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MARILLION

A NEW BEGINNING AT THE SEASON'S END

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STEVE 'Clutching At Twigs' HOGARTH of MARILLION: pic Ray Palmer

REKORD 7

K: Kakk! KK: Khronik! KKK: Kapable! KKKK: Kerrackin'!
KKKKK: Kataklysmik!

MARILLION
'Seasons End'
(EMI EMDIOII)
KKKK

'SEASONS END', for Marillion, is the crux of the matter. Steve Hogarth has to work. There's no going sideways or back without opening a credibility gap that probably couldn't be closed.

The tendency to emulate past glories must have been, at times, almost irresistible. Find the first passable Fish soundalike and make like the morning after: pretend it never happened.

But Marillion have proved they have enough courage to lay an

old ghost to rest.

Hogarth is not remotely large, Scottish or introspectively drunk. That's the shadow he has to step out of.

As a result, 'Seasons End' is less personal than any previous album, less bleeding-hearted and biting, but no less thought provoking, or less valid.

As if to reassure their expectant audience, opener 'The King Of Sunset Town' begins with the classically constructed, Marillion patented, Gold album style-intro; choppy rhythms and spirited, uplifting guitar, slowing to allow Hogarth to make his *sotto voce* debut before exploding into the sort of glorious pomp chorus only an extremely accomplished vocalist can handle.

A minute in, and Hogarth has arrived.

He has extensive range, memorable phrasing and power to spare. He may be no Fish, but then Fish is no Steve Hogarth. That's the beauty and the wisdom of the choice Marillion have made.

Marillion still have their penchant for the epic. 'Seasons End' will become a Green anthem with its socks-over-wellies-and-chunky-jumper issues that used to be an easy piss-take until we discovered the size of the hole in the ozone layer and sweated through this unnaturally hot Summer. A widescape slowburner.

'Easter' is a deceptively gentle look at the lyrically well-worn, war-torn province of Northern Ireland; as winsome as 'Forgotten Sons' was barbed, and with a melody lush enough to be Clannad.

'Berlin', though, is a virulent, acid-gobbed march through German no-man's land. Certainly the closest Marillion have ever got to being musically savage, it's rasping enough to render the final, lengthy opera 'The Space' appear as what it is: overworked guff that shouldn't have made it onto an album this good.

As became apparent on 'Clutching At Straws', Marillion are becoming increasingly adept at working within the three-minute formula.

'Hooks In You' is a wicked melody that just won't let go, Steve Rothery enjoying a little light pyrotechnic release in a meaty 45-anthem.

'Uninvited Guest' should end up as one of Marillion's finest, most pithy moments, up there with 'Freaks' and 'Cinderella Search'.

Lyrically it's a slightly sinister, very clever conscience talking to an all too human subject, gaining in power and effect with each chorus.

