Holidays In Eden" and "Seasons End", released in September 1989.

The band are adamant that the new collection is not intended as a greatest hits set. As Steve Hogarth puts it, "A hit single would sell more albums and more importantly you get through to a market who wouldn't otherwise know anything about the band. But we're not a singles band. There's no good losing sleep over it."

Marillion have yet to match the success of "Kayleigh", their most successful 45 to date. Featured on this album is the single version which reached No. 2 in Britain in June 1985, and did indeed bring them to the attention of a wider audience. Even America began to sit

up and listen to this so-called prog-rock-revival band.

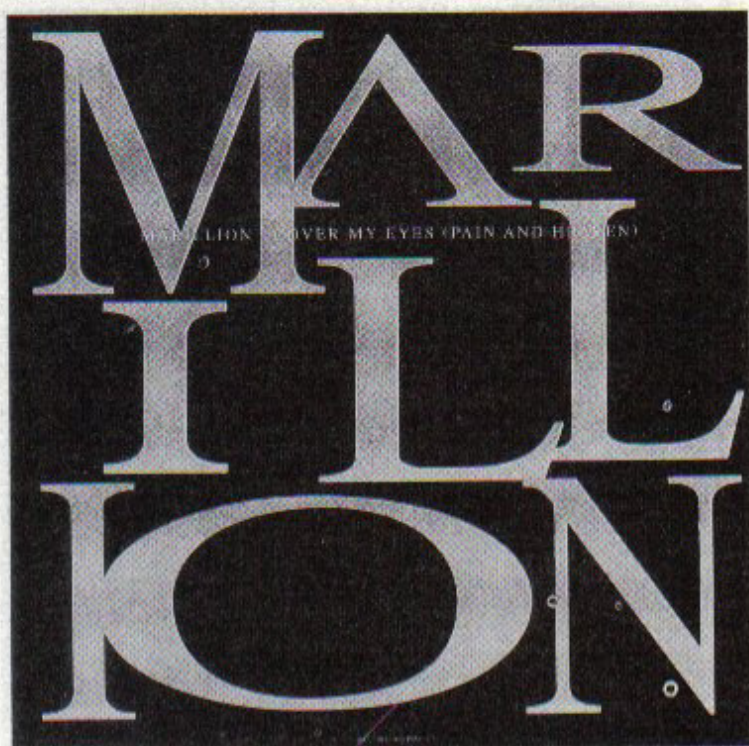
"Kayleigh" came together very quickly," Rothery remembers. "The guitar part I wrote when I was still living in a little cottage with my wife Jo. She asked me how I wrote ideas. I picked up a guitar and showed her how I try to combine melody and rhythm. What came out was the first part of 'Kayleigh'."

SUCCESS

Despite the success of that single, Steve Hogarth didn't become aware of the band's music until much later: "I probably heard 'Kayleigh' on the radio, but it wasn't until I went out and bought 'Clutching At Straws' that I became familiar with them. Earlier on, I had heard about this band who had a bloke who painted his face," he says, describing Fish's more *outré* early performances.

On Marillion's first album in 1983, "Script For A Jester's Tear", Fish wrote a song — "Forgotten Sons" — about the troubles in Northern Ireland. Some years later Steve

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1991's "Cover My Eyes (Pain And Heaven)" came in a 12" edition with a free fold-out poster.

Hogarth would also compose something for the people caught up in that awful tragedy. "I wrote most of 'Easter' before I met the band," he says of their 1989 mini-hit. "I was trying to rewrite the 'Skye Boat Song,'" he smiles, humming that folksong. "I'm not Irish but I had been at college with a guy who had grown up on the Falls Road, and living with him hammered home the reality of the Irish situation. I wanted to write a song for the Irish people, 99% of whom hate the struggle and want nothing to do with it. They are quite happy to live in peace together, and yet there are these terrorists who perpetrate violence, and I sometimes wonder to what extent it's about money rather than freedom. I just wanted to write a song of hope, a little love song for the people who are stuck in the middle of it. It is, after all, real people getting murdered."

On a lighter note, Rothery recalls the argument that the band had with the title of another single included on the album, "Warm Wet Circles", from their last studio LP with Fish, "Clutching At Straws" in June 1987. Some of them were not exactly fond of its sexual connotations.

"When we recorded that song," Rothery smiles, "Chris Kimsey, our producer, was arguing that we couldn't use that title. We were sitting in a bar, and he called the waitress over and said, 'If I said to you, warm, wet circles, what would you think?' She said,



The "Warm Wet Circles" 12" picture disc featured two songs recorded live at Loreley.

"That's disgusting!", and walked off." He shakes his head. "The title stuck, though. It's one of my favourite songs, but I can see Chris's point of view. If it hadn't been called that, it could have been as successful as 'Kayleigh'.

"This version was remixed after we recorded the album. Nick Davis engineered the LP, but we weren't happy with the person who mixed it so we asked Nick to remix it for the single version, adding acoustic guitars and a female backing vocalist."

