



THE WEB UK MAGAZINE

SUMMER 2022

*You never knew power, did you?
y' thought it fizzed
in the overhead lines...*

WEEKEND REPORTS AND MUCH MORE.



Back from our Holidays

As we do the final spit and polish on this issue of the Web Magazine, we're on the verge of Marillion's autumn tour of the UK and mainland Europe, a series of gigs to underline a highly successful year for the band. The emails confirming places for next year's Marillion Weekend in Port Zélande are about to go out to the nervous fans (good luck!) and then Mr h finishes the year with a few dates for his much loved h Natural gigs.

Before any of that, though, it's time for the release of the deluxe version of *Holidays In Eden*. An album that was somewhat divisive on release for being too poppy for some tastes, it's been remixed by Stephen W Taylor and Mr Rothery has stated that the songs have so much more power now that you can hear how they should have sounded. He says we'll be blown away by the new mix. We weren't that unhappy with it as it was, so we're expecting to love hearing a different take on an old favourite. And you know what? No one's nicked the old version from the shelf, so everyone wins!

To celebrate the latest deluxe edition, we're pleased to be able to bring you an article about the lyrics in that album that's so huge the James Webb telescope could see it from the other

side of the universe! Harking back to that period, Mr h also discusses his working relationship with the most excellent John Helmer. We hope it's a great appetiser for *Holidays* landing on your mats.

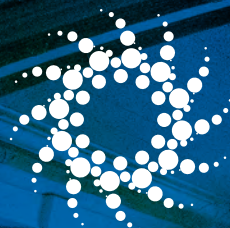
We also have reviews of the Stockholm and Montréal weekends - both marked by some truly magical moments - a piece about Choir Noir, who added the choral elements to the last album and a piece about Bethan Bond, daughter of The Web UK team's Anne and Stuart Bond, and a gifted harpist whose contributions added colour to *An Hour Before It's Dark*.

We really are spoiled sometimes!

See you on the road!

The Web UK

Alan, Anne, Francis, Fraser, Lucy, Malcolm, Pete, Sheelagh and Stuart



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Address for Correspondence:

The Web UK
PO Box 252, Aylesbury
Buckinghamshire HP18 0YS, UK

Email: info@theweb-uk.com

The Internet: For the latest breaking news, tour dates, and release information, visit the official Marillion website: www.marillion.com

You can also visit the Web UK website which contains news and all sorts of interesting stuff: www.theweb-uk.com

Credits

Photos:

Pierre Careau
Barry Crell
Anne-Marie Forker
Alan Jones
Stefan Schultz
Alison Toon

Design:

Francis Donlevy

Every effort has been made to accurately credit photographers. As ever Lucy Jordache, Stephanie Bradley and Mark Kennedy. Thanking you.



PAIN AND HEAVEN

> by Martin Jansen

The Web Holland's Martin Jansen has provided us with insights into Holidays In Eden's lyrics and h and John Helmer's thoughts on working with each other.

If your Marillion journey started before 1989, like ours, you may well recall the times of eagerly awaiting the thud of a thick, heavy, A5 format, new Freaks mag dropping on the door mat. With news about releases, tours, artwork, and, of course, the lyrics. The Dutch fanclub had its own 'Fish lyrics professor', Kees-Jan Backhuys, whose analyses, in his column 'Sleeves & Lyrics', of all the references and layers of meaning in Fish's "scribblings and scratchings" were lapped up greedily by us punters. Or as we were called with a term of endearment, 'text aficionados'. And however far-fetched or tenuous the explanations might sometimes get, they'd always offer a welcome chance to delve deeper into the former frontman's imagination and world of thought, and the richness of Marillion's lyrical canon of that era.

After Fish left in 1988, there was a brief pause in this side to the Marillion experience, as Freaks ended and The Company Fish and the Dutch Marillion Fanclub (as The Web Holland was initially named) were established. But in 1992 we tried to pick up where the illustrious 'KJB' left off and started work on a new column, called 'Textual' - later renamed 'Textures'. Not as academical as its predecessor perhaps, but throughout the years, we think we've been able to turn up and highlight some interesting explanations, background facts and titbits.

On 24 June 1991, *Holidays In Eden* was released in the UK. 2021 marked its 30th anniversary, and on 16 September 2022 its Deluxe Edition was released by Parlophone. Marillion's second album with Steve Hogarth as singer and lyricist left some delighted, some baffled, some disappointed, and some others suddenly interested in a band they'd never thought to give the light of day before.

But no matter how you felt about it at the time, or how you feel about it now you've heard the excellent remix by Steven Taylor on the Deluxe Edition, a fact is still that about half the songs on *Holidays In Eden* remain live favourites, some thirty years on. This article highlights everything we have learnt, over the years - through interviews, through writings by the band, and even through things as seemingly remote as the 2012 London Olympics... about the lyrics on this, in a lot of ways, typical 'second album'.

This is naturally going to be a bit of a flash from the past, so please bear with us. For those among

you who don't (or are too young to) remember: Fish had left for a solo career, taking with him all his lyrical contributions in progress post *Clutching At Straws*. Marillion did have new music and kept on churning out gems during an unprecedented creative spell; they seemed liberated and were on fire! And EMI plus the band's management were looking to prevent the search for a new singer/ frontman from resulting in too big a delay in delivering a new album, which was to build on the successes of *Misplaced Childhood* and *Clutching At Straws*. Plus, what if the new singer didn't write his own lyrics? Because to let Marillion continue as an instrumental band, well...

In 1989 on firstling *Seasons End*, to many people's surprise, along with Steve Hogarth another new name appeared in the Marillion annals. For a moment some thought it might be a practical joke - Helmer, helmsman, although it soon became clear that songwriter/writer/marketing consultant John Helmer actually did exist and had been approached by EMI in 1988 to help maintain songwriting continuity.

When h had arrived to the scene, he turned out to be able to make good use of a number of John's lyrics, along with the words he, fortunately, also produced himself. A new creative duo was born, at least for a few albums.

After that, the information about this 'man of mystery' remained limited to a few little spectacular facts, and attempts to arrange an interview failed. In 1992, after the *Holidays In Eden* tour, though, it seemed high time we had talked to both wordsmiths, and so we did. As the then Dutch Marillion Fanclub, we were able to get in contact with John Helmer through Charisma Music Publishing - to which he had transferred for *Holidays In Eden* after an initial deal with EMI. And so on 4 September 1992, at the Charisma offices in London, I was fortunate enough to have the unique opportunity to be the first person ever to do an interview with John, about his contributions to the *Seasons End* and *Holidays In Eden* albums.

John turned out to be a friendly, intelligent, and perhaps at first seemingly shy man in his thirties,



who clearly enjoyed talking about his work and his ideas. He seemed to have a pretty thematic and craftsman-like way of writing and saw no problem in explaining, sometimes literally, how various parts and phrases in a lyric referred to a theme. Songs like *The Uninvited Guest* and *Berlin* – more about those on the occasion of next year's *Seasons End* Deluxe Edition, of course – but also *Holidays In Eden* revealed true treasure chests.

In the following year, fellow fan and since then friend for life Patrick van der Splinter and I got the chance, also, to talk at length with h about his lyrics up till then for both albums. We interviewed him on 19 June 1993, at the Dutch fan club convention in what was then still Tivoli (Utrecht, Netherlands). And again, over the phone, on 13 July 1993, when the band had gone back to work in Parr Street Studios in Liverpool, to work on what was soon thereafter to become *Brave*.

As it turned out, h felt a little different than John. He didn't really want to explain himself or his lyrics phrase for phrase and word for word; perhaps there is also a little more of him personally in his words. At any rate, he turned out to quite like the idea of everyone being able to still interpret and read their own things into his lyrics. There is absolutely something to be said for that and it didn't result in less interesting interviews in any way. h was actually totally okay with shedding light on some of the sources of inspirations that had led to bits of text, sometimes even to single sentences.

The track-by-track of *Holidays In Eden* below, is a combination of what came out of those interviews, enriched with snippets and explanations that appeared in interviews, in liner notes on albums, on fan forums, Fraser Marshall's Explanations of Song Elements blog, over the years and, lastly, with what was said about the songs in *Pain and Heaven – The Making of Holidays In Eden*, Tim Sidwell's (Toward Infinity) 2022 documentary film which is featured on the *Holidays In Eden* Deluxe Edition Blu-ray.



Steve Rothery: The success of Seasons End was very much that some things were Steve's idea, that we then took and developed, like Easter, or we had the stuff that we'd written before Steve joined, and Steve came and did an amazing job, quite often, of hanging melodies on John Helmer's lyrics or with this existing music. So we knew that worked. But this was something different, this was finding the five together, gelling, and sort of giving each other the space, and the respect that you need to function as a unit, as opposed to the song writer, and the band, playing their songs.

Splintering Heart

On marillion.com, h writes about the opening track: h: The lyric came to me in a flash early in February of 1990. I went for a walk in Toronto. I was on my way to the CN Tower*, the world's tallest structure or something like that, doing the tourist thing, and I wrote it down with a felt pen on a photo wallet that was the only piece of paper available. I was feeling lonely and I could sometimes feel it pricking at me. It's an icy place in February, Toronto, and I was imagining a heart shattering from its own hardness... or coldness. I still like the imagery in the last verse... "a cross for a kiss..." Ain't that the truth?"

(* The CN Tower was the world's tallest free-standing structure for thirty two years until 2007, when it was surpassed by the Burj Khalifa in Dubai, UAE).

h had also been quoted in interviews as saying that the song was about being on tour and leaving 'splinters' everywhere. He got to know new people every day, some a little better than others, but he always had to say goodbye again, too, and he always felt he was leaving a splinter of his heart behind. The first one being at home, obviously – as a side note,

you might say he further developed parts of this notion in later songs like *80 Days* and *The Leavers*.

During our interview with him, he explained, "*Splintering Heart* was about missing someone very deeply; about that sense of your heart literally shattering or fragmenting and these splinters sticking and pricking at you all the time."

In the song's intro, though, a couple of quarrelling voices can be heard. So how did that play into the theme?

h: Oh the big argument: "Shut up!"... (and then in a high-pitched voice,) "Don't touch me!"

That was the receptionist from Westside Studios who screamed that. It was actually Chris Neil, the producer, who was screaming and she was screaming back at him; it was completely his idea to use that in the front, but in a very ghostly way, like a couple of phantoms.

It is in fact very hard to hear them, unless you're listening to the album loud, with headphones on.

h" Yeah, it was meant to be that subtle. The song was much more about being a long way away from someone and missing them very much. "the same sun is shining..." I actually missed a line out of that. I wrote, "The same sun is shining on each half of the world". It was the line that was going to explain all of that a little more, and in the end I decided not to put it in.

Too direct?

h: Well yes, to keep me out of... yes, not to make things too direct."

Out of what? Too direct? "A cross for a kiss", of course, refers to the universal sign for kisses and affection, as used in letters, and notes, and on postcards, even back then and before we were all texting and apping each other with them. But which 'she' needs to learn "to stop dreaming"? h may have explained some of his words, but left plenty of questions, or things to be read into other lines.



What made Chris Neil think of including an argument, for example? Could that refer to the second verse?

"And I'm paying in pain / But it's the cost of the high / Till the weight of the secret / And the weight of the lie / Makes my heart want to burst / Feel the ache as time goes by / Getting better and worse / Getting better and worse". Which secret and which lie are being alluded to here, if the song is about leaving splinters? Secrets and lies that could lead to arguments? Do they perhaps tie in with the next verse?

"And there's a screw that I tighten / As I dream of the kiss / And it twists and it cuts me / And you know what it is? / It's a fragment of love / From a splintering heart / And it tears her apart / But not as much as this".

Two people, sometimes each on another half of the world, both feel lonely at times, and at times it tears each of them apart. Does one of them perhaps have to deal with resisting the temptations of being on the road as well? It may not be his 'other half', who he loves and

misses, that needs to stop dreaming and that gets a cross instead of an actual kiss. "And the same sun is shining / On the old and the young / On the saints and the sinners / On the weak and the strong"; no matter what part of the world you're in, not everyone who is in that position, or who is feeling lonely, is strong, all of the time, and some are just weak. Some are 'saints' and some are 'sinners'. But they all "know what it is" and "know how it is" to leave splinters, "fragments of love".

Cover My Eyes

In the liner notes for the *Six Of One - Half-Dozen Of The Other* compilation album, h writes "The song didn't really exist until just before we commenced recording *Holidays In Eden* in February '91. We had just given Chris (Neil) a cassette of unfinished half-ideas* along with songs that were already complete and he telephoned one night to say that if we were to arrange two of the ideas together, we would have another 'single'.

"When we got together at Nomis to routine the album, we set about with glue and string... Sixties

actress Eleanor Bron inspired the original lyric idea. See if you can spot David Niven." He later added on marillion.com: "Lyrically, it's a fantasy about beautiful women - an intensity of beauty which intimidates and scares. The examples are stolen from movies, art, literature, and pop videos".

(* The verses to the songs came from *Simon's Car*, a song by h's previous band How We Live.)

During our interview with him in 1993, h told us: "I actually wrote a lot of the verse lyric quite some years ago, before virtual reality really existed as a concept. But it's obviously a reference towards machinery and electronics; it was all about the effect that women have on me, really. I mean most of those images, when I wrote them, were almost entirely to do with fantasy or to do with sex, to do with the power of the 'femme fatale', I suppose. I read something that this psychologist wrote, which I thought was very interesting, which is that when a woman goes to bed with a man, up to the moment when she actually goes to bed with him, she

has all the power and beyond the moment that she's gone to bed with him, the following morning, he has all the power (laughs). I thought that was quite interesting, the psychology of that, in explaining, perhaps, a great many women's reluctance to have casual sex with men (laughs)... apart from the obvious risks of going to bed with an axe murderer of course."

ELEANOR BRON

"Where does Eleanor Bron come in... She's one of my favourite actresses, still; she was in a TV series here, called *That was the week that was*, I think, that was running in the sixties with people like – a lot of the sort of cynics – David Frost, and I think Peter Cooke, Dudley Moore, and people like that in it, and she was later in *Help!* by The Beatles. She played the high priestess in that and I had a thing about her. She's in there somewhere anyway, but I can't remember in which line."

We weren't able to further pinpoint her either. Eleanor Bron (born 14 March 1938) is an English stage, film and television actress, and an author. Her film roles include *Ahme* in, indeed, the Beatles musical *Help!* (1965), the Doctor in *Alfie* (1966), Margaret Spencer in *Bedazzled* (1967), and *Hermione Roddick* in *Women In Love* (1969). She has appeared in television series such as *Yes Minister*, *Doctor Who*, and *Absolutely Fabulous*. h wasn't the only English male with 'a thing about her'. In one way the (attractive) 'girl next door', she was regarded by many as a universal beauty, and femme fatale, if you will. H may well have seen her in *Bedazzled*, in which she plays the protagonist's girl of his dreams.

DAVID NIVEN

"There's a movie – I'm going to frustrate you by not being able to remember the title; it's one of my favourite films ever, so it's pathetic that I can't think of the title, but it is very early in the morning for me – that was shot shortly after the war years. I think it may have been funded, actually, by the British government because there'd been a great deal of prejudice and

bitterness left over among the English towards the Americans after the last war, because so many Americans were drafted into England on to military bases here, as part of the war effort. And there was a natural jealousy that came from the British people, because the Americans had so much more money, and had cigarettes, and chewing gum, and hot dogs, and good food, and they had silk stockings. They had access to all these goods that in England at the time were sparse, if not non-existent. And to make matters worse, a great many of them were hunky, good looking guys who went off with the English girls as well.