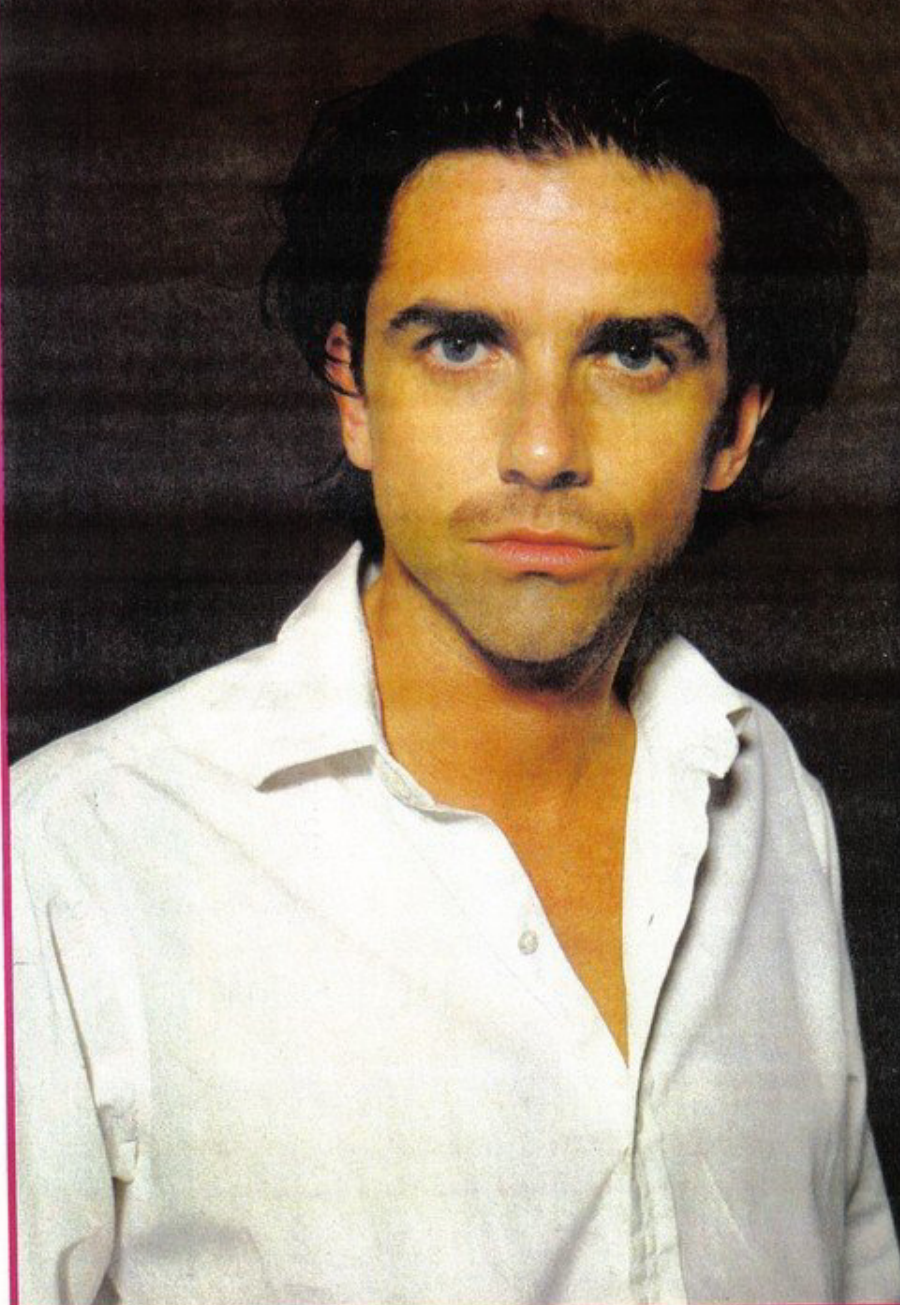
Above all, 'Seasons End' retains Marillion's ability to create albums that although immediate, bite deeper and reveal more with each play.

A legacy of some of the best and most beautiful music can't be rubbed out with bad blood. Marillion have proved that they are more than one man as Fish must prove he's more than one band.

JON HOTTEN

SEASON TICKET

MARILLION'S STEVE HOGARTH: *nowhere is he to be caught Fishing for compliments*



Pic Ray Palmer

PRE-SEASON FRIENDLIES

Next week sees the kick-off of the new MARILLION season when they release their fifth studio album, 'Seasons End', the first to feature new signing STEVE HOGARTH on vocals. We sent along MICK WALL to a pre-'Season...' training session to put Mr H and guitarist STEVE ROTHERY through their paces. At the end of the day, when all was said and done, only the tape recorder was fit enough for extra time...

STEVE ROTHERY puts down his tea cup, folds his hands into his lap and fixes me with a long, steady gaze.

"I don't feel any different from when I started, really," he says, matter-of-factly, mulling the thought over in his mind. "The enthusiasm for playing in a band and making records, that's never faded, I think it's just that you appreciate it a bit more. How lucky you are to be in that position."

"One of the things that happened when we were mixing 'Clutching At Straws', I had a major argument with Fish. I stormed out of the studio and in my mind I'd left the band. I just walked out and got on a train - I think it was Mark's birthday or somebody's birthday - and I just came home."

"I thought, I can't live with this any more. If I've got to go back to nine-to-five, I don't care. It's got to be better than this."