MALEVOLENT

"Uninvited Guest" from "Season's End" is a brooding, rather malevolent song. Hogarth nods in agreement: "It is sinister. I didn't write the lyrics; they were done by a chap called John Helman. We were working down in Brighton and he would send his lyrics through on a fax machine. When this came, we all liked it immediately. As luck would have it, we had been thrashing around a musical idea which seemed to fit this perfectly, and we married the two. I added a few lyrics afterwards. It's a song about people you don't really want around but it's also about your conscience calling on you."

John Helman also collaborated lyrically on a lot of the "Season's End" album, as well as writing the title track of the follow-up, "Holidays In Eden". "He would send things and I would alter them a bit, which he didn't seem

to mind," says Hogarth, obviously happy with the relationship. "We may collaborate again in the future."

Marillion's second album, "Fugazi", released in March 1984, spawned two hit singles. Featured here is "Assassing", which, Rothery tells me, "was really a lyric about Fish sacking the ex-members of the band. In the song, he is the assassin who comes along and destroys people. It's quite a nasty lyric."

Fish was often perceived in those days as the leader of the band. Not so, says Rothery: "Fish did have a lot of influence, but all the changes that were made in the band were made for the right reasons. Changes had occurred even before Fish had joined. It's necessary for a band to evolve. A band is about chemistry more than about being good musicians. I know some great music made by awful musicians and some bloody awful music made by great musicians."

The first single that featured the assassin's replacement was "Hooks In You". Hogarth remembers his new-kid-on-the-block nerves: "We were all terrified that people would think it was vastly different."

"I thought it was a Marillion rocker," Rothery adds. "Again, it didn't get played enough, otherwise I think it would have crossed over. Simon Mayo, I think, played it, and it got to the mid-20s. It's one of the problems — the prejudice against Marillion. Radio isn't really prepared to give us a chance. Maybe we've been around too long," he sighs.

The band have recently acquired their own 24-track recording studio in Buckinghamshire called "The Racquet Club", and it was there that "Garden Party", from "Script For A Jester's Tear", was remixed by long-standing crew member Privet Hedge especially for the new album.

"It's one of my favourites," Rothery enthuses. "But we thought it would be nice to make it a bit different. There's a limit to how much you can do with what you have on the tape, but we tried to bring out certain elements we hadn't thought of originally. We did that with 'Assassing' as well, which was very successful."

"No One Can", the second single from "Holidays In Eden", Hogarth tells me with a smirk, was written "totally from the heart during a tea-break. We have very long tea-breaks." More seriously, he explains: "I was missing



A shaped picture disc of "Freaks" came with a live version of "Kayleigh" and a card insert.

my loved ones. You're constantly dragged away from people you love when you're in a band, and this song is really about being able to carry someone with you."

Although "Incommunicado" was released as a single, it is the full five-minutes-plus LP version that is featured here. This was the first single from "Clutching At Straws", and Steve Rothery maintains that it is classic Marillion.

Steve Hogarth likes it too: "I think it's one of those songs which works better live in terms of its energy level. It is important to the live set for that reason, to offset the more mellow songs."

NAUSEOUS

"I think here that Fish had realised that success hadn't brought him happiness," says Rothery of the song's deliberately nauseous lyrics. "It's more a disillusionment with success and people always wanting their ten per cent of you."

The last single from "Holidays In Eden" was "Dryland", actually written by Hogarth's previous band How We Live, but released last September before Marillion's last U.K. tour.

Bringing up the rear of the oldies on "Six Of One . . ." is "Lavender", which reached No. 4 in the U.K. charts in August 1985. When it originally appeared on the concept album "Misplaced Childhood", it was only 90 seconds or



The new "Six Of One, Half A Dozen Of The Other" collection includes two new tracks.

so long. But producer Chris Kimsey ingeniously extended it to three-and-a-half minutes, using tape loops, for release as a single.

"Sympathy" is a cover version of a song by British band Rare Bird, who had to release it twice before it finally charted in the U.K., reaching No. 27 in 1970. Combined with a live version of "Kayleigh", it became Marillion's latest single, which was issued on May 11th. The 12" picture disc and CD formats also included a live version of "Dryland".

Noticeably absent from the new album, meanwhile, are "He Knows You Know" (from "Script"), "Punch & Judy" (from "Fugazi"), "Heart Of Lothian" (from "Misplaced Childhood") and "Sugar Mice" (from "Clutching At Straws"), all of which reached the Top 30 in Britain. Steve Rothery feels that "there simply wasn't enough room for everything. Besides, 'Heart Of Lothian' never did work that well as a single, and is rarely performed live these days." One also gets the feeling that the ghost of Fish still hovers over the band, and that they are anxious to keep things as up-to-date as possible, even on a greatest hits set.

On a typically introspective but positive note, Steve Hogarth ended our conversation with a remark about the new track, "Walk On Water". "You know why Jesus Christ could walk on water, don't you?", he asks. "Because he knew he could." Of course!