And it left a lot of bad feeling here, and I think the government part funded the film in order to present Americans (laughs at this choice of words)... give Americans a more sensitive and human kind of face. David Niven is an English pilot who falls in love with an American girl who works on a radio base here in England. Niven is a typically English well-to-do, well-spoken gentleman, who I believe is in a bomber, actually, and he's hit during the war and manages to get home to England. But he's on fire and his aeroplane is badly damaged and in the end he crashes into the sea. On his way down into the sea he makes radio contact with this American girl – she's still talking to him as his aeroplane crashes in the sea - and she's so moved by his cheerfulness and his willingness to chat to her, whilst at the same time probably undergoing the last moments of his life.

There was a movie called *Heaven Can Wait*, with Warren Beatty in it, that is a rip off of this film I'm talking about, which was the original one and a much better film for that matter. Basically, he crashes in the sea but it's foggy and the angels who come for him to take him to heaven can't find him because of the fog. So there's this big scene up in heaven of all this consternation, and this angel whose job it is to go and collect this pilot's soul, who doesn't find him. And consequently he lives and he's washed up on the beach and he

later, by pure chance, meets the girl who he'd been talking to on the radio as he was crashing, and falls in love. And then the angel is sent down to earth to collect him; to say, "There's been a terrible mistake, you should be dead", and he comes down this great big long staircase and takes David Niven back to heaven. But David Niven, when he gets back to heaven, appeals against the judgement and says, "You've made this mistake and now I've fallen in love and you can't do this to me". And they end up having a court, it goes to a trial by a jury up in heaven, to decide whether or not he should be allowed to live.

Anyway, that all ended up as just this one line, "she's like the girl in the movie when the spitfire falls." Now this was 1993, when hardly any of us were familiar with the internet, when Google didn't even exist yet, let alone Search, and the same applied to imdb.com. So we had limited means of finding out which movie h had been talking about. Of course we could check (analogous) sources back then, but perhaps we also trusted each other's memories a little better than we do now. In any case it didn't occur to us to check the Film Encyclopaedia for h's source of inspiration, we transcribed his explanation as it was, and we let it go. It wasn't until the opening ceremony of the 2012 London Olympics, and Danny Boyle's short film for the occasion, that we did find out more. In that short film – coincidentally it also featured an excerpt from Pink Floyd's *Eclipse* and a prominent spot was reserved for Mike Oldfield – there was a film fragment featuring David Niven as a pilot, and actress Kim Hunter as an American radio operator. And in our minds, we could almost hear h chanting, "Pain and heaven!" over it.

The times had changed and after the opening ceremony I thought, "Well, let's Google that...". And wouldn't you know there is a film with David Niven and a Spitfire in it! Known in the UK as *First Of The Few* and in the US as... of course, *Spitfire*. But that movie, from 1942, is about the designer of the Spitfire, R.J. Mitchell. Niven plays

a test pilot, but he doesn't crash over the Channel after a mission, nor does he fall in love with a radio operator. But didn't he also say that he believed it was a bomber and not a Spitfire? And indeed, a further search provided another result, *A Matter Of Life And Death*, from 1946, directed by Michael Powell (also known in the US as *Stairway To Heaven* (films often change names in different markets). This also stars David Niven, as pilot Peter Carter, and there also is Kim Hunter, as radio operator June. It has exactly his story as its plot, and indeed it's not a Spitfire but a Lancaster bomber which crashes.

When asked by Fraser Marshall (from the Explanations of Song Elements blog) on the Marillion On-Line Forum (MOLF), he couldn't explain the mix-up. Oh well, poetic licence is a great thing. And personally, I feel that "like the girl in the movie when the Spitfire falls" has a much better ring to it than "...when the Lancaster falls". Let's be honest, who still knows what a Lancaster was? Spitfire still conjures up an image in a lot more people's minds.

"Like the girl in the novel in the wind on the moors" is no doubt a reference to Catherine Earnshaw in *Wuthering Heights*, Emily Brontë's classic novel of love, hate, passion, revenge, and 'bloody English weather' in Yorkshire. And, of course, the inspiration for Kate Bush's track by the same title. In other interviews with him, 'dream girls' or 'fear of beauty' have also come forward as this lyric's themes.

Perhaps an image springs to mind: women who are so beautiful and so bewitching, but also so unattainable that, in order not to torture yourself, you'd better stop looking at them - "cover my eyes". You can feel extremely attracted to someone, but if you give in to it, sometimes you can only lose - "like the girl in the picture that he couldn't afford" because that person is so unattainable "like the girl on the TV with the red guitar" and "the girl overtaking in the open car". But still, you can't keep your eyes off that person and then there could



be a fear of falling under a spell. Or else it could be the fear of being disappointed or embarrassed if you give in to the attraction - "pain and heaven". "Crimson", in that sense, could be red with excitement or embarrassment and "Halloween white", think of dressing up as a ghost, in a white sheet - might mean white with anguish, fear or nervousness. One thing one moment, another the next - "pain and heaven".

"The meaning of life / a hair falls out of place" is one of the more puzzling lines, although that could be about how, with very beautiful people, even the slightest flaw can have the impact of an earth-shaking event. Trust him, in short, to write a lyric chock full of references to such fatal beauty.

How Can It Hurt (B-side to Cover My Eyes)

He told me what inspired this song, during our interview in 1993:

"That's a song about arguing. I was just refusing to feel guilty for something of which I didn't understand what I'd done. That was just a song that I wrote after I'd had a bit of a row; a collection of words that I wrote down out of frustration with it all and we needed a B-side so I just dug them out and used them."

How can you identify with someone else's pain and problems, or even take their reproaches to heart when, because of grief or anger, they don't express themselves clearly or understandably? If they seem not to be entirely open, or if they even stop communicating, it can be very tempting to just give up. "And I could write you off and it's over with/like a damaged car I can't afford to fix". But still, "everything inside me wants to heal your pain/you won't explain..." And how can I feel your hurt, if you won't explain to me what the problem is?

The Party

On marillion.com, h writes: "I was trying to capture the atmosphere of the first teenage parties I went to up in Yorkshire. I was young and naive and everything about them seemed mystically illicit and dangerous. The man in the off-licence used to let me buy a bottle of cider even though I was only sixteen (and only looked fourteen!) These were my first forays into the wild world of alcohol, girls, dark rooms, joss sticks, patchouli oil and Led Zeppelin. Phew!

One night at Stanbridge's (Stanbridge Farm Studios where the band recorded *Holidays in Eden*) we had a Mexican evening. We all hired ponchos and big hats, blacked out our teeth with wax crayons, ate magic mushrooms and drank tequila. I spent the evening with my hand in a bowl of rice and later, in the garden, I remember watching the moonlight dripping in the trees like the juice of some unearthly tropical citrus fruit. That's where the "succulent light" came from."

In the documentary, h relates: "There was a girl called Janet Jones in my school, and her parents used to go out, and she used to have parties. And so it's my own memory of buying a bottle of cider at the off-licence, and getting on a bus, and going across town, and not really knowing where I was going. And you know, the very first time, when you're a kid, that you're kind of allowed out on your own, and you go and meet up with a lot of other kids and it's all really... it's charged, isn't it, sexually charged and, you know, you're hearing music you've never heard before. Smells of patchouli, and candles, and hearing Led Zeppelin and Yes for the first time, and just thinking, what on earth?! All at once, you know, sensory tsunami of intrigue, excitement, and a little bit of frisson of fear."

On the topic of Yes, in issue 100 of *Prog* magazine, in an article nominating Jon Anderson as his prog icon, h had already explained: "I first heard Yes at a party of

maybe 16 years old. It was a life-changing experience and I later wrote a song about it called *The Party*. During the course of the evening someone put on *The Yes Album*. Until that point I'd been listening to The Beatles, The Stones and The Kinks. But *The Yes Album* changed my whole idea about music. Jon Anderson's amazing vocals and Bill Bruford's amazing random drumming, Chris Squire's grinding bass – everything at once, it was a genuine "What the fuck?" moment!"

During our 1993 interview, h elaborated some more: "A great deal of it is drawn from my own memories of the first party or parties that I went to when I was at school. When I first approached being a grown up person, I suppose, and being allowed to go out on my own at night and start to have a scene and get into discovering drink and sex and substances and... I was trying to capture the feeling of all those things being forbidden and this sense of excitement at dipping your toe into this pool of potential wickedness and dangerousness.

On the one hand the excitement and on the other hand the sense of being out of your depth and wondering whether or not you could deal with it; when all these experiences are new. So it's a song about a loss of virginity, as I've often said before, but it's not necessarily sexual; about doing things for the first time, doing scary things for the first time and wondering if you should, and becoming lost in that. It holds such a lot of powerful memories for me of when I was about sixteen – what kids of that age were doing then was extremely similar to what they're doing now. They would go to nightclubs which were all painted black inside and everybody would wear lots of beads, and patchouli oil, and cheese-cloth shirts, and flared trousers, and they'd lie on the floor in the nightclub and stare at the coloured lights (laughs). I used to go to this club in Doncaster called *The Top Rank* and David Bowie And The Spiders From Mars played there,

and I used to go and see a band called *Be Bop Deluxe* there, that were going around at the time, and there were fairly kind of 'out there' bands happening at the time.

And there's a nightclub here in Liverpool called *The Crazy House*, we went there a couple of times, and to my amazement it's exactly the same as this was, this nightclub that I used to go to in Doncaster something like twenty years ago. It's all turned full circle: the girls are back out on the street in built-up shoes and loon pants again and it's very weird for me, because I remember that all happening the last time. So *The Party* was really about... I just wanted to paint this picture of this young girl getting on a bus across town and going to a place that she'd been invited to by someone at school, only to discover that nobody there, although they were the same people, seemed the same as they were when they were at school. And the excitement of that, thinking, "Wow! This is what life can be like – you don't have to just be at home in front of the TV and go out on picnics with your mum and dad, you can actually get into all this." That freedom to start drinking and sort of interacting with the opposite sex is such a great thing, although it's a very scary thing when you first taste it.

But it's based almost word for word on my own experiences, on things I actually did. I did actually use to buy a bottle of cider and get on a bus and go to parties... most of those things are things I did." "and she could smell the soil and the trees and see the succulent lights from the little fires in his eyes pulling shapes out of the night" We were, of course, also extremely interested in this, frankly, brilliant line, reminiscent of the 'stream of consciousness' style of writers like Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg.

h was more than willing to provide some context: "I actually wrote that line at Stanbridge Farm rehearsal studios; we were writing *Holidays In Eden* at the time, and we had a very strange day and had a big argument in the afternoon. We'd arranged a party ourselves

at Stanbridge Farm, and it was a fancy dress party: we'd arranged a Mexican evening, we'd hired in all these Mexican things and we deliberately hadn't shaved for about three weeks to get ready for it, so that we all looked like outlaws. We'd invited a few people over; in fact we'd invited John Helmer over and he came – and we arranged for the people there to give us Mexican food, and we had lots of bottles of Tequila, and I ended up completely off the planet.

First of all, we were all ready to have this party in the evening, we were working in the studio in the afternoon and had a big argument over something, which upset all of us. And none of us wanted to have a party but we'd already hired all the stuff, and had invited people, and we kind of had to do it. We'd got to that point where it was all arranged, so even although the last thing everyone in the band felt like doing was to have a party, we had one anyway. And we all drank too much because we didn't really feel like we should be doing it anyway, so everybody got completely out of their trees. And it was that night

when at one point I noticed that the light was dripping like kind of a thick juice from the light fittings and I was sitting in the corner, saying, "Look at that, can anybody else see this light dripping?" And they were saying, "Oh dear, he's at it again." And I was saying, "it's succulent, it's like juice, it's like a fruit". And that's where that line came from: the idea of light being almost like thick and juicy. When in certain conditions, light can be like that, but you probably have to eat quite a lot of mushrooms (laughs).

And while I still had a head full of all this light, I went outside into the garden, and it had just rained, and I could smell the soil and the moonlight was coming through the trees at Stanbridge. The line presented itself to me: "pulling shapes out of the night". I could see these shapes being cast as the moonlight came through this tree in the mist, as well. In fact, shortly after I wrote that line I went to bed, and I started to get undressed, I took my shoes and socks off and my left foot turned into a pig. And I sat at the edge of my bed for about an hour, just staring at my

foot, watching it become a pig and then turn back into my foot again and then become a pig again. So I sat up half the night, and once I managed to get my attention away from my foot, I noticed that things were happening to my hands as well, so I sat and looked at my hands for about another hour after that. They weren't turning into things, but they just weren't quite right. I didn't put that in the song though... didn't seem relevant (laughs)."

No One Can

On marillion.com, h writes: "I had written these words standing in a field near to the rehearsal studio in Brighton, one day. I'd been away from home for most of the eighteen months since I joined the band and I was beginning to feel alienated from my wife, and daughter (Sue and Sofie). It was a beautiful day and I had a head full of the natural things all around me and the sense of separation from the people I love most. I imagine it's worse for them than it is for me and these words are an attempt to say, "It's okay, you're with me here..." and to argue against the



myth that to be single is to be free. I remember being single... I don't remember it being great".

In the documentary, he recalls: "I'd written that for my wife. You know, it's just a straight ahead love song. My favourite line in *No One Can* and, interestingly, Tony Smith, who manages Genesis, came down to Hook End while we were there, recording, and he actually pulled that line out, said, "I love that line" – is "There's something of you in everything that I love". That's my favourite line in *No One Can*, really, 'cos I was thinking about my children and our shared memories, all of that. I think if you do love someone, then there is something of them in everything else, isn't there, because that's the prism you start to live through, you know. You share so much, and then if you have children, then they become the physical embodiment of you and that other person."

A Collection (B-side to *No One Can*)

On Marillion.com, h writes: "A song about souvenirs... John Helmer had a friend who was in the habit of photographing his girlfriends at a certain favourite location. Every girlfriend he'd had in his life had been innocently lured to this same spot, unaware that she was to become part of a series of similar snapshots. The photographs were assembled in an album, which he would peruse from time to time in secret. Well, it's not illegal... but it's not entirely wholesome either. John was inspired! He wrote this lyric which explores the desire to capture and to possess someone at a moment in time – to keep them forever."

We'd heard it was about an uncle of John Helmer's, so we asked him about this, too, of course. "Yes. I noticed that he had his favourite views that he'd return to and in the collection of photographs you saw these views and there would be different women, basically in the same place or the same view. And it's something that we tend to do. I'm very interested in the way that people frame their holiday

photographs and also the way that people have wedding videos and things, because it's the most strictly formalized type of fiction there is. I used to work for a wedding photographer and see three weddings every Saturday, that he'd done, and each one had exactly the same form to it. You know, there's the cutting of the cake, the group photograph with the best man and the bride and groom, and then there's the one with the family; exactly the same in every case. People describe the experiences of their lives by the way that they photograph them.

The idea here is that there's the same view with different women put into the frame and it could be interpreted to say something about the way that that person views the women in question, or the way that he views the view. And I crossed that – because you need to push these things to a pathological edge, really, to make them interesting, with John Fowles' *The Collector*; the idea of this rather unhinged person who collects women as if they were butterflies. There's something strange about the way that we use photographs to try and pin down the fleeting moments of our lives, and all completely fail in doing that, just produce something that's an inadequately considered fiction. Our lives are full of these things. Everybody is an artist, a video-artist, a photographer.