"It's great now that everything is so positive and so enthusiastic again. It just makes you so aware of how lucky you are. Which is one of the things Fish never appreciated, really - how lucky he was to be in a band."

WE ARE hunkered down in a temporarily vacant room at the smart Manchester Square offices of EMI Records in London. It's the last day in August and outside a weak, sticky sun is fighting a losing battle to the clouds.

In an adjoining room sits Steve Hogarth, Marillion's new-kid-in-class lead vocalist (or The Man Who Replaced Fish, to give him his full theatrical title) patiently filling-in a what's-your-favourite-toilet-paper questionnaire for the readers of *Look In* magazine.

Hogarth and I had met for the first time earlier that day when Brian Munns, Head of Press at EMI, treated the two Steves and myself to lunch at Tradewinds, an expensive Chinese number in Baker Street, around the corner from the record company.

I shook hands with Hogarth in a perfunctory, 'Dr Livingstone, I presume' sort of way. Then we stood there grinning inanely at each other, relieved as much as anything to

finally get the introduction out of the way.

After all, I was the man who had written *The Book* (though not the final chapter, as things turned out), waxing lyrical about everything from Aylesbury to Kayleigh, then wagging an accusing finger at the last 'posthumous' live album in the pages of *Kerrang!*

I had swum with the Fish through rough waters and calm - would I now return as friend or foe to the group he had left for dead almost a year ago to the day (and, in particular, to his young, would-be successor)?

As we stood there sizing each other up for the first time, I hoped none of these thoughts were circulating in Hogarth's mind - though I wouldn't have blamed him if they had been.

Over lunch, however, I try to clarify my position: that despite my long-standing association with a certain Scotsman, all that really concerns me right now is the quality of the new Marillion album, 'Seasons End'... not the legal battles between the band and their erstwhile singer (a massive court case is looming to decide who owns the legal rights to the name Marillion); not the bitter animosities that continue to dog both camps, the off and on-the-record finger-pointing and bad-mouthing - all I was truly interested in, at this point, was the music.

Man.

AND WHAT of the music on the new, first-of-the-Hogarth-era Marillion album?

Well, if, like me, you're a Marillion fan from the days when their singer used to paint his face the colours of the rainbow, I don't think you'll be disappointed.

Musically, it's pretty much business as usual: the mature and busy percussion work of Ian Mosely always a delight to hear; Pete Trewavas' supple bass lines underpinning the beat with soft, wooded textures; Mark Kelly's keyboards and synthesizers as pert and delicate as ever; Steve Rothery's aching guitar lines used like brandy to lace the milk of the melodies.

Tracks like 'King Of Sunset Town', 'Uninvited Guest', 'Hooks In You' (the first single) and the title track itself, 'Seasons End', all cover familiar Marillion territory, endlessly refining the

themes that have come to characterize their sound.

'Hooks In You', for example, is a direct descendant of 'Incommunicado', itself a not-so distant relative of 'Market Square Heroes'. While the origins of 'Seasons End' (the track) can be located quite easily in something like 'Warm Wet Circles', some of the less cluttered instrumental passages of 'Misplaced Childhood' or, from the distant past, 'The Web'.

Vocally and lyrically, of course, we find ourselves on new ground. Hogarth's certainly got a voice, smooth as glass and emotive as hell. And, in common with his more famous predecessor, it's a very un-American voice, the vowel sounds are all Queen's English.

But there the comparisons end. Steve Hogarth is no Fish clone. He's no Peter Gabriel nor Phil Collins apologist, either. He doesn't need to be. He's got a voice of his own - and when you listen to it on tracks like 'Easter', 'Seasons End' or 'After Me', you can almost forget that the band ever had another singer...

ALMOST. BUT not quite. Fish is a ghost that will probably take at least another album to lay to rest properly. And maybe not even then...

"Since Fish left, most of the time he never comes into the conversation," Steve Rothery tells me after we return from lunch and I switch the tape-recorder on. "The only times it's happened recently is with the legal situation, which is silly to get into here, but that's the only time his name comes up these days."

