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REVIEW

Music Review: Fish - *13th Star*

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In this little corner of Scotland you are never more than [three degrees of separation](#) from the local hero that is Fish. It seems every shop assistant, every drinker on a bar stool next to you, knows somebody who knows Fish. My only real connection to him is a long distant memory of spotty geek days writing treasured Marillion lyrics on my schoolbook when I should have been listening to the teacher.

Fast forward from the [plooks](#) of yesteryear to the wrinkles of today and I find that some memories are inviolate. Fish has always written beautiful and evocative lyrics and he hasn't failed me on *13th Star*. It seems he has been having hard times of late, when a marriage that should have been fell at the final hurdle. Some of the best songs on the album grew from this dark period in his life - it seems it is the lot of the ex-partner of a songsmith to be vilified in tunes which live long past the dying days of the relationship, though in this case the tales are more of lost dreams than of vitriol.

Fish's distinctive vocal style has ripened, though it has more quality when he reaches deep into his boots. There's a spoken section which opens the funky "Openwater" which fair made my middle-aged knees tremble. It has a delicious come-to-bed quality and shows that he hasn't entirely forsaken his Scottish twang in favour of that characterless indeterminate "song accent". You can hear it again on the snarled lyrics of the fierce "Square Go". "I want to hit back at this 'wurruld'"* indeed.

The post-Marillion career of Fish has not always gone swimmingly well, and having taken my eye from his output since my school days, I was curious to see whether he still had the power to move me. If I'm honest, *13th Star* is not an unqualified success; I fear the skip button would be pressed for the tracks which fail to hook. "Where in the World" and "13th Star" are a little too bland, a little to 'nice' to evoke the visceral response I crave in music, in spite of the fact that the lyrics are really very special. "Manchmal" and "Dark Star" finds him in a gutsier frame of mind, all tenderness and teeth. "Openwater" quickly presented itself as a frontrunner, and it wasn't just because of his low, dark words. Honest. It is with these songs that Fish proved that he still has the power to move me.

So if I ever do find myself on a bar stool next to Fish, talking about *13th Star*, I'll shake his hand and say, "It wisnae half bad, big man!"

*wurruld - world

Corylus is pleased to live in Scotland, living as disgracefully as is possible given her lamentable state of finances. She bears life's little hiccups by repeating the mantra 'life is inherently absurd' until she feels calmer. but