The Collector is a 1963 novel about a socially inept man who kidnaps the woman he has fallen in love with, in the belief that if she gets to know him, she will fall in love with him, too. The novel ends with the protagonist planning to kidnap another woman.

There's an interesting paradox in the lyric, in the line "I know a place you can't die, so no one lives inside my collection". Some might think, 'Serial killer?'. What did John mean by that?

h: It's about the artificial permanence of the collection. To

push that mentality to the extreme is very interesting, because the person who wants to pin down the fleeting moment has to kill it in order to do so. So you kill the butterfly and put it on a pin and stick it there; you try to do that with people. And there's a suggestion that, although the subject of *A Collection* is an extreme case, we're all trying to do this, we're all desperately fighting against the horrible, ungovernable, spontaneous nature of life and luckily failing."

Always trying to order things, and feelings, and thoughts, and capturing them. Don't you sometimes do the same, successfully, when writing a lyric?

h: Yes, there's a certain amount of that, because you're intellectualizing it, you go through a mental process. The real struggle obviously is to produce something that lives, has a life of its own. But there is that tendency; think of the work of someone like Proust (Marcel Proust, the French writer of *A la recherche du temps perdu*, among other things – Ed). He is someone who appears to have a butterfly collector mentality. You have the illusion that here is someone who wanted to write down every single thing he ever thought; every fleeting butterfly that passed through, he captured with a pin at some point. But it's an illusion, because what he really does is to create an analogy, something analogous to life, which is living. I don't think a maniacal butterfly collector could ever be an artist; there's something about that wanting to kill spontaneity which is directly in opposition to what a creative person does. You're always working to try and prompt yourself into a lucky accident.

The solution to the problem of writing a diary, for me, is to write lyrics, because you can work at them and hammer them out to a state that you know they'll still be interesting to look at in three or four years time. It's like a memo to yourself three years down the line. And it's a bit more durable, but to come back to the collector

thing; I don't think it quite freezes anything, because the thing continues to grow and change.

There's this odd thing about a good lyric, that it means something different ten years afterwards than what it did when it was written. It starts to have a life of its own and that's particularly the case when you write lyrics and hand them over to a band who turn them into songs and play them around the world. And when you come back to see the thing two years later it's like, "This is my child, and now it's grown up a bit."

Years later, Jon Collins, author of the Marillion biography *Separated Out* – which features album write-ups from Fraser Marshall of the Explanations of Song Elements blog – got in touch with Fraser and asked him whether John Fowles' novel *The Collector* had been an influence. Fraser had also done an interview with John, for The Web UK, and dug that up for this relevant bit.

Fraser: Can I ask you about some of the Marillion lyrics? One of the big ones has always been *A Collection*, which is either described as being about your uncle or a friend of yours – I don't know whether you would want to confirm which of those – but some people think it's about a serial killer. To me it always came across as something slightly wrong but to other people it's seriously creepy and they think that something really bad is going to happen, and that contrasts with this very pretty little melody.

John replied "Yes. Again, I have to say I'm quite surprised because that wasn't necessarily the motivation, it wasn't there when I was writing it. Obviously you can read what you like in to it and I hesitate to say, "no, it's not", because I'm quite pleased with it! Really, it's about a source of male autism. This is about a guy who systemises, in everything possible, all ends of his relationships. And everything takes a very similar pattern. It's a very male systemising 'on the spectrum' sort of thing to do. Obviously, a serial

killer is an extreme example of where that sort of thing can end up. I do see where in the lyric you could feel like there was something there to pick up.

Jon (Web UK) then took it a stage further, and contacted John and asked him explicitly. John's reply was: "I'd certainly read *The Collector*, which was probably better known at the time (and more read) than it is now. It's probably true the similarity in the title was intended to give a resonance that suggested there was something less than entirely wholesome about the way the 'narrator' of the lyrics views the subjects of his photography. I'd stop short of the word 'inspired' however. If you want to be fancy about it, the lyric is a critique of the male gaze, so the inspiration is probably more from feminist writing and people like Lacan. Fowles doesn't come that well out of such a critique, which is probably why he is not read so much nowadays." Regardless, creepy it is, for such a perfectly innocent sounding song!

Holidays in Eden

On marillion.com, h writes: "The first lyric by John Helmer on this album. A girl he knew had gone on holiday to South America and 'gone native' for a while. When she got back home she had problems picking up the threads of her old life. We could all relate..."

In the documentary, h explains how he and the rest of the band related to the lyric personally: "It came from a lyric that John had written, about going away, on holiday, and losing yourself. To the point where you even change your name, and your identity completely goes. And I can relate to that as well, having toured a lot. I found there was a point in the *Seasons End* tour, where I started to lose myself, and I was no longer me, I was this other thing. And then you've got to come home and try to be the person you used to be, when you get back at the other end. It's not easy."

Of course, we had already asked John Helmer himself about this, in 1992... "no one comes around at night or uses your new name".

You can go away and have massive experiences which change you, and then you find that you get back to your peer group and say, "I've got this new religion, I've shaved my head and I've got a different name that I'd like you to call me by". And people say, "Come off it, this is bullshit! Space cadet!" The group has a way of squatting on the individual, when the individual is in pursuit of personal development.

"I think there's great danger in the sixties; sort of individualism because it produces, paradoxically, a very conformist society. A very dangerous thing for us all, because people like that are continually marginalised and put upon and booted about, and it really begins to be the death of that culture. I think that's a very sad thing that's happening in England, and not so much in Europe, necessarily. The whole rave culture for instance, and the travellers, are seen as derelicts on the outside of society, whereas that culture is important to society itself. That kind of debate about the limits of freedom within society that was carried on as a very central preoccupation in the sixties and seventies, now is seen as something very freakish and outlandish. With my work in marketing I'm aware of the fact that the centre of gravity in society, the business community, which represents stability, solidity and everything daylight and sensible, is extraordinarily conformist. I grew a beard a couple of months ago, and the secretaries seemed to talk about nothing else for three or four months. What are you trying to prove by growing a beard?" They should have seen me back in 1977, when I had dog chains around my neck, and walked around in bin liners all the time."

Of course that begged the question if the lyric was about someone John knew (or autobiographical)?

John: "Yes, it is actually. Well, it's a concatenation of various friends of mine. A major preoccupation of fiction of all ages is with the exact location or whereabouts of earthly paradise. In the sixties I think people all thought it was

somewhere where you went and drank Martini and that began to change: that very joyful, untroubled materialism of the sixties began to tarnish in the seventies and the eighties and people began to feel again that the golden age or the earthly paradise lies in a previous time. And that translates geographically to more primitive cultures. And that's something you see developing through the children of the sixties, like Herzog; this idea of the mythical, primitive earthly paradise. And things like *Apocalypse Now*, both the fascination of that primitive state and 'the Horror'.

What I tried to do in *Holidays In Eden* – this is a rather roundabout answer is what the title suggests: people feel that they can go and visit this primitive state or recapture a type of primitive outlook on life in two-week 'bursts' in other countries. I was quite disturbed by this friend of mine who came back from a holiday where the whole thing had these sort of sexual overtones, with adolescent girls, and it was about innocence but you could see it wasn't entirely innocent, because of the 'white West exploiting the Third World' aspect of the situation. I found the whole thing very troubling, because in the one sense primitive culture is something we all learn from and draw on, and contains truths that we have to continually re-address.

On the other hand there's the knowledge that you can't go back, you can't throw away two thousand years of civilisation because those things are there for a bloody good reason, and if they start to fall apart, then you start to kick away the props that stop us from behaving to each other in the way that several thousand people manifested their will to behave in Germany quite recently. All the demons lurk there, as well as the instruction and wisdom of the past. It's a completely ambivalent thing." And then is that what comes back in a phrase like, "The creatures of the forest bid you welcome to the dark"? The dark side to the whole idea of 'going back to basics'?

"Exactly, that theme comes out of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and *Apocalypse Now*, about the river that leads to the primal source and evil lurks there, in the heart of darkness. This is a heavy burden, I know, to put on a package-tour, but... well, a lot of thoughts and currents of thought go into all these lyrics and it's nice when people take the time to unpack some of those meanings."



Heart of Darkness a novel by Polish born, English novelist Joseph Conrad (1857-1924), tells the tale of the culture shock experienced by a man who spends time with the natives in the Congo. He reverts to nature, becoming almost savage as his need to survive comes to the fore. Upon his return to Victorian London, he is unable to relate to the people and customs that he was once a part of.

The film *Apocalypse Now*, by director Francis Ford Coppola (born 7 April 1939) is also based on *Heart of Darkness*. Werner Herzog (born 5 September 1942) is a German film director, screenwriter, author, actor, and opera director, regarded as a pioneer of New German Cinema, influenced by the French New Wave. His films often feature ambitious protagonists with impossible dreams, people with unique talents in obscure fields, or individuals in conflict with nature. He was named one of the world's 100 most influential people by *Time* magazine in 2009.

"Forgetfulness is a river, and you know where the river leads":

Lethe, in Greek mythology, is the river of forgetfulness, situated in the underworld. The spirits of the dead drank from its waters to forget the sorrows of their earthly life before entering Elysium. Conversely, when the Trojan Prince

Aeneas visited the world of the dead, he found a great number of souls wandering on the banks of the stream. His father, Anchises, with whom he was joyously reunited, told him that before these spirits could live again in the world above, they must drink of the river of oblivion to forget the happiness they had known in Elysium.

"Life before the fall":

The Fall refers to the expulsion from Eden: God creates man and woman and lets them live in Paradise (Eden). They can eat from any tree except for the tree of knowledge. The serpent tempts Eve, who tempts Adam, and they eat the fruit. They realise that they are naked and cover themselves. God discovers that they have disobeyed him and expels them from paradise. This is known as 'the fall from grace', and is the 'original sin' that every human is said, by religions based in the Christian tradition, to be born with.

"Paradise regained":

Writer John Milton (1608-1674) – regarded as one of the greatest English poets along with William Shakespeare – wrote an epic poem entitled *Paradise Lost* (1667). It tells of the fall of the angels, and of the creation of Adam and Eve and their temptation by Satan in the Garden of Eden ("Of Man's first disobedience, and the fruit of that forbidden tree..."). It is considered his masterpiece, although he himself regarded its sequel, *Paradise Regained* (1671), as such. Less well known is his prose, among which are essays containing powerful arguments on subjects like divorce and freedom of the press. He was a supporter of Oliver Cromwell's republic and advocated divorce on the grounds of incompatibility. He became blind in later years – he dictated *Paradise Lost* to his daughters – and died in solitude.

"See no, hear no, speak no evil":

This is a reference to the three wise monkeys, a pictorial maxim based on a 17th century carving at the Toshogu Shrine in Nikko, Japan. Part of a larger work based on Confucius's code of conduct, the monkeys were carved by

Hidari Jingoro. They are Mizaru, covering his eyes, who sees no evil; Kikazaru, covering his ears, who hears no evil; and Iwazaru, covering his mouth, who speaks no evil. The line is also referenced by the drawing of them on the back of the *Holidays In Eden* album cover.

Dry Land

In the documentary, h says "It's about suspecting that you've got something going on with someone, but not actually knowing if you have. It was Chris Neil (producer Christopher Neil; Ed.) coming into the equation that was going to give the album not just a pop sensibility, but a business sensibility. He was looking for three singles. He was looking for *Cover My Eyes*, *No One Can* and another one. And because we hadn't written another one, he suggested *Dry Land*."

According to Tim Glasswell's Europeans/How We Live website, *Dry Land* started off as a Europeans' song called *You Are An Island*, demoed by the band and played at their final concert. It became the title track of the How We Live album by the same title.

In 1993, h was only slightly more elaborate about the song: "*Dry Land* is really about suspecting that you're having a relationship with someone and not actually being quite sure. It's to do with the uncertainty of whether or not someone feels the same about you as you feel about them; about agonizing over that, and the fear to ask, really."

"But I can't leave you all out at sea" is a very familiar phrase to native English speakers, but perhaps less to the rest of the world's listeners; 'to be all at sea' means to be confused or in a flurry, desperate even. In that sense it is connected to the 'edgy and nervous' in the first, and the "You're an island / I can't sleep / Won't you speak to me / I'm on dry land / Won't you help me please", in the last verse. Apart from that, it's a play on words on "you're an island", which means more or less the same as "you're such a natural stranger", someone who is by nature a distant and



solitary individual. It seems there was always something between them, but she's always kept her distance. And so our protagonist has left it at that - "I made excuses and ran" although he would love to know what's going on. "I never wanted to own you" could be intended as a reassurance: 'I'd love to be with you, but you won't have to give everything up and be mine completely'. It could, however, also express that he doesn't feel like plunging himself into anything, as long as her feelings seem so uncertain. "I'm on dry land" more or less seems to confirm that: her being an island is one thing, but his feeling insecure and 'thirsty' is

another. And so he's waiting for a sign, "...won't you help me please".

Haven't we all, at some point in our lives, been there?

Waiting to Happen

In the documentary, h says about this song: "I remember lying in bed in Englefield Green near Windsor, where we used to live, one night, unable to sleep, listening to the rain and listening to my wife breathing next to me, asleep. It just came from that memory."

During our interview in 1993, h said: "It used to go entirely on the end, like a kind of antidote to all

the bitterness. Which is actually something we've done on the new album, we've got a song at the end of this album, called *Made Again* – which is just a little song of its own, a very happy, sunny kind of song, that John wrote – and we really felt the need to have a song like that because this is a pretty heavy album, essentially about jumping off a bridge, killing yourself. And all the themes in it: it's so full of lies and hatred and abuse, that we just thought we should put it on the end, because otherwise... this is a great album, but people are just going to be so brought down..."

The song's lyric is quite self-explanatory, and you could argue that, logically, it fits better before the *This Town* triptych than after it. This could be the time before our couple moves to the big city, when something's still waiting to happen, "Something learning to fly / On the edge of exploding / Something wild and alive". Then again, if you consider lines like "After all this time / Cynical and jaded / All the stones are diamonds / All the blues are faded", "Everything I've been through / All I've seen and heard / Spend so much of my life / In the spiritual third world", "A jigsaw of an angel / I can do when I feel low", and "From emptiness and dryness / The famine of our days", you could also imagine a time when our couple, brought down by the city, grows closer together again, and is ready to embark on a new journey. It works either way, and it works wonderfully as a not-run-of-the-mill love song, doesn't it?

This Town / The Rakes Progress / 100 Nights

On marillion.com h writes, about *This Town*: "I'd written these words about the threat imposed upon a relationship by two people moving from where they grew up and met, to a city. The feeling that the city is seducing your lover away from you... and being jealous of it... and knowing it will win."

And about *100 Nights*: "We got into the idea of developing *This Town*, exploring the consequences of becoming bitter and taking revenge on the city – using it,

and the people in it, for your own ends... becoming a champion of the city through manipulation and some kind of two-faced cynicism. Playing it all like a game. It was easy to create this fiction – I've been in the music business for over a decade and, believe me, there's no better place to meet these guys. He discovers that his ruthlessness makes him perversely attractive. Am I ringing any bells...?"

For the little reprise of *This Town* at the very end I imagined all the people on the escalators going down the underground at Waterloo station mumbling the mantra together..."