The previous weekend, Rothery had celebrated his tenth anniversary as the guitarist in Marillion. The longest serving member of the band, he's also the only one who can say he was there before, during and after Fish...

Maybe that's why, when the Big Fella finally went that-a-way, Rothery says he felt no pain, no panic.

"The biggest feeling I experienced was relief, really," he shrugs. "When Fish left it was like a huge weight being lifted off my shoulders. We realised it was going to take a while to replace him. We thought it might take a year or even two years to find the right

person with the right sort of chemistry."

"But at least we now have the freedom to do anything we want without having to work with somebody we don't seem to have anything in common with any more - not musically, not socially. Nothing."

The arrival of Steve Hogarth at the start of the year, less than four months after the departure of their errant former frontman, was, Rothery admits, "an unexpected piece of good luck."

"His publisher sent us a tape of some of Steve's work with the Europeans and How We Live. It was obvious he was working in a similar musical vein, and his voice seemed really quite distinct, it had character."

"So we invited him down for an audition and everything just clicked over the space of an afternoon's jamming in Pete's garage. The minute Steve started singing, it was like our whole creativity became supercharged again."

"It had that same magic, working together, that we'd had in the early days with Fish, and it was obvious to us all, right from the word go, that this was the guy for the job..."

How much of the new album was actually written before Steve Hogarth was invited to join the band?

"About two-thirds, something like that. Musically, 'King Of Sunset Town', 'Seasons End' and 'Berlin' were pretty much all finished. The first half of 'The Space' and part of 'Uninvited Guest' were written while we were still in Scotland last year trying to make a last-ditch attempt to write with Fish..."

"'Hooks In You' I wrote in Brighton after Steve had joined. That was such a creative time, when we all went down to Brighton to write and rehearse together for the first time. The adrenalin was really going, it was incredible!"

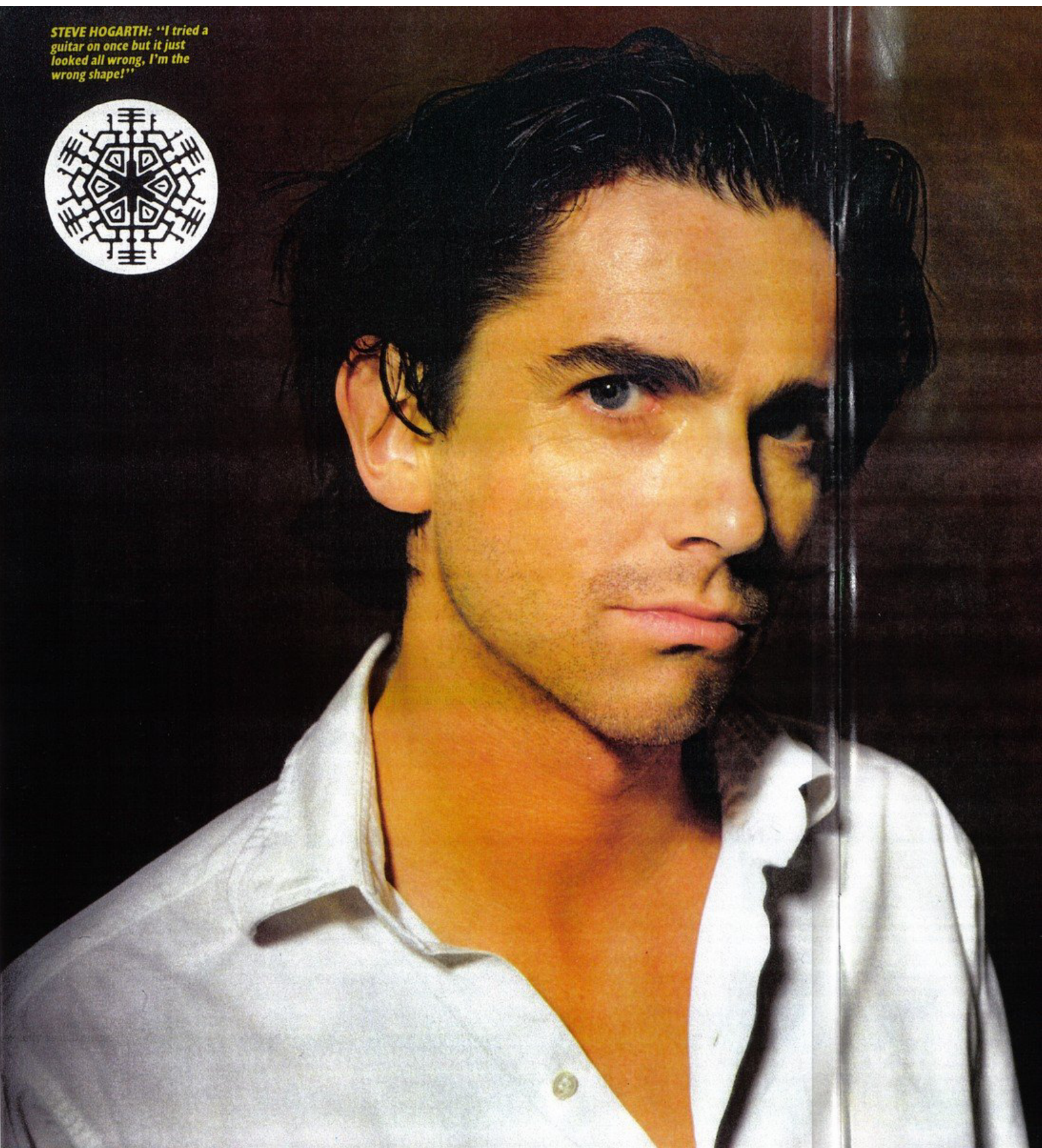
"All the vocal melodies are Steve's. He also wrote all the lyrics to 'Easter', 'Holloway Girls', most of 'Hooks In You', and the rest he adapted from lyrics a guy called John Helmer had written for us before Steve joined."

