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FIGHTING CONSERVATIVISM, FUNDAMENTALISM AND ANTI-INTELLECTUALISM SINCE
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Somewhere Else

"Love her like you've never fallen
in love before
Fall out of love with her
So you can remember"

EASTER 2007: *Somewhere Else* is here. What can be said about the latest Marillion offering? While this is recognizably the band that brought us *Marbles*, it is (as usual) a completely new direction for Marillion. It is experimental and unconventional. This is more of a song-oriented record than a album-based record consisting of a continuing theme. At the same time, the songs don't really stand out as prominent individual pieces. They all blend together quite nicely, creating an atmospheric journey the transitions seamlessly from one track to another. There aren't many hooks, making the album as a whole not as easily accessible as it might be, there are no tracks like "You're Gone" to reach out and grab you. (*see note below). The closest track is "Most Toys". The first time I heard this I thought it was going to be very trite. At less than three minutes, it is an anomaly for Marillion; but more troublesome, the lyrics seem incomplete, as an intro verse should have been added. Nevertheless, the track is a catchy one.

Musically, *Somewhere Else* contains top notch performances. The bass and drums are solid. There is a lot of outstanding piano work, and perhaps most importantly there is a lot of Rothery's magical electric guitar. The style contains pieces of *Anoraknophobia*, *.com*, and musical phrases straight off of *Brave* and *This Strange Engine*. There is also a notable Beatles influence, both musically and lyrically, as there was on *Marbles* ("Don't Hurt Yourself"). What is lacking is the intensity of the "classic" Marillion era of *Season's End*

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and *Holidays in Eden*, where the bass was driving and the guitars screaming.

In terms of lyrics and song structure, this album continues Marillion's journey farther away from conventional structure into more abstract territories. There isn't much of a verse/chorus structure and many songs seem to be two completely separate sections put together, although there could be a thematic purpose for that, (The Other Half), (This is what prog is supposed to be right, so anyone who thinks Marillion is not progressive needs to take a listen to this. It's not *Holidays in Eden*!). The lyrics are also abstract and seem somewhat stream-of-consciousness. I'm not sure if H is just getting more obscure, or if I'm just not getting it, or maybe there's nothing to get. I guess that's my homework assignment, and I'm sure like all good art it will become more and more meaningful as I experience it. In the tradition of U2, H's global awareness certainly shines through more than any other Marillion record. "The Wound" is a song about pain and ferns with imagery that reminds me of Sting's "Lazarus Heart":

He looked beneath his shirt today
There was a wound in his flesh so deep and wide
From the wound a lovely flower grew
From somewhere deep inside

So while I don't think the album as a whole lives up to the standards set by the Classic period, I also think this will be an essential piece of Marillion history, the music is simply too unique and too well crafted not to be. For myself this is a CD that can be put on repeat and I never feel inclined to hit stop.

*Just to set the record straight on *Marbles*: I've seen much criticism about "You're Gone", referring to bad pop and often accusing it of a cheese factor. Not only do I think it the best song of 2004 and the best Marillion track since *This Strange Engine*, I also think it may be one of their best songs ever. The intensity of the lyrics and the multiple guitar solo's are unsurpassed. I remember riding a bus across the UK the month *Marbles* came out, and leaving this song on constant repeat on my ipod. The emotional intensity in this song seemed to me to reflect the emotional depth that I felt from England as well.

". . .And your life took on a life of it's own. . ."

POSTED BY BRIAN MCCOOLEY AT 3:53 AM

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