In the documentary, h explains further: "It was an attempt to try and... I guess *The Rakes Progress* sums it up in a way, I'd grown up – you know, I was provincial, I'd grown up in Doncaster. I'd moved down to the smoke with my girlfriend and it didn't corrupt us, and it didn't tear us apart, but I used to think that it might. And so it's a work of fiction, about two people living together in a big city and being torn apart by the city, by what the city does to them. You know, "this town has turned me into what I've become", it's turned me into another person, and "it dresses you up like a stranger", and it takes you away from me. To god knows where and what and who. And you've had to become this other person in order to work in this city, which I think does happen to people. They have to get dressed up in a business suit and go to work, and pretend to be this thing.

"And then, I'd imagined, what if this person that's become heartbroken by this, then uses the shell that has grown around him to become an utter bastard. And of course he's ideally suited to the city himself, then. So he becomes a product of it, and I guess he becomes a gigolo, doesn't he? "She spends your money on me", and the idea of passing another man on the staircase and knowing that you're sleeping with his wife, and having seen his clothes in her wardrobe. Pretty spooky, pretty nasty. So it sort of took on that

twist, just that sort of descent into the moral vacuum."

Almost sounds like a concept! During our interview in 1993, when we asked h if he'd set out, with this 'triptych', to try his hand at writing something 'conceptual', like a concept album, he answered: "I'm not very good at someone telling me what to write and if somebody turns around to me and says: "We want you to write this kind of album now", I'll probably write something else, for two reasons really. First of all, I can't really write to order and second of all there's a rebel in me that'll go "well fuck you", and I deliberately won't. So I've never tried to write conceptually; that's not something I've tried to do with *This Town* and *100 Nights*. It's just the way it evolved."

We also asked h for some of the things he'd tried to convey in the triptych, as it's loaded with imagery.

h: "Basically *This Town*, *The Rakes Progress* through into *100 Nights*, with that bit at the end, that was a piece of fiction. It was based on some things that had happened to me, but it was essentially a story about two people who move to a big city in order to fulfil their dreams and their ambitions, only to find that the process of living in that city destroys their relationship. And that sense of the central character gradually being betrayed by his lover, to the point where he becomes very embittered, very cold and unable to feel anything. And so then that's when the rakish behaviour really starts... *The Rakes Progress* is really to do with the sense of – I suppose the 'king for a day' sense. It was a bit of a joke, calling that section of music *The Rakes Progress* because in England it's a famous set of lithographs by the artist Hogarth and essentially a rake is someone who inherits a very large amount of money and then wastes it and spends it on wine, women and so on, and essentially on hedonism and his own indulgences."

Is that a temptation that's there when you become a successful artist as well?

A Rake's Progress, Plate 7, The Prison



From Comptons Interactive Encyclopedia: The English painter and engraver William Hogarth (1697-1764) was primarily a humorist and satirist.

His best-known works include several series of popular satiric engravings in which he ridiculed the viciousness and folly that he saw in the world around him.

William Hogarth was born in London, England, on 10 November 1697. At an early age young Hogarth showed artistic talent and was apprenticed to an engraver in London.

Hogarth's fame began in 1731 with the appearance of a series of six pictures called A Harlot's Progress. Other series followed, including A Rake's Progress (1735) and Marriage a la Mode (1745).

Editions of these engravings sold well. Hogarth managed to get a law passed, called the Hogarth Act, that protected an artist's copyright and kept others from selling copies.



Hogarth, who has been called a master of caricature, contributed greatly to the development of

technique in this field. Unlike modern caricaturists, however, Hogarth did not ridicule individuals by exaggerating their conspicuous features. Instead he made fun of humanity as a whole, satirizing its weaknesses, pretensions, and vices.

In his own day many critics considered Hogarth's work to be vulgar and inferior. Now he is placed high in the history of English art. He is respected for his originality, his superb rendering of costume and setting, and for the accuracy of his vision, his humour, and the humanness of his characters.

Hogarth died in London on 26th October 1764. He was buried in Chiswick churchyard where his friends erected a tomb to him in 1771.

h: "Well yeah, there's an element of that, and an element of that sense of being corrupted and being surrounded by people who aren't necessarily around you for the right reasons... I was trying to create this idea of someone who was, I suppose, evil or lost; a very hard, callous, very cynical person – god knows there are enough of those in any big city – who works his way up through the city and becomes champion of it by using everybody."

The Rake's Progress:

From Explanations of Song Elements (<https://tinyurl.com/y3f5mnz9>), "The Rake's Progress is a series of eight pictures by Hogarth (William Hogarth, that is) following a young man who has inherited a fortune. He dumps his girlfriend and spends his days on drinking, gambling and the pleasures of the flesh. Even his former fiancée's pregnancy cannot stop his debauchery and eventually he ends up in the notorious Bedlam, a hospital for the insane. Many of them were actually in the advanced stages of syphilis, which causes insanity."

"What do you do when your roots have dissolved and broken down / When you list all the qualities that you despise / And you realise / You're describing yourself", indeed!

"The pictures are in the Sir John Soane museum in Lincoln's Inn Fields, London. It's round the corner from Holborn tube station and free to visit and is a magnificent museum to boot. The third in the series, in which the titular Rake is living it up in the taverns, is on this page, but the following link will take you to a site with all the pictures upon it. These particular versions appear to be from the engravings, not the paintings displayed at the Soane museum. Sadly, the only memorial to this great artist is the grim and grotty Hogarth Roundabout in one of the most congested parts of west London."

William Hogarth, by the way, was no relative of our h.

"You didn't notice me as I passed you on the stairs..." The founding

father of the Explanations of Song Elements blog, Fraser Marshall, became aware that passing someone on the stairs is considered to be bad luck, and was an established superstition, and he asked about it on the 'Ask the Band' page on the Marillion Forum (long since consigned to the dustbin of history).

h replied: "I know about this superstition and I'm always a little reluctant to pass people

the *Holidays In Eden* tour. We were on our way down the M4 bound for Cardiff in a minibus. I was sitting in the front watching the rain which was thrashing down outside when something strange began to happen. Call me what you will, but as I sat there, a kind of energy started to come out of the rain, in through the windscreen and into me. It felt like being connected to some kind of electricity inducing a rush of uplifting excitement. Like someone, or something was



on stairs. Yes, I was very aware of this when I wrote the line and NO you're not reading too much into it. Most of my lyrics have two meanings (three, if you know me) so it's always worth digging a little deeper than the literal if you're going to fully get to grips with 'em. I think there's something very complex, disturbing and romantic about crossing on stairs. This metaphor takes me to a lot of places in my life. The metaphors of simultaneous ascent and descent have much resonance... and to descend stairs may not necessarily represent DESCENT. You might be on your way to freedom, just as to ascend a staircase maybe a burden, or a journey to some kind of imprisonment. Staircases are lonely and peculiar places. I used to have a recurring nightmare about stairs. Elevators also... I could go on for hours..."

I Will Walk on Water (B-side to the Sympathy cover)

On marillion.com, h writes about this song on the *Six Of One – Half-Dozen Of The Other* compilation album "The lyric was taken from a poem I'd scribbled down during

sending it to me. Magic... I quietly looked around me at everyone else to see if anything was happening to them, but it seemed that I was on my own with it... I borrowed a pen and paper and tried to describe it."

And on that interesting and supernatural note, we conclude this celebration of the themes and words on *Holidays In Eden*. Please share your thoughts, if you have any. Certainly, it's a good enough album, lyrically as well, to keep alive long past this year's 30th anniversary Deluxe Edition!

With many thanks to: h, John Helmer, Lucy Jordache, Tim Sidwell, The Web Holland, The Web UK, Patrick van der Spinter and Fraser Marshall as well as all contributors to the Explanations of Song Elements web pages (<https://marillionations.blogspot.com>) ●

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My god, look what you've done to my song!

> photos by Alison Toon



FLASHBACK

*Steve Hogarth talks about writing and collaborating on lyrics
with John Helmer for Holidays In Eden*

Being a singer and a frontman, a lot of the feedback h got in his early days with the band related to his and the band's onstage performance or to the albums as a whole. To someone who is also responsible for the larger part of the lyrics, the lack of interest in that part of the creative process could have been a little discouraging. When we sat down at the kitchen table in what was then Tivoli, in Utrecht, in 1993, our first question for h was if this did bother him?

"I think the importance of a lyric works in different ways. First of all the lyric is very important from the point of view of myself when I'm writing it or of a writer when they write lyrics, because they're telling a story or they're trying to explain how they feel about something. I'd like to think that our lyrics are also important to the listeners; I think the vast majority of our audience pays a lot of attention to the words and listens to the lyrics carefully enough to think about what lyrics are saying. But I think it's quite important that people get their own thing out of a song; and it's just that if you can paint a certain picture with a lyric, you can paint a certain emotion, or you can describe a certain scene, and the scene that that then creates, in the listener's mind might be a completely different one. It might be a more wonderful one to them than the one that you were actually painting.

"And so, I always think that there's an argument against explaining your lyrics too much, because you could end up nailing the whole thing to the wall, saying, "This is what that was like". You know, "This is what this means". The same is also true if you try and illustrate a lyric with a video or a piece of film. You run the risk of spray painting it with varnish or plastic for all time – and you can actually end up leaving people with a picture which is less moving or less beautiful than the one that they created in their own mind themselves. On the other hand, it can be very interesting to hear

from a writer why he wrote certain things or what he was getting at when he wrote certain things."

After *Holidays In Eden*, h and the band went on to write a concept album with *Brave*, but his first try at that could have been the *This Town* triptych. We asked him if it was a similar experience.

"I'm not very good at someone telling me what to write and if somebody turns around to me and says, "We want you to write this kind of album now", I'll probably write something else, for two reasons really. First of all, I can't really write to order, and second of all there's a rebel in me that'll go "Well fuck you", and I deliberately won't. So I've never tried to write conceptually; that's not something I've tried to do with *This Town* and *100 Nights*. It's just the way it evolved and the same is true with this album [*Brave* – Ed].



I think the vast majority of our audience pays a lot of attention to the words and listens to the lyrics carefully enough to think about what lyrics are saying



This is much, much more of a concept album overall, and it's probably the first concept album overall as a set of lyrics that I've contributed to myself, but it didn't end up like that because someone had asked me to do that, it just grew into that. It didn't really start out as a concept album, mind you; everybody's going to hear this album and go: "My god, this is so different from *Holidays In Eden*, you can tell with *Holidays In Eden* they were under a lot of pressure bla bla bla..., and on this album they were obviously under a lot of pressure to do this". But we never write like that; we just jam, and we keep the good stuff, and that's all we do."

Well, the moment you've got a couple of songs that have something in common, you probably start to realize that it can be a concept album, but putting it all together as such must be another thing entirely.

"We found, after we'd got about five songs into this album, that they all had similar themes and I just sat down and got to thinking, one day, about this radio broadcast that I'd heard and I went and dug out all my old diaries to find it – because I'd actually written it down, written the date, the description of the girl and everything down at the time that it happened – because I was excited with the idea of writing an album about it, given the fact that we'd already got four or five songs that would work. But yeah, then going on and doing it..."

And then John had some songs that fitted in rather well, apparently...

"Oh well, what John had sent was absolutely spot-on, without him knowing; in fact, once we actually had a vision of what we were trying to do and had a meeting with him and gave him a brief, I don't think he sent us any more words. You know, John's a very natural writer who is... He's like me, if you send him away to write a song and you tell him what kind of a song you want, chances are nothing will ever come back. It's best to just leave him to it and see what he sends."

John said something to the extent, also, that it's something of a felt thing between writers, between creative people, that you don't talk much about the stuff you do.

"Well yes, that's kind of deliberate..."

Why, because that's dangerous for the process?

"Because he's dangerous? [grins] I often wonder if he is dangerous..." Well he seems to be a gentle enough guy.

"He is a very gentle chap, but there are certain things very weird going on inside him judging by some lyrics he sends through. [laughs]"

He also told us he thinks that Marillion has brought forth three entirely different writers. Do you agree, or are John and you a lot more alike actually, than you and Fish are for instance, in how you write your lyrics?

"No, I think we're all completely different. The three of us, in our style and in the way our minds work, are all in different universes and have got very little in common, really. But the creative process, with me, has a hell of a lot to do with how much empathy I feel on a personal level, towards the people I work with. I find it very hard to work with people I don't really like, even at a distance, and I like John very much and find it very easy to collaborate with John.

"But because we are so different, I don't know how much success we'd have if we got together and sat in a room and said, "Well okay, let's write a song." We're much better if he sends me a fax with an idea and I take it - if he says "This is a house", and I go, "What a good house", but I paint it all over again, so it's still a house but it's my shape then. So that I've used the best bits, which in a way is kind of a rape of his creative process, but he doesn't seem to mind. And as long as he doesn't mind we can work together, and if he ever gets precious and goes, "My god, look what you've done to my song", then it'll be over (laughs). But fortunately he's very easy about it."



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My god, look what you've done to my song (part two)!

> photos by Alison Toon

FLASHBACK

*John Helmer talks to Martin about his life and
working with Marillion*

Firstly: 'Who are you and where are you from?'

JH: I was born in Lewisham in South-London and was brought up in Essex, which is sort of a godless, benighted place, really, and when I got old enough, when I was eighteen, I left and moved to Brighton, where I've lived ever since. Well, a couple of years up in London, but then I met a girl from Brighton, married her and moved back down to Brighton. I went to college, to the University of Sussex there and when it was over, when you sort of sit down and think, "What do I want to do with the rest of my life?", I also thought, "Well, I want to be a writer, but I don't know anything. I haven't done anything. I'd like to see a certain amount of the world to have the experience to write out of." The best way to do that seemed to me to be in a group. I played the guitar and the keyboards, and that group became Piranhas, a punk group that metamorphosed into a ska group. And it was a good way of knocking around the world and meeting some unusual people.

With Piranhas was also the first time I went to Holland, to play the Milky Way in Amsterdam, to some very stoned German hippies; that was very odd. After that I was in Pookie Snackenburger, something of a folk band, completely acoustic and we did a lot of work in Amsterdam and Haarlem. We did the Pinkpop festival as well, we were on the bill sandwiched between Kid Creole and the Coconuts, who were a big deal at the time, and ZZ Top. This must have been somewhere during the first half of the eighties. In Europe, we suddenly found that we were playing European art festivals and we discovered this huge amount of street theatre and a sort of street performance culture which just doesn't exist in England, there's no tradition as far as I know. It seemed to me at the time a much more honest way of earning a living, I was a bit through with rock and roll.

I went heavily into the studio after that, which is completely contradictory, started making house records, kind of obscure

with underground people from New York and Detroit like Derek May, Frankie Nuckles and Mike Wilson, who at the time were very unknown names and who have subsequently, because of the huge houseboom, become very big. But at the same time I was trying to weld it into lyrics that were a bit more progressive-like and it wasn't quite working, I think. And really, the whole dance thing took off in a completely different direction. It was like an experiment that didn't quite work and then I just got fed up with the whole thing and sat down to write my novel and the lyrics as well.

So when you started writing lyrics, did you think they were suited for progressive rock music?

JH: No, not really, because I came there via house music. But Marillion saw some of the lyrics at the time they were looking for a lyricist, without the backing tracks attached; and they liked those, it struck a chord with them. And I found that quite surprising, really, because it had come out of a very different type of music, but I mean, it was something that worked."