A FORMER MUSICIAN who never quite found a band that really hit the limelight, these days making his living as a professional songwriter,

MARILLION: "At least we now have the freedom to do anything... without having to work with somebody we don't seem to have anything in common with anymore," says Steve Rothery (far right)



STEVE HOGARTH: "I tried a guitar on once but it just looked all wrong, I'm the wrong shape!"



PRE-SEASON FRIENDLIES

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Helmer had first met up with Rothery in a pub in Hammersmith ("Around the corner from the Odeon") last Winter to discuss ideas for possible future lyrics.

"We had looked into the work of a few different lyricists, including the idea of asking Viv Stanshall (*Former Bonzo Dog Doo Dah Band* mainman and renowned comedic iconoclast) to maybe do some stuff.

"He never actually came up with anything in the end... Charming chap, though. A complete nutter..."

"Out of them all, though, John was the one lyricist who stood out to me because it was so different to the stuff Fish was doing. He had that colourful imagery, but he was a little bit more direct. Good strong imagery, but emotionally very direct."

The first idea Rothery floated past Helmer was to come up with a piece about Berlin, where the band had resided for three uncomfortable months in 1985, during the recording of *'Misplaced Childhood'*.

"I didn't tell him anything about recording *'Misplaced...'*, or anything that happened to us in Berlin," says Rothery, anticipating the next question. "I just said there was a piece of music we'd written that, from my point of view, had been inspired by Berlin. The place has such a strong atmosphere, and I thought it might be nice to do something structured around that."

"John seemed quite intrigued by that and he went away and wrote the initial draft of the Berlin lyric."

Pleased with the results, the band gave Helmer the go-ahead to start grappling with a couple of other ideas they had in mind.

"John would come 'round and Mark and I would chat to him... It's difficult, though, when you're trying to work like that, without music, to just think of an idea you would want a song to be about."

"The only thing we felt really strongly about was the environmental side of things - this was before it got trendy and you started reading about it in the papers so much and seeing it on television."

"This was a year ago, so we said can you do any sort of work in that area, you know? And he went away over Christmas and wrote *'Seasons End'* exactly as it is on the album..."

"It's interesting really, 'cause Steve is such a good lyricist as

well. The styles not only complemented each other, but, where they had to, they merged quite nicely, too."