And now, when you write lyrics, do you ever contribute musical ideas as well?

JH: When I write lyrics, I always have a vague tune in the background of them, if I write them on their own, but then I have to forget that, and the bare version effaces it and becomes the version you remember. So it's quite odd. But I find that's the best way to make sure that the words have a proper rhythm to them. Take The Uninvited Guest, I can't remember what the original tune of that was, but it had that very strict meter.

There are different ideas about songwriters, one of which is the romantic concept of the one who writes bits and pieces and then goes on all night piecing them together. How do you work?

JH: I write them in my sleep... I write lyrics fairly infrequently because I also do other bits of

writing; I'm working on screenplay ideas at the moment and also I work as a marketing consultant, as a copywriter. That tends to be done in a nine to five sort of way, so lyrics usually slot in around that. But having said that, when I do write lyrics, I write prolifically. What'll happen is that I wake up in the middle of the night and write three lyrics. This happened last week in fact, for Marillion. And when I wake up the next morning, I have no memory of them at all.

So a couple of weeks later I have to take them out and think, "This needs a bit of polishing", and then I'll start the process of editing, which is a very long, torturous thing and can take days of fitting words here and there. But the main part of it will come out of sleep very often. Or sometimes you specifically sit down and start to write. Because when I wrote most of the *Seasons End* stuff, for instance, the band needed a lot of lyrics very quickly because they didn't have a singer, they just had a lot of music. So I was coming up with a lot of stuff very quickly and that was quite hard. I will naturally, left to my own devices, probably write a certain amount of lyrics, whether people want them or not."

And how does it work when you've written them, with Marillion? Do they leave them unchanged, do they get changed around a lot?

JH: It varies. They might ring up to say, "Do you mind if we put a middle-eight in here?", and Steve will come up with something and add a few words. Or else, sometimes it's, "Well, we didn't like that but could we have these two lines?" Or sometimes it could be complete acceptance of the whole lot, with no changes at all.

The way this worked out on *Holidays in Eden*, it ended up containing two lyrics by you. How did that come about?

JH: It sort of turned out I was unavailable for a large period when they needed a lot of help on that, and Steve contributed a lot

more and was very prolific at the time, so I ended up with less on it. I don't know how it'll work on the next one, but I'm becoming more available at the moment."

Is it a kind of 'do as you please' arrangement then, where, if you have something, they'll have a look at it and use it if it fits? And do you think it will stay that way?

JH: It works out that way, yes, and I've just delivered about six or seven to them. And I've got some other stuff that I'll be bringing along as well."

I've written that as a love lyric. It's really of the influence of Steve's type of lyric. I'm a great admirer of his stuff, I really like *Dry Land*, an achingly beautiful song.

(John told us earlier that, as he and he are roughly the same age, it seems there's an instinctive understanding.) Is that similar to the rest of the band, is that why it all works so well?

JH: I guess so, yes, but it's odd, because they've been in a very different culture, the type of group Marillion is. It's not the sort of

paint, and where to buy paint and turpentine, the technical stuff.

There might be the thought that it's a bit dangerous to touch it as well, because everything I'm saying today about the lyrics that I've written has been formulated past the experiences of writing them. The actual experience of producing lyrics and music is that it's done instinctively and you don't know at the time what you're doing. And one of the reasons people do it is that it's so interesting to look back afterwards and see what it was all about.



Could you perhaps reveal anything about that?

JH: Well, there's one I wrote called *Made Again* [the closing track on *Brave - Ed.*], which is a boy/girl one about feeling that the whole world has been created anew overnight and about that experience of renewal you get, which I think is a constantly surprising thing in life. That suddenly everything is fresh and great and you have boundless energy and enthusiasm. Having passed thirty five, it was a surprise to me that this kept happening and

group that ten years ago I would have gone to see necessarily. Yet across that divide there's still a lot of understanding there and it's a very creative difference, really. Not that we talk about it deeply; it's a matter of feel, and it's really stronger like that between musicians. What I wanted to say: when Steve and I go out for a drink, we tend to talk about entirely different things, like the beer or women or something. Picasso once said something to that effect: when artists get together, they don't talk about their art, they talk about

Looking at the albums and singles you collaborated on: how is it to see things you've contributed to appear in the charts?

JH: That's a kick, yes, but it's an eerie feeling as well, really. I remember walking into the Hammersmith Odeon on the *Holidays In Eden* tour and seeing the banners with those three wise monkeys, "See no, hear no, speak no evil". Suddenly something like three lines in a piece of lyrics has been blown up to gigantic proportions. And there's something very magical about

that, because as a non-performing lyricist you no longer have that sort of feedback from the audience. There's a big gap: you're in your little room and write something which basically only exists between you and the paper, and then a few months later an entire industry, that you've been no part of whatsoever, has taken those ideas and you see it again, and it has taken on such immense proportions. A bit like the sorcerer's apprentice: "Where are all those brooms going with all those buckets of water" And it all becomes rather alienating.

Do you ever still get reactions from fans or does the feedback only come from shows like that?

JH: I'd say the show, yes. Being on the sidelines, very quietly in the shadows and seeing people sing your lyrics along with their fists in the air: a strange experience. And also, then, you realise what your lyrics actually mean, because when you write them, as I said, you're not necessarily aware of their deeper structure.

And the structure has added, of course.

Exactly, and it's easier with him to see what it's about, aside from the obvious, because in the performance you see how he has transformed what you do, something on quite a small scale, to something that fits the enormity of a gig like that. And you see how something you've done works on a large scale, like *The King Of Sunset Town*; I never thought that lyric could have that scope until I saw it live, and thought, "Yes, it's quite a grand term and it seems like I'm quite good at coming up with such rather grandiose titles." [smiles]

Do you also write for any other artists?

JH: I've written a song with Chris Neil, the producer on *Holidays In Eden*, about Judy Garland, called Tragic Heroine, which I think was written for a French artist, but I don't know yet if that's been accepted or not. And there have been odd things; there was

something I wrote for a group in Sweden, which is sort of my attempt at writing a Springsteen lyric, called *New York Skyline* (this appeared as a rock ballad that's track seven on Norwegian band Private Eye's self-titled album for Desperado Records in 1990 – Ed.). But I haven't done that much outside Marillion, because I don't think there aren't many other groups that would go into those sort of waters nowadays.

You mentioned earlier that you're writing a novel, what's that about?

JH: At the moment it's about someone who's terminally tactless, who's always said the wrong thing in any given situation, and that sort of brings him into conflict with the



Suddenly something like three lines in a piece of lyrics has been blown up to gigantic proportions. And there's something very magical about that



rest of the world, very predictably. But it's a very difficult thing to do, a big undertaking.

Does it fit in with your other work in any specific way?

JH: Well, there is this theme in my lyrics that we're living in a time when those restrictions that we thought we'd escaped, are reasserting themselves. Young people grew up taking that for granted, because that's what they've grown up with, but to people like myself, over thirty, it's quite a disconcerting experience to find that, when you assume that things will become even more liberal, ever freer, in fact the case is that freedom is something that expands and contracts in different places at different times.

Famous last words, as they say. That is, we may all have found those words to be particularly true in recent years. Parts of the rest of this interview with John were used for the main article about the lyrics on *Holidays in Eden*, or will appear in a similar article on *Seasons End*, next year.

John did go on to complete his novel, *Mother Tongue*, which was published in 1999 by Quartet Books and is well worth the read.

Apart from *Made Again* he continued to contribute occasional lyrics to Marillion's work until around 2000. He also wrote most of the lyrics for *Carnival Of Souls*, the 1996 album by Steve Rothery's side project The Wishing Tree. The last known words he contributed to Marillion's vast lyrics catalogue, after a ten year plus year hiatus, was on *Pour My Love* from *Sounds That Can't Be Made* in 2012).

On 26 March 2017 and 30 April 2017, on the Sunday nights of the Dutch and UK Marillion Weekends at Port Zélande and at Leicester's De Montfort Hall, respectively, John got on stage to perform on guitar and vocals with Marillion on *Tumble Down The Years* – one of the songs on *marillion.com* he co-wrote.

These days, John is still a writer, but also active as a Senior Marketing Consultant, and an expert and something of a thought leader in England in the field of Learning Technologies, in which he's also the showrunner and host for The Learning Hack podcast. John still lives in Brighton. ●

Questions Within Questions

> by Francis Donlevy > photos by Stefan Schulz

To tie in with the publication of his new book, back in March Mark Kelly took over the Blue Lion Pub for a Q&A session in front of an invited audience. Hosted by Philip 'Rod Stewart' Wilding, it was a game of two halves with some great audience questions asked in part two! Read on to discover more...

On 5th March a small group of invited people gathered at The Blue Lion on Greys Inn Road for an evening of conversation with Mark Kelly and Philip Wilding, including John Mitchell, Big Big Train's Greg Spawton, Prog Magazine's Jerry Ewing and Marillion photographer Anne-Marie Forker and her lovely husband. Stephanie 'Your name's not on the list, you're not coming in' Bradley was checking people in. Phil, who hosted the evening, mentioned that he had spent the afternoon chatting with Geddy Lee and invited him along but unfortunately he had a prior engagement.

I don't normally cover things like this for the Web Magazine, I just try and make it look pretty but I thought I would give it a go. Armed with note pad and brand new pen, it all went wrong after about twenty minutes when my pen stopped working. I turned to my phone to try and record the audio of the evening but it ended up so muffled it was impossible to hear, so I'm doing this from my far from perfect memory.

There were plenty of people to chat to and have a laugh with in the build up to the first half, which was Mark talking about his book and being insulted by Phil. Mark asked one of the audience, Stuart, to set the timer on their watch, instructing them that after forty five minutes he had to interrupt and say "Mark Kelly, I am the man from the planet Marzipan". Asked to repeat this, of course Stuart got it wrong and was suitably chastised!

Much of what followed was a discussion of things contained within the pages of Mark's book. It was

interesting to learn that Mark's Mother objected to him referring to his family as "Dirt Poor" even though they were. He actually sent each chapter to his Mum to read after it had been written to see what she thought.

Talk turned to Fish and how he forced Diz out of the band, the response to Mark's book that he posted on Facebook and not so veiled threats made many years ago about the contents of any book.

A voice from the crowd said "Mark Kelly, I am the man from the planet Marzipan" meaning time for the first part was up. We broke for drinks and chat and I finally got to meet photographer extraordinaire Anne-Marie Forker and her lovely husband and have a good natter. The second half was a Q&A session with Phil and Mark taking questions from the audience. Mr Wilding managed to light heartedly insult pretty much everyone who asked a question, although that didn't seem to put anyone off.

There was a real range of questions too, ranging from someone asking for relationship advice after his divorce, to remembering broken down trains in Budapest. With the former Mark's response was "have you read my book? I'm the last person should be asking for relationship advice".

Mark's first car, a Saab Turbo, was discussed, including the fact that the examiner on his test was far more interested in the car than Mark's driving. The same gentleman from Bracknell also asked a more pertinent question about whether the Poland

MARK KELLY



IN CONVERSATION WITH
PHILIP WILDING ABOUT
HIS AUTOBIOGRAPHY

**MARILLION
MISADVENTURES
& MARATHONS**

*The Life & Times
Of Mad Jack*

KINGMAKER

Weekend would still go ahead, given the events in Ukraine. The answer was yes, which got a resounding cheer from all present.

We learned Mark's favourite dish to cook is lasagne, which he had made that afternoon before setting off to London. However, there was the possibility his pasta dish had made one of his children ill! We do hope the child in question survived Mark's questionable culinary delights.

Asked to describe the other band members best and worst qualities, Mark pleaded the fifth on the worst. Pete is a consummate musician. Even if you think a piece of music is rubbish, Pete will help work on it to help make it better. Ian is the Dad of the band, the one who will always call to ask if you're OK. Steve Hogarth is very laid back. He's always losing stuff,

Anderson on vocals, Roger Waters writing lyrics and playing bass and Bill Bruford coming out of retirement on drums. Mark was struggling to think of a guitarist so a suggestion from the audience saw Michael Schenker included "as long as he behaved himself". There were two suggestions for the band name, Half Marathon and Snickers.

Being a budding keyboard player Aidan Campbell asked a question about music theory and was surprised to find Mark doesn't actually know much music theory, he just plays what feels right. His advice was lots of practice and do your own thing which Aidan found really inspiring.

An odd question was posed by a recently divorced chap about whether Mark thought it was possible to find love. Mark mentioned that he probably wasn't



most notably his phone and, on tour, his washbag. Steve Rothery is the calm one who keeps everything together and if it wasn't for him, Marillion would no longer exist as a band.

Mark was asked about playing with Travis and if there were any other bands he would like to playing. His answer was no and that had been very stressful learning their music. Mark is, however, open to offers for £££s! Following on from that he was asked to name his dream band. He would have liked Rick Wakeman, although that would have put himself out of a job, so he was out. We ended up with John

the right person to ask as he didn't have a proper girlfriend until he was twenty. That's what you get for sitting in your room, practicing.

Obviously Mark has had relationships, marriages and children and has now found his perfect partner but Dear Deirdre won't be losing any sleep over any of the the advice given... don't give up your day job Mark.

Asked how many albums the band have left in them, Mark is quite honest in saying if every album takes six years, probably only one. Apparently before the band started the process of recording

said this maybe (one of the band's last so let's make it as good as we all can. As a follow-up question I asked about the fact in the last Web Magazine it was said the band have an entire full song, which didn't fit on this album plus other left over bits. I

was quite surprised when Mark indicated there are four or five songs that wouldn't take much to finish, plus other promising bits and pieces, although they are very different sounding to *An Hour Before It's Dark*. The band actually wrote far more than they needed, although Mark fought for the album to be about forty five minutes long.

Once Mark has a bit of a time free from Marillion there will be another Marathon album and it won't take twenty five years. Unfortunately there are no live plans at present.

Sue Beasey asked Mark if he remembered an embarrassing but funny situation on the first Cruise To The Edge when he was asked for a photo. Pulling himself up to his full height and tilting his chin Mark was ready for a selfie with the couple, only to find them handing him their camera; they wanted Mark to take a photo of the two of them. They had no idea who he was! Mark laughed and said he should have checked the guest list, although did say in answer to another question he was happy he wasn't hugely famous, admitting would hate being recognised everywhere he went.

Asked if money was no object where would the band tour where they have never played Mark



replied without hesitation Australia and New Zealand. The questioner followed up by asking if there was enough of an audience, Mark said there was a small but very dedicated group of fans who would probably all go to every show.

Mark answered every question thrown at him thoughtfully and often humorously and ducked very little. Philip made a great host and prompted many laughs, although he seemed a little worried about Mark writing another book. He took the banter back to his insults with good grace, especially when someone called him Rod, as he was rocking the Rod Stewart look!

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It was interesting to learn that Mark's Mother objected to him referring to his family as "Dirt Poor" even though they were
▼▼

Phil said there was time for one more question so I asked how often and why does Lucy go on the warpath, have to tell the band off and make them stand on the naughty step? Mark laughed and said it's usually when she needs stuff to promote the band; new photos, music or interviews but that she's usually not too bad, especially as she partly works from home now. I really think Lucy needs to keep a tighter reign on these miscreant musicians!