"The thing is, when Steve joined we told him to make the lyrics his own... We didn't expect him to sing anything he didn't feel comfortable doing, or didn't work for his particular style. On *'Seasons End'* and *'Uninvited Guest'* he more or less left them exactly as John had written them."

"'Hooks...' came with a completed Helmer lyric which Steve eventually just kept the title from, I think. And he changed quite a lot of *'King Of Sunset Town'*, sort of shifted the emphasis of the song. He was very affected by what happened with the Chinese student in Tiananmen Square earlier this year, we all were, so he shifted the emphasis of the song to make it more applicable to that."

"'Berlin' Steve re-wrote quite a lot of, too, again just shifting the emphasis slightly, changing the direction to personalize it more. And of course *'Eater'* and *'Holloway Girls'* were all Steve's lyrics."

"Considering the complications and problems that could have arisen, the whole thing with Steve and John worked out extremely well. It was almost too easy. We're still waiting for something to go wrong..."

STEVE HOGARTH is five-and-a-half feet of energy and bustle. Thin, dark, good-looking, his lank black hair, cut somewhere between Brideshead and Bowie, perpetually falls into his eyes (*This isn't Mills & Boon, get on with it - Ed.*) and he uses his hands a lot when he talks. As he does, he fidgets in his seat and grows animated, as if physically absorbing the bob and sway of the conversation.

"Ask me the time and I'll show you how to mend a watch," he warns as I plonk my tape-recorder onto the arm of his chair for the first time. "I have a tendency to waffle on," he informs me cheerfully. "Standing on the corner, shooting the breeze, it's probably part of my Yorkshire heritage..."

Steve Hogarth was, in fact, born, in 1959, in the small seaside town of Kendal, situated in a part of the country now known as Cumbria. His father's family, however, were all stout Doncaster folk, and before he was two-years-old Steve and his parents moved back to Doncaster.

"My dad was in the Merchant Navy when I was born, he was an engineer. But he came out 'cause of me being around," he

tells me in his soft Yorkshire accent. "So we moved back and he got a job in a factory there. We lived on a council estate nearby."

Enquire about his earliest musical influences and Hogarth just shakes his head and smiles. "Apparently, I was one of those perfectly awful babies that sing in the pram. I could talk before I could walk, and almost as soon as I could talk I started singing..."

Apart from his father who was "not a bad singer, but he would never ever sing if he thought anyone was listening" and a grandmother who "played the most appalling piano," none of the immediate Hogarth family were particularly musical.

"We got our first record player when I was about six or seven. The first things I remember hearing on it were *'She Loves You'* and *'I Wanna Hold You Hand'* by the Beatles, and I fell in love with the whole thing," he says, the hands slicing the air.

"Me and my best friend used to pretend to be Paul McCartney and John Lennon, with tennis rackets for guitars. I was always Paul McCartney..."

By the time he'd reached his adolescence, Hogarth's budding fascination for the music he could hear coming out of his parents' record player and radio had blossomed into a full-time obsession.

"After the Beatles, I got into the Kinks. I remember buying *'Tired Of Waiting For You'* when I was about seven-years-old and just running home and playing it for hours on end."

"I remember doing the same with *'Hole In My Shoe'* by Traffic. It completely blew my mind! I couldn't believe that anyone could make a noise like that. I kept playing it until my dad threatened to murder me if I didn't stop..."

DESPITE A varied and growing record collection, though, the idea of taking his interest a step further and actually learning to play a musical instrument was never high on the teenage Hogarth's list of priorities.

"I tried a guitar on once but it just looked all wrong, I'm the wrong shape!" he says with a smile. "That's why I've never learnt it. I looked in the mirror and it looked so wrong I took it straight off again! That was the end of any pretensions I had to play guitar..."

The turning point, he says, came at a Deep Purple concert at Sheffield City Hall in 1973.

"They were the first band I ever saw live. I just came out of there with my jaw on the floor! I'd never witnessed anything so

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PRE-SEASON FRIENDLIES

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exciting before. Ritchie Blackmore is such a great guitar player, and Jon Lord had such an outrageous organ sound... It was like somebody drilling holes in your head!

"It was around about then that I went from just really loving and enjoying the music to actually wanting to be one of those people on the stage. Suddenly, I couldn't think of anything more exciting than that."

"I went home that night and in three weeks flat I'd managed to nag my parents into 'acquiring' a piano - you can't really look wrong at a piano - and set about trying to learn how to play it."

A friend showed him the basic principle of major and minor chords and Hogarth "just hammered it all out from there on my own. I used to make a hell of a racket... I owe everything to my parents capacity for not strangling me, I think."

Leaving school at 18, Hogarth enrolled into Trent Polytechnic for a four-year sandwich-course in electrical engineering, with the third year spent working, as part of his degree, working for a wire-drawing company in Doncaster.

It was during this year, that Hogarth got into his first band.

"We were called Harlow and we used to play in working men's clubs in Rotherham and places like that," he says. "It was hard work, too. And we didn't make it any easier on ourselves by steadfastly refusing to play covers. It used to get us into all sorts of trouble."

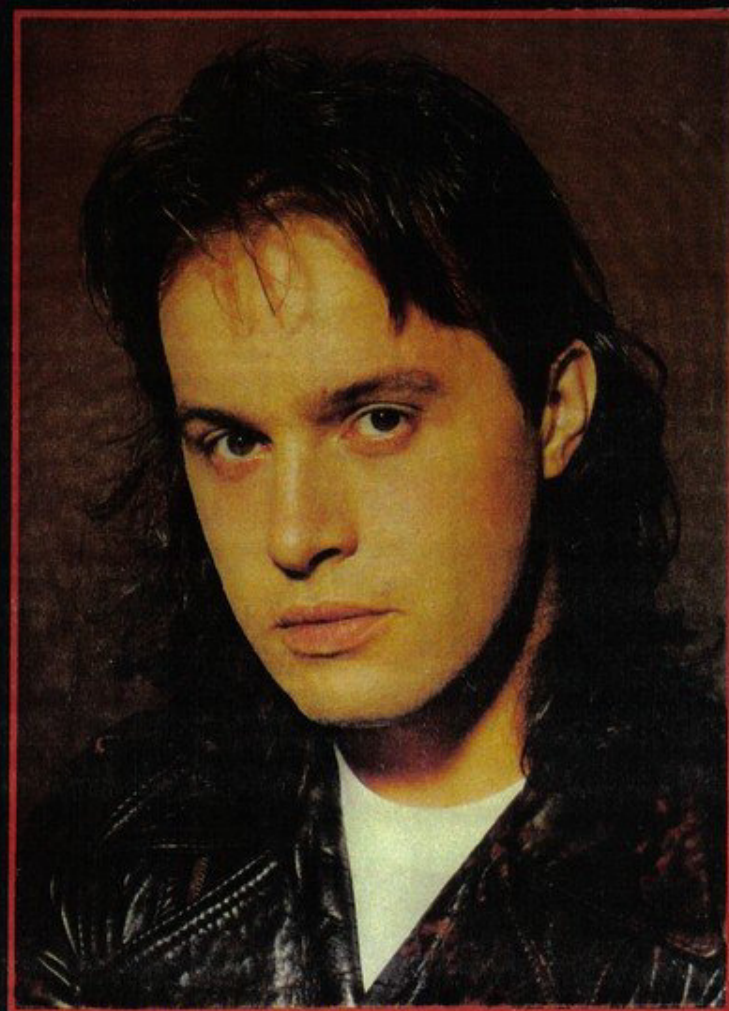
Hogarth recalls one particularly bad night when the band played to a bar room full of fishermen.

"We used to do two sets a night, and in between sets I was in the toilets, and this huge bloke came in and said he would knife me if we didn't do 'Delilah' by Tom Jones in the next set!"

"Next set, first number we do is 'Delilah'. The band had no idea how it went and I only knew the first verse, but it didn't matter. Once we started, all these fishermen just took over and finished the song by themselves..."

HARLOW MET their demise in 1981 after a half-hearted plan to relocate to London had foundered when "the guitar player changed his mind and decided he wanted to stay with his girlfriend".