After the questions were done Mark and Phil were happy to chat and sign copies of the book, and it was nice to mingle with and talk to Marillion friends old and new. All in all an interesting evening and a fun way to spend a Saturday night. ●

Marillion played Stockholm for the first time as part of the run of 2022 Weekends. Our intrepid explorer James went to the land of Alfred Nobel, Ikea and ABBA, and wrote a review for us.

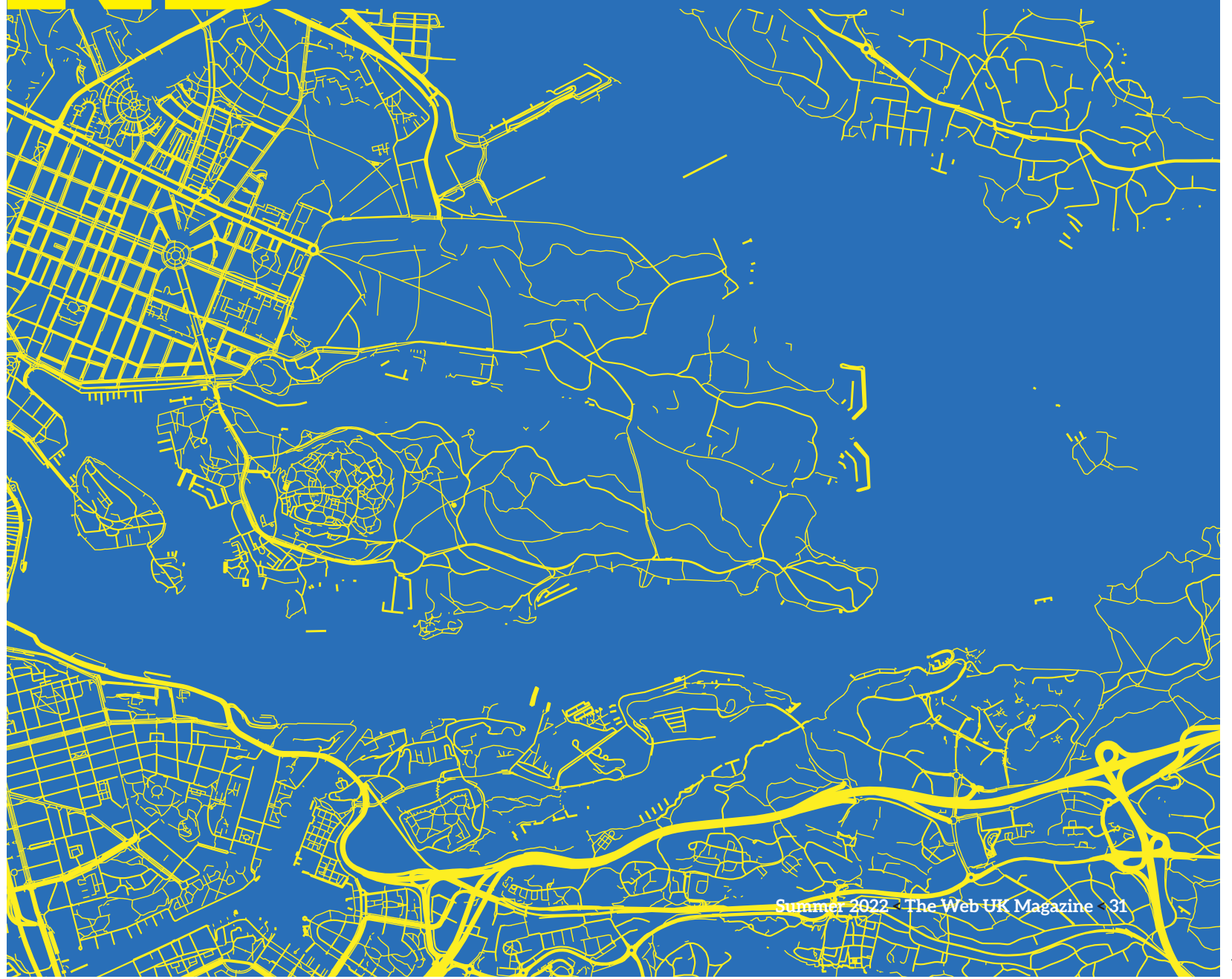
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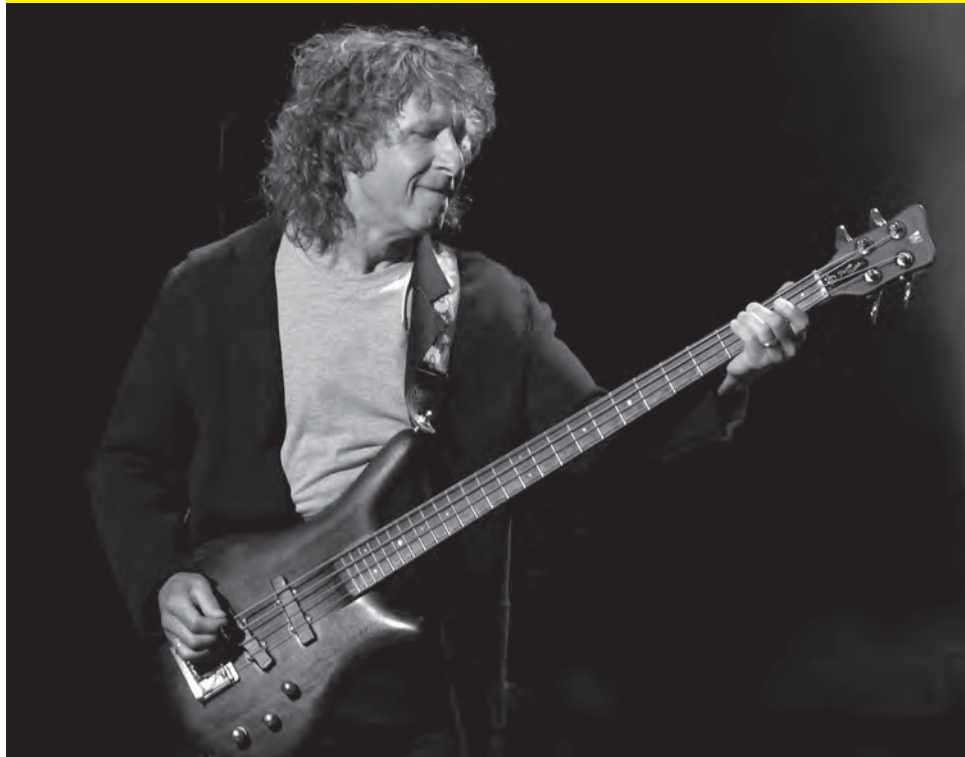
LOSE TO ND

> by James Greenwood

> photos by Alison Toon







Thursday 19th May saw about five people travelling from Heathrow to Stockholm in a packed plane. They looked a little out of place. They were individuals. They were unique. They were probably the only people on the flight who were not going to the first ever Marillion convention to be held in Sweden.

The departure lounge on that particular day was a veritable sea of band t-shirts (aside from those five; the members of the band; their families and the crew were also on that particular flight).

And the buzz was somewhat different from other trips following Marillion. The reason was probably twofold. For starters, this year's weekends were the first ones held post lockdown and then there's the the Scandinavian factor. For many of us, this was our first visit to Stockholm, a city sited on an archipelago of fourteen islands and over fifty bridges.

Over the next few days, it was wonderful to see so many friends – old and new – and the numerous band t-shirts around the sights of the Gamla Stan (the old town) and the numerous museums of Djurgården. It was not hard to be struck by the friendliness of the people who live in this beautiful city on the edge of the Baltic.





»
Cause I'm the one who
knows what scares you
I'm the one who loves you best
I'm the thirtieth at the table
I'm the uninvited guest
»

The venue chosen for the inaugural Swedish weekend was the Cirkus Arena, a late 19th Century building with all the character one would expect to find in a construction of that era.

Now, as for the weekend itself, this was to prove one of the most unusual conventions thus far, and ultimately, will probably prove to be one of the most memorable.

The first night set the scene for the unusual, the hallmark of the whole weekend. Initially, we were treated to an excellent performance from Oslo band, Oak, with their influences from Classical composers to prog and metal being very evident.

Then things took an unusual turn: about a minute before Marillion took the stage, I was treated to a grandstand view of a gentleman clutching a couple of pint glasses doing the lager two-step before he tripped up, head-butting Phil's Graphic Equaliser, and spilling his drinks over the equipment. I'm sure none of us have seen Phil completely lost for words until this moment as he had to hurriedly check what had been spilled and to work out how the settings had been affected.

Speaking to Phil the following day, it was touch and go as to whether the gig would be able to go ahead – but luckily, the glasses only contained water. It would still require several songs for Phil to reset the deck, but as we know, we are incredibly lucky to have an engineer of his quality supporting the band – he really is the best in the business.

The first night was described as an upbeat selection of songs, and we were not to be disappointed with tracks from *Misplaced Childhood* onwards.

Highlights will largely depend on your individual viewpoint, but *Lords of the Backstage*, *The Damage*, *Separated Out* and *Incommunicado* probably came top of the majority's pick on the night. It was a shame that we lost *Man of a Thousand Faces* but for those of you lucky enough to visit Montréal, it popped up on the second night.



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The second night began with a great set from Oslo-based art rockers Dim Gray, before Marillion took the stage to perform *An Hour Before It's Dark*.

It's fair to say that the Saturday night performance of the new album was flawless, every track being greeted with an extended standing ovation. Mark Kennedy summed it up: "As the first encore was coming round I was beginning to relax and think: they've got this nailed now, it's all coming together like a well-oiled machine." Little did we know what was coming...

The encores were *The Invisible Man* and *Power*, and it was at this point it became clear that he was suffering with his voice, but he gamefully carried on. The final encore was *Neverland*, and it became very clear that he was in fact losing his voice. As the 'Wendy darling' section began, he was unable to continue and was forced to leave the stage, leaving the band to recover the situation, but cometh the hour, cometh the man – Rothers took the centre stage with an improvised extended series of solos and turned the gig from potential disaster into triumph as the band all rose to the occasion.

Now, we know that the fans talk about the concept of the Marillion family, but here we saw

the crowd rise as one to support them. Strangely, this turned into one of the best performances of *Neverland* that many people there could remember, and as the standing ovation continued after the song, he came back to the stage to acknowledge the four remaining members of the band.

Clearly there were a lot of questions around whether the band would be able to play *Seasons End* on the final night, but his Sunday morning Instagram post answered that one and, as a result, Sunday was one of the most unique Marillion shows I think many of us have ever seen. Most artists would have pulled that last show, but Marillion found a way around it that worked to stunning effect. As he said, "This will be our first karaoke concert!"

He didn't attend Lucy's Q&A as he was resting his voice.

As I've already alluded to, we all speak a lot about the notion of the 'Marillion family' and it's easy to be cynical about it, but for ninety minutes it didn't feel like family – we were all in the band. We were all Marillion.

In a way the pressure was off because the crowd were up for it, and he still managed to perform to a high standard despite his voice problems. The crowd choir coped admirably with *Easter* and *The*



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I'm sure none of us have seen Phil completely lost for words until this moment
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Uninvited Guest, but it was surprising how much h was able to sing as the gig went on. He even bravely got through *The Space* with some crowd support on the closing section.

Highlights were when Pete chose the wrong bass for the start of *Holloway Girl*; Mark missing the start of a song; and then completely missed the intro of *The King of Sunset Town*; but with the palpable goodwill from the audience, this turned into something rather special.

Speaking to Phil and Yenz after the final night, it was clear just how much effort had gone into the technical prep for the weekend - I for one was unaware that Yenz carries out three complete run-throughs to ensure the wonderful lighting was fully synchronised. We all have to thank Stephanie's merch team for their sterling work and, as always, Lucy for her role which probably equates to 'herding cats'.

After that, it was onwards to Leicester, Lisbon and, ultimately, Montréal.

Three nights of great music in a lovely venue, in a wonderful friendly city. So many friends from the four corners of the world (Twenty five countries) As always, we were one big family... ●



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It's fair to say that the Saturday night
performance of the new album was flawless,
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standing ovation
”



WITH THE LOVE OF OUR FAMILY



Due to various chronic conditions, Benjamin Kidd-Bentley never thought travelling to a Marillion weekend would be possible. He wasn't counting on the love of the Marillion Family...



"You are going to the ball". I think those were the words that Mike used when he and Ritchie did a video call with us, back in the dim and distant times before such things as global pandemics and when the 'new album' was still *F E A R*.

Ben has had far more than his fair share of bullies over the years, many incidents of which have been unsatisfactorily resolved and forgotten only with difficulty. But when he experienced a bullying incident on Facebook in full view of the Marillion family, something changed. People were incensed at the nasty words and wanted to do something to help Ben keep his faith in those who follow our favourite band. Unbeknown to us, funds were raised and plans were hatched. Tickets were bought. Hotels were booked. And Ben was indeed going to the ball - even if he found the whole thing overwhelming to the point of disbelief.

On Thursday we arrived in Leicester, but even then I don't think it truly registered with Ben what was happening. Even when we got our wristbands, got inside, got onto the viewing platform and watched the fantastic Pete Jones set as supporting act, I still think he could barely believe it. But when the guys came on stage and the music filled the hall, tears filled his eyes. He had arrived!

If you asked him his highlights of this weekend he is lost for words. Meeting people, new friends and old, sobbing when *Care* was played, laughing, screaming for joy and singing himself hoarse. Old and new favourites

heard in totally wonderful ways, from the first notes of *This Town* to the last triumphant chord of *The Leavers* and everything in between.

Due to his disabilities, and nearing almost total exhaustion, it was touch and go at one point as to whether he'd make Sunday night at all. But he did and the last night was, in Ben's words, "fucking awesome"! When asked to pick his favourite night he said it was impossible to choose, he loved every moment, even those few moments when mistakes were made. Again in Ben's words, "the fuck ups almost made it better because it showed they were real people playing real music".

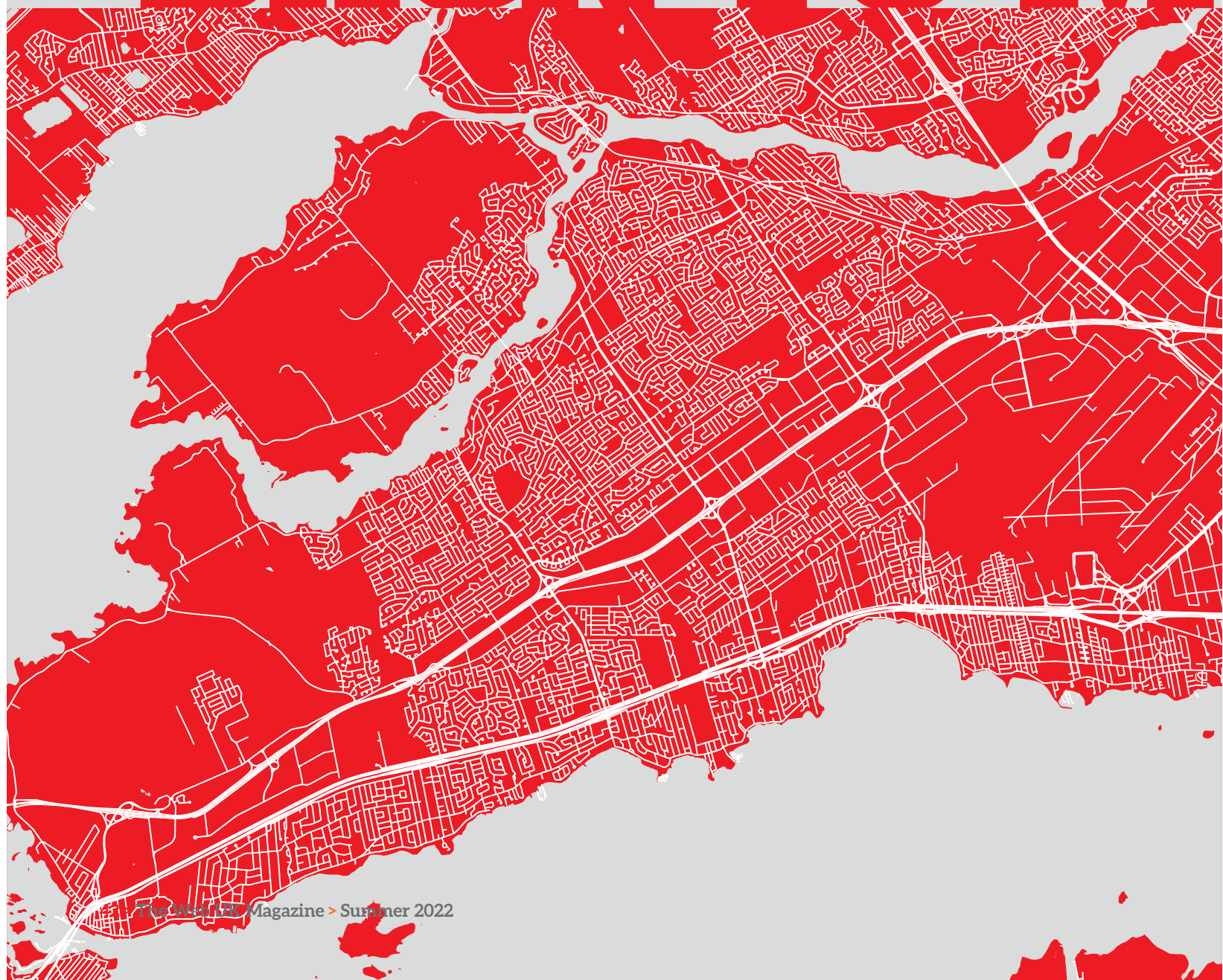
He is coming away with the sorts of memories that the very best dreams are made of. He still says he doesn't understand why people did all this for him. He claims he's nothing special. But, getting to know some of the Marillion family members this weekend has helped us both to understand the love and care and fun and above all the anti-bullying message that was so important in those early plans.

We both want to extend all our love and heartfelt thanks to everyone who donated, planned, organised and helped. There are far too many people to name everyone individually, and some we don't know at all, but three people stand out - Richie, Francis and above all Mike "the gobby one" Crotty, whose support and friendship know no bounds. You've given Ben the experience of a lifetime. ●



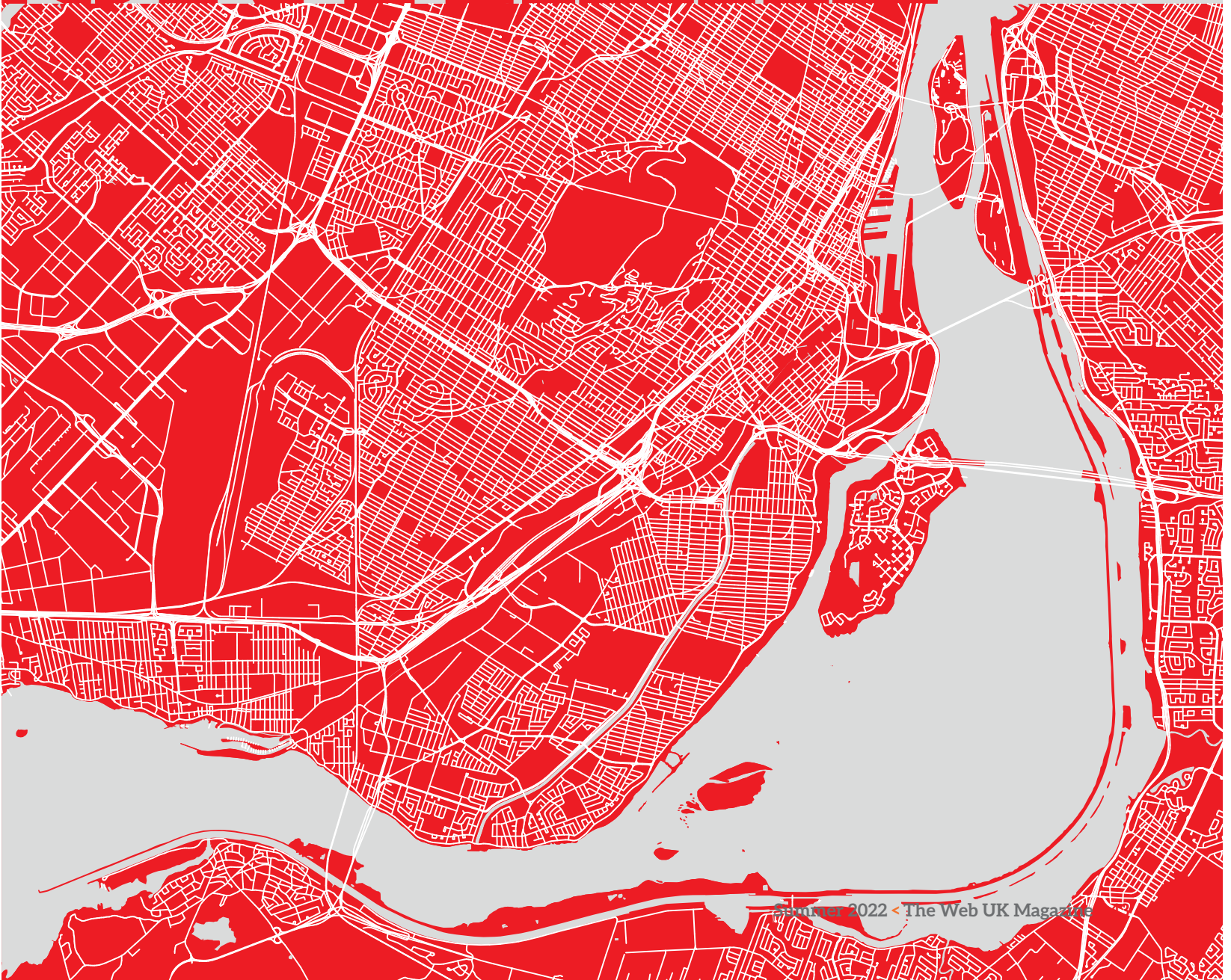
On the weekend of the 1st July Marillion returned to North America for the three night Canadian weekend in Montréal. Joseph Ackerman kept a diary of the weekend for The Web UK.

HELLO SIR, BACK TO M



> Photos by Barry Crell and Pierre Careau

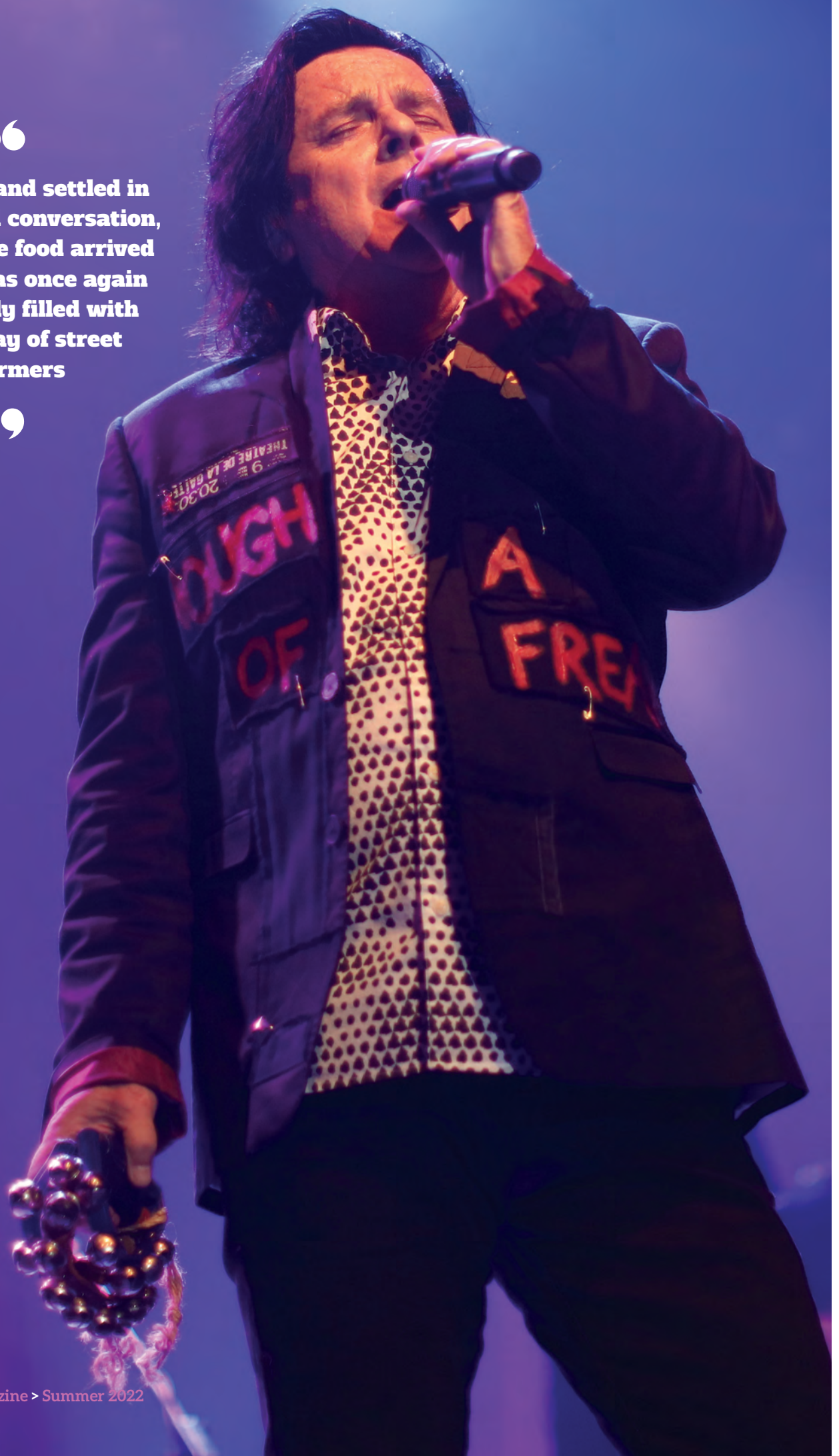
WELCOME MONTRÉAL



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We ordered and settled in for some good conversation, but before the food arrived the street was once again unexpectedly filled with a wild array of street performers

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Joseph has been an attendee at all six Montréal Weekends. He first heard and fell in love with the band via a cassette walkman lent to him in a youth hostel in Interlaken, Switzerland in the Summer of 1985. He lives and works in Silicon Valley, CA, USA and wishes his Marillion friends (including the band) would come visit more often. Here is his diary...

THURSDAY:

Since the spring of 2009, 'The Fantastic Place' for me has been Montréal. Each and every one of these weekends has been its own adventure and a respite from the usual stresses of my generally 'normal' life (whatever that means). Work, family, my engagement with local community and world news, all are generally left behind while I take a break to get out of my comfort zone and engage with a whole different world. Truly, "keep the rest of my life away." All of my usual supports are gone, I'm in unfamiliar territory in many ways, and I get to exist in a space where I don't have to explain this odd musical

obsession - everyone here already knows, they get it.

2009, 2011, 2013, 2015 and 2019 were all wonderful in their own ways, and so "here I am once more." These old bones are finding it a little harder on this trip: Two and a half years of Covid lockdown, and other (some associated with my bout at the end of 2020, others not so much) health issues have made it significantly more difficult this go-round. As a result, I am treating myself gently and have saved more filthy lucre than usual to support this venture.

My seat is reserved, in my much-beloved L'Olympia balcony: no queueing for me, no thank you sir.

I am engaged in 'Urban Glamping', ensconced in a high-end hotel room with its own sitting room, dining area and kitchenette. And with the one exception of a short walk to the bank ATM for merchantable purchase cash and a small shopping trip to stock the fridge, cabs are the order of the day for transport. So be it. No guilt, no regrets, just bills to be paid when I return home, the beneficiary of cheaper Canadian dollars. Also, can I just say how much safer I feel here than the big cities of my own country? *sigh* Maybe some day my countrymen will get their \$#!+ together.

The city and its people are lovely and warm and welcoming as always. The first show is



tomorrow tonight. No doubt the best is yet to come. I'll be checking back in periodically as I will have more time to myself on this trip, my terror of picking up Covid for a second time keeping me out of most social situations this time around. Hanging out at Brutopia with the rest of the Freaks has been a favourite staple on these trips, but I am just too worried about my health to risk it (particularly now in light of rising case numbers everywhere and the chatter about what has happened at the other weekends this year).

FRIDAY:

HOLY \$#!+... All the best freaks were there! Walking into the venue, I was overcome with this sudden wave of recognition. I was right where I was supposed to be and I was not among friends, I was among family. While I was somewhat dismayed to see only

around two percent masking, it was truly wonderful to see everyone; so many familiar faces, friends made years ago via casual conversations at the Brutopia pub, people from all over the US, Canada and places further south, all united in this peculiar obsession we carry virtually alone in the places where we live.

The line at the merch table was already wrapped around the lobby and down into the venue almost all the way to the stage. Not the easiest for me to queue for that long, but I got my stuff and as a bonus, a two minute conversation with my patron saint of all things Marillion, 'The Queen of Prog' Stephanie Bradley. The lady's been super sweet to me since the moment we first met via email in late 2008, and it's always a treat to get to say hello. Randy McStine came on in support. Some very nice songs, the guy is very talented. Not always as

quick on the uptake as I should be, I realized I was going to see him solo here, and apparently he's 'the new Wes' for the upcoming Porcupine Tree tour. I liked him quite a bit.

After scaling Mount Gauche (the left set of stairs to the balcony - oof, no picnic in my condition) I settled into my seat and got acquainted with the neighbours; a pleasant couple from Kentucky. They'd been here in 2015 and apparently Leicester and Wolverhampton as well, so veterans all. We let the real world in for a moment during the conversation and we commiserated around the issue of the state of the nation we had both temporarily left behind. Too many murder machines. Then the lights went down, and we were all treated to an astonishing high-energy set. *Separated Out* is a favourite, the inclusion of *How Can It Hurt* was





a treat, and the whole crowd was in full voice for the "too many words" (h's assessment, not mine) of *Incommunicado*. After a killer *Market Square Heroes*, and a second encore of *The Invisible Man*, we spilled out into the street a band of happy campers, high on the residual energy from the gig. A good time was had by all. This was definitely in the top third of all h-fronted Marillion gigs I've attended, so only one day in and mission already accomplished!

Getting back to base was a bit of a challenge -- it was Canada Day, after all, and between that and the never-ending state of construction/reconstruction this

city is in, it took some doing to get a cab to where I needed to be. But all's well that ends well, and I collapsed in a contented heap, ready for whatever comes next.

Saturday:

The day started out less than great, as some medication I had to take after breakfast left me feeling a bit oogy (yes, that's the technical term. Being on vacation and on my own, I took advantage of the opportunity for a mid-morning nap and awoke feeling significantly better. The day was quiet and I spent some time writing messages to friends, taking a very short walk and then relaxing with a movie.