For Hogarth, though, who had talked his college into allowing him to take a year's



STEVE ROTHERY: "The big challenge is to make every show we do on this first tour with Steve a really special event"

hiatus from his course, it was a different story. He says he couldn't wait to leave.

"The company in Doncaster had offered me a full-time job, and I just thought, if I do this, if I take this job, that's it, you can nail the lid down on my coffin, you know?"

"I'd wangled this year away from college and whatever the others were doing I was going..."

Hogarth moved in with a girlfriend into a flat in Shepperton, just west of London, and began checking the ads pages of the music press. One of the first ads he answered put him in touch with a band called Motion Pictures, later to be known as the Europeans, who were looking for a keyboard player.

"I joined as the keyboard player, then later, when we got into writing together, I began doing the lead vocals on some tracks as well. Usually things I'd written the lyrics for."

"Up till then I was always very shy about singing. I knew I had a voice, I'd started singing in Harlow and really enjoyed it. But it had always been from behind a keyboard. The whole frontman thing, though, was something else. It wasn't really until towards the end of the Europeans that I started getting to grips with that with any real confidence."

Signed to A&M Records in 1981, the Europeans released three albums, 'Vocabulary' (1982), 'Recurring Dreams' (1985), plus a 'Live' collection issued in 1983.

"We were very affected by the fashion of the times," says Hogarth now. "We were very fast, anxious and industrial, if you know what I mean. But by the time of the second studio album, we'd really developed. If we hadn't left A&M when we did, I think we might have done something..."

But leave they did, in 1986, after the MD and most of his A&R staff who had originally signed the band were all 'made redundant'.

"After that, we lost all direction. We fell apart without a deal. Eventually, me and the guitar player split to form a band on our own called How We Live."

How We Live recorded one album, 'Dry Land', released on CBS in 1987. More bad luck with record company hierarchies, however, led to 'Dry Land' being "buried, completely lost in politics and bullshit. It never stood a chance."

THIS TIME last year, Steve Hogarth was seriously considering quitting the music business and "getting a job that

didn't require me to think too much. I thought about being a milkman..."

As we now know, things didn't quite work out like that. Joining Marillion was like "coming in out of the cold," he says.

As for the Marillion album: "I don't know about the rest of the guys but this is definitely the best piece of work I've ever had a hand in."

With the first British tour fast approaching, Hogarth admits that a part of him is "frankly terrified" at the prospect.

"When I joined I wrote a letter in the fan club magazine announcing myself and telling everybody that I wasn't here to impersonate Fish. I was here to be myself. I also said I would be giving 100 per cent to help make this version of Marillion happen for them. And that's basically how I feel."

The new 90-minute set will comprise a half-and-half mixture of old and new material.

Purists can expect to see Hogarth singing 'Kayleigh' ("I don't have a problem with that at all. 'Kayleigh' is a very easy song to feel when you sing it."); 'Lavender', 'Heart Of Lothian' ("Maybe we should ask the Scottish fans what they think through the fan club. If they think it's a graceless thing to do then we won't do it. I am Scottish on my grandfather's side, though!"), plus 'Incommunicado', 'Warm Wet Circles', 'That Time Of The Night', possibly 'Script For A Jester's Tear' ("That was one of the last songs we tried. I still don't know if we'll be able to make it work"), and one or two others you'll just have to wait and find out about for yourselves.

No 'Fugazi', though ("I couldn't cope with it all. I have a problem relating to it. Only Fish can really sing that one properly and make it work."). And no 'Garden Party' ("I don't know about 'Garden Party'. It's difficult for me without impersonating Fish. We do feel obliged to play the songs the fans want to hear from the old days, but one or two of them... Well, one or two of them they'll have to go to see Fish for...").

The last word, for now, is Steve Rothery's...

"The big challenge now is to make every show we do on this first tour with Steve a really special event. Like when a band first starts out and only so many people know about it. And they go along and they think, this is special, and I was there when it started."

"At the end of the day, it's a proper band again and that counts for more than how many records you sell or what size gigs you play - the joy of being a real band again, which it hadn't been for far too long..."

Pic Ray Palmer