Met my long-time balcony pal Pat for a lovely Italian dinner in the street-side dining area of a restaurant half a block from the venue. As I was seated, I noticed that the entire merchantable crew was inside, including the aforementioned Stephanie, getting a meal as well. Made sense since I knew they had to be at work in short bit. There was a parade going on in the street, so there was constant entertainment as we dined -- people on stilts (!) and in wild costumes, musicians of all sorts, papier mache rhinos and zebras, acrobats and so on -- it was all a bit surreal but genuinely joyful. I was once again overwhelmed by being in 'the fantastic place' and



marvelled at my emotional state, basking in this feeling that has been so rare since the start of the pandemic.

After once again ascending Mount Gauche to my assigned spot, The Cyberiam came out and pretty much rocked the place. Really enjoyable and totally appropriate prog-flavoured rock, good tunes that were actually about stuff, so some of you reading this might like 'em. I say give 'em a shot.

After a quick break, it was *An Hour Before It's Dark* time and what a treat it was. I always like their new material better after having a chance to hear it live,

and this was no exception, with *The Crow And The Nightingale* a stand-out highlight. Another special night from the boys, even if Mark's keyboards were 'haunted by ghosts' (again h's words, not mine) and *Sierra Leone* had to be restarted.

The encores were very good as well, *Quartz* and *Man Of A Thousand Faces* both made me very happy, and of course the always epic *Neverland* left us very sure that we had all really been somewhere (where someone would want to be). Superb. Damn it, I'm running out of adjectives. Another awesome musical night and out into the dark I went in search of a taxi to

return me to my respite. And wouldn't you know it, out on the sidewalk smoking a stinky death-stick there's Montreal Rick. MONTREAL RICK! Some here may recognise the handle, as he was regularly here somewhere back in the mists of time before Facebook migrations and the dreaded (but undoubtedly necessary) data purges. In 2008 when I first began to wonder if I could actually get away with going to a Marillion Weekend in Canada, I was online, not posting a ton but keeping up with things. I tentatively posted (along with some others) that I was considering making the journey and darn it if angels like Annick and Rick and ooh, that



poor sweet fellow that passed away soon after (Richard, I think?), didn't make it clear that they would love to meet all of us and started making various and sundry social plans for the Brutopia pub and else-wise.

When I arrived, knowing no one and unsure of myself, Rick was kind enough to invite a fair handful of us Quebec-first-timers to a barbecue garden party at his house. This kind man opened his home for us and fed us and made us feel fully welcome in a foreign land, and for that kindness I will be forever grateful. We talked about the band, other bands, and laughed mightily on many subjects, from the odd cultural differences

between us to why h seemed to sing in colour metaphors and have an obsession with "death and water." He did not have to do any of this, but went out of his way to be a gracious host. It was this exemplary first impression that likely set me on the path to coming back again (and again... and again... and again.

His joy at seeing me last night was so genuine. Great to see him. No wonder I so treasure repeatedly falling into the arms of Montreal.

One more night to go, and apparently it's a 'going full circle' event as in 2009, it is (one more time!) *Seasons End*. Can't wait, but don't want it to be over!

Sunday:

Trouble sleeping left me feeling bit off, so after my morning routine, I decided to rest up a bit more than usual. By dinner time, I was ready for the final show. Having made my way to the venue, I once again met the wonderful Pat on the patio deck at the chicken shack across the street.

We ordered and settled in for some good conversation, but before the food arrived the street was once again unexpectedly filled with a wild array of street performers. A full on drag show, including lip-synching 'singers' and a clearly trans burlesque striptease (hmm,



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never seen tassels on that part of the anatomy before (:o), an enthusiastic couple doing Bollywood-style dancing and an acrobat who managed to spin around inside a hoop Vitruvian Man style (sans exposed genitalia) that was larger than they were! It was again quite surreal to be honest, but everyone was having a grand time and it was smiles all 'round. The food soon arrived and was quite tasty, but by the time we were done a light drizzle had begun to fall. It was the first precipitation I'd seen in months (I live in drought-stricken California) much less the weekend. We hustled into the venue a little soggy but none the worse for wear.

A quick spin around the venue floor yielded a meeting with friend-of-a-friend Mark from Calgary, and another run-in with Montreal Rick. And at long last, the man I'd been looking to see

all weekend, David, the lead singer of Genesis cover band Gabble Ratchet! We'd met right here in 2011 and had been in touch on and off since. Hung out with him at The House Of Blues in Los Angeles on the 2012 US Tour as well, the first night of which is probably tops of all my non-Weekend h-era Marillion gigs. I'd made several trips to Southern California to see his band, including one where he made me the hero of my then-teenage son.

The two of us arrived at the small theatre gig to find David had reserved a spot for us where a row of the seats had been ripped out and replaced with a wide, comfy sofa plastered with a sign declaring 'Reserved for Joseph'. The look on my kid's face was priceless! Talk about "walking across the sitting room". With the Q&A about to begin, I approached Mount Gauche for one last climb with the old walking stick when one of the

kind young venue workers tapped me and asked, "Monsieur, would you prefer to take the elevator?" Say WHAT?! My sixth Montreal Weekend in thirteen years, and NOW you tell me there's an elevator??!! (Brit-speak: "lift") "Uh...sure. Thanks...", I muttered. Pretty funny in retrospect, I must say.

The Q&A was silly fun, with Ian showing up late as he had apparently been under the weather. Lucy started with a roll-call of nations, with the one fellow who hollered when she read out "Ukraine" getting an enthusiastic standing ovation. Quite moving. This was followed by some questions I don't really remember well, then quick game of 'Mr. and Mrs', with the band members (with Ian feeling sorry he'd showed up after all) and Steve R. winning the night, with a prize of 'not having to be the one who has to do the next interview' request that Lucy gets.







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This was definitely in the top third of all h-fronted Marillion gigs I've attended, so only one day in and mission already accomplished!

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Next, a game of 'pin the shades on the Drummer' and then folks getting photos with the band on stage. Such a bunch of endearing humans, the lot of them!

After a quick break it was *Seasons End* time, and it was majestic! Somehow *The Release* found its way in as well and I loved it, although I was surprised by how many folks did not seem to know it. The days of this band being 'insiders only' in North America are gone I suppose, and not a bad thing that, I just remember how hard-core everyone was singing along with it back in 2009. h got confused and began to tell the story of trying to find a saxophone player for

Berlin ("You'd think it wouldn't be too difficult what with this being Montreal... during the Jazz Festival!"), but as he did, Pete and Steve approached him from both sides walking slowly and shaking their heads sadly. With a brotherly arm around his shoulders, Rothers casually pointed to the set list at his feet. "Oh Hell! No I don't need spectacles! It's me brain!!!" and they launched into *Holloway Girl*. Then came *Berlin* and, lo and behold, a saxophone there was! So much better than the pre-recorded one I'd always got at previous gigs. Huzzah to the lady in question! *The Space* was... well it was *The Space*... in all its glory. My first indication

all those many years ago that life with this h guy was going to be just fine and long-term! Two long encores later, and it was all done, numbers 34, 35 and 36 in the books. I'd seen almost everyone I'd wanted to meet with, had three great gigs in a row, and was now making my peace with the idea of leaving 'the fantastic place'.

Big thanks to the band, to Lucy and her staff and all the tech folk (even Yenz, whom I wish would stop shining lights directly in my eyes in the balcony [it's painful!] but is otherwise an amazing LD). Let's do it again sometime! ●



NONE MORE BLACK



> Interview by Anne Bond

> Photos courtesy of Kat Marsh/Choir Noir

Anne Bond talked by email with Kat Marsh:
leader, arranger and Founder of Choir Noir who
feature prominently on *An Hour Before It's Dark*.

What is your musical background?

My musical training/ background is entirely self-taught. I've been performing since I was a teenager and song writing and recording to a professional standard for the past thirteen years. I've learned everything on the job, so to speak!

Arranging, scoring, choir-leading and session-singing are all things I've learned by doing. I'm constantly learning new things; I'm branching out a bit into vocal production, I'm currently vocal producing the new Tesseract album.

How long have Choir Noir been together?

We performed together for the first time with Bring Me The Horizon at the Royal Albert Hall in 2016, but we officially launched in 2018, so between four and six years!

How many of you performed on the album?

There were twelve singers.

What sort of music/ projects are you normally involved with?

We work mostly with alternative/ metal/progressive bands and occasionally pop/DnB. We've

recorded and/or performed with Architects, Bring Me The Horizon, Ed Sheeran, Frank Turner and many more.

How did you get to be involved in working with Marillion?

The Bring Me The Horizon show at Royal Albert Hall was filmed by Tim Sidwell and I stayed in touch with him after that performance. He shared the choir videos and one of my videos (I release my own music under the name Cestra) with h and their producer Mike Hunter. They loved it and reached out to get us involved in *An Hour Before It's Dark*.

Were you familiar with any of Marillion's music before this project?

Several of the choir members are fans of the band and they were super excited about the choir performing on the record. For some of us this was our introduction to Marillion so we've had a great time discovering their legacy!

How did the choir music come about? Was it written for you or did you have input into it?

I was given free reign over the arrangements which is always the most fun for me! I spoke to Mike and h at length about what they

wanted for the two tracks *Care* and *The Crow And The Nightingale*.

For *Crow* I was given the reference of the incredible Bulgarian choir 'Le Mystère des Voix Bulgares' and for *Care*, a bombastic ascension to heaven. I was able to take these concepts and run with the arrangements. With *Crow*, I chose close, dissonant harmonies and a range of dynamic movement.

With *Care* I created huge walls of harmonies with an angelic counterpoint for the finale. My aim is always to take the emotional intention of the song and expand it outwards as far as I can and I feel like the band really allowed me to do this to my best ability.

At what stage in the writing of the album did you become involved?

I first spoke to h and Mike at the end of June 2021, the tracks they sent me were very fully formed so I think they were at the closing stages of album production.

Did you meet the band during the recording process or did you record it remotely?

We were still being very cautious at that point in time and the choir was only recording remotely. We did





everything remote and the choir sent their stems (vocal tracks) to me to mix for delivery to Mike.

Lots of people have asked about the words being sung, can you shed any light on this?

The majority of our vocal work on *An Hour Before It's Dark* was non-lyrical. We sang a range of pads, hums and belts, with a few lyrics here and there. The big choir sections at the ends of both

The Crow And The Nightingale, and *Care* are non-lyrical, we're a wall of wailing voices. In terms of the lyrical meaning, I know that *Care* was h's love letter to the incredible NHS workers who looked after everyone during the pandemic. The meaning behind *Crow* is more cryptic and I've been enjoying reading the various theories.

Do you think the songs would work if performed live with the choir?

Yes absolutely, we'd love to perform them live with the band.

Were the finished versions of the songs how you imagined they would be? Were you pleased with the results?

The final mixes sounded incredible, the emotional intention I'd shot for was palpable. We were all incredibly pleased with the results. ●

CHOIR

Choir Noir singers are hand-picked for their talent, studio and live experience and understanding/involvement within the music industry.

As a result of their experience within the industry, their vocalists are extremely versatile, work under tight time constraints and are very hard-working. The members also understand how important the right attitude

is towards making rehearsals, tours and sessions enjoyable for everyone.

If you want to know more about Choir Noir or Kat's own project, check out these links:

Choir Noir:
<https://www.choirnoir.com/>

Doomsday by Architects:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vbl5ns3--YU>

Kat's project Cestra, a live performance with members of Choir Noir:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lox3kZmy2OM>



Dont forget next year's Marillion Weekends:

PORT ZÉLANDE

16 - 20 MARCH 2023

?

14 - 15 APRIL 2023

ITALY

28 - 29 April 2023

NORTH AMERICA

12 - 13 MAY 2023

UK

27 - 28 MAY 2023

GERMANY

23 - 24 JUNE 2023

We look forward to seeing you there!

For more information visit
<https://www.marillionweekend.com/>



Harping On

A young woman with long brown hair, wearing a white blouse and a plaid apron, is smiling and playing a wooden harp. She is standing in a field of vibrant red poppies. The background shows a line of trees under a clear sky. The harp is a large, wooden, upright instrument with many strings and a curved neck.

Marillion wanted some harp on *An Hour Before It's Dark*, so who better to ask than Bethan Bond, daughter of The Web UK's editor Anne, who just happens to be a very experienced harpist?

Tell us a bit about yourself and what you are currently doing.

I'm 18 and I've just finished my A levels (chemistry, maths and physics) and am going to be studying chemistry at Swansea university in October.

How long have you been playing the harp and how did you come to choose such an unusual instrument?

I've been playing the harp for eleven years and I did my grade eight when I was fourteen. I chose the harp because it was on a children's cartoon tv programme I liked when I was little (called Bobinogs) and I begged my mum for ages to let me have lessons for a while before she managed to find me a teacher. I think she thought I'd lose interest and choose something more common like the flute or the piano but I never stopped wanting to play it. We were lucky that we found a lady locally who gave lessons and had a small harp I could rent until we bought my own harp.

I still have weekly lessons and also play in a harp group with about eight other harpists. We usually do about three concerts a year and I have also taken part in a yearly harp competition in Leamington Spa with the group and on my own.

Is the harp a particularly difficult instrument to play and do you play anything else?

The harp is quite difficult to play to a high level. It is easy to get a nice sound from it right from the first lesson but, like the piano, you have to master both hands playing different parts so it soon becomes very tricky as the pieces get more complicated. You also need strong fingers and they can get very sore from lots of playing. At school, I used to play in a ukulele group and I also had singing lessons at sixth form college and sang in the choir.

Had you heard of Marillion before playing on the album?

Yes, my mum and dad have been fans for a long time and are part of

the Web UK team so I've been going to shows since I was very young. In fact, my first show was the Marillion weekend in Butlins when I was one but obviously I can't remember anything about it! I even met Steve Hogarth in my pushchair.

I went to a couple of the weekends at Port Zélande when I was small and enjoyed meeting all the fans from around the world. I think I remember the swimming pool, the terrapins and the mini-helicopter ride more than I remember the music but it was great fun. The big balls and the confetti canon also

seeing them live and they played quite a big part in my childhood.

How was your part recorded?

Mike Hunter asked if I'd be willing to play some parts for a song on the album and then sent me some sheet music to give me an idea of what the band wanted. It had been arranged on a computer so I had to adapt it a little to make it possible to play all the notes they wanted on an actual harp. We took my pedal harp to the Racket Club and I played several versions of the music, mainly different glissandos



stick in my mind. Several times a year, we all had to go down to the Racket Club to pack the Web UK magazines. When we were tiny, me and my younger brother used to draw on the empty boxes but when we were old enough, we got roped into helping stick labels on envelopes and pack magazines.

One Christmas, the Web UK team sang on *Carol Of The Bells* and you can spot me in the video. Mike Hunter also had a go at recording me playing a big chord on my harp. I wouldn't say that I'm a fan of the band but I've always enjoyed

and arpeggios. Mike recorded everything and told me that the band would have the final say as to what they liked.

Do you think it would work having a harp play live on stage with the band?

I don't know if I would be loud enough, but I would definitely be willing to give it a go. I've played with orchestras before and it is always a challenge to make the harp parts heard above the other instruments.



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PO Box 252, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire, HP18 0YS, UK