



PHOTO: NIELS VAN IPEREN

# Marillion goes *Somewhere Else*

Band considers its chemistry  
tighter than ever on 14<sup>th</sup>  
studio release

By ROSS BOISSONEAU

It has been nearly a quarter century since Marillion arose at the forefront of progressive rock's second wave in the early 1980s. During that span the band gradually adapted to a changing musical landscape, morphing from prototypical neo-progressive band, replete with references to Peter Gabriel-era Genesis, to crack contemporary rock band.

Rock, yes — but still progressive? According to guitarist Steve Rothery, yes, probably, but bassist Pete Trewavas isn't so sure.

"It's a rock band," Trewavas says flatly, before adding, "I'm not even sure it's a *rock* band."

"Some people call you progressive," says Rothery, "but they mean that as an insult, like the worst '70s excess or self-indulgent twaddle. The true meaning is it doesn't have to conform to short-radio format.

"You can absorb classical, jazz. It [progressive music] has more meaning than most conventional pop songs. In that regard, yes, we're a progressive band."

Drummer Ian Mosley is more succinct. "I've never really thought about progressive rock, I much prefer to think of music as good or bad — whether it's long or short," he says.

Not that this discussion settles anything definitively. Marillion long has been considered a standard-bearer among second-generation prog bands, along with outfits such as Pallas and Pendragon, which followed on the heels of Kansas and



Rush and the “golden-era” groups who pioneered progressive rock in the ‘70s – the likes of King Crimson, Yes, and Emerson, Lake & Palmer.

Marillion has been fortunate enough to see only two personnel changes over the band’s now lengthy tenure as a recording act. Mosley replaced drummer Mick Pointer following the release of 1983 debut album *Script for a Jester’s Tear*, though the band toured with Andy Ward of Camel on drums before Mosley joined. After 1987’s *Clutching at Straws* and the double-live *The Thieving Magpie* a year later, Steve Hogarth replaced original lead vocalist Derek Dick, a/k/a Fish.

Mosley says the band’s continued existence and its relative stability over the years owes much to the members enjoying each other, both musically and personally. “Although there have been lots of ups and downs, I think it’s that we basically get on OK with each other and we enjoy the music that we make together,” he says.

“We have a great natural chemistry,” agrees Rothery.

Working together for so many years has given the group a sense of familiarity that’s apparent both in concert and on record. Marillion’s 14<sup>th</sup> studio album *Somewhere Else*, they say, is yet another example.

“We’ve improved as musicians, and I think we’ve learned the craft of writing and arranging,” says Trewavas of the new album. “That’s one of the strengths of *Marbles* [the group’s previous recording, released in 2004] and this album.”

Notes Rothery, “I see a progression through all the records. We try not to repeat ourselves but to experiment, use a slightly different approach.” As an example he cites *Marbles*, where he and Trewavas switched instruments — Rothery playing bass and Trewavas acoustic guitar.

Trewavas says the overall goal of *Somewhere Else* was to show the band at peak performance. “We wanted to capture the energy of what we do live,” he says. “We did live recording” as opposed to having the individual members record parts separately.

“It’s fresh, dynamic. Mike [producer Mike Hunter] brought a certain kind of energy to it,” says Rothery of the new work. “A lot of people think it’s one of our best. It’s got a bit of *Marbles*, but not the darkness.”



PHOTO: CARL GLOVER

The band has weathered changes in mainstream popular music while progressive rock has waxed and waned. The alternative sound, progressive metal and “big guitar” all have cycled around while pop tarts and boy bands ruled radio. Through it all Marillion has persevered, producing quality contemporary music that stands the test of time.

One of the biggest advancements for musicians during the past quarter-century is newfound technological freedom: Band members praise the advances in recording technology allowing them to work in home studios with quality equipment and sound capability that simply was impossible 15 or 20 years ago.

“The thing that really changed for us was having our own studio,” says Rothery. “*Brave* [1994] was a very expensive album. Now we can make high-quality records without spending \$1,000 a day for studio time.”

Marillion now has a wealth of material from which to choose when it comes to live performance. Rothery and Trewavas say they take several factors into account when selecting a tour’s set list. “We always focus on the album we’re releasing or promoting,” says Rothery. “Then, we try to balance it with other songs.”

Trewavas says that recent concert history plays a role on what is played and what is shelved, at least temporarily. “We look back on our last three or four tours and pull out songs that are overdone,” he says. “Then we do ones that we haven’t played in a while. We rehearse to see which ones sound the best.”

When they do perform live, who exactly are they playing to? Most groups find initial audiences aging right alongside them. Of course, without a constant influx of new devotees, the old fan base eventually dries up. And with American radio’s abiding reluctance to play progressive music — especially new

progressive music — Marillion would seem to have a tough go of things outside its native England.

That’s where another technological godsend comes into play — the Internet. Trewavas lauds the World Wide Web as a means by which the band can recruit new fans while keeping older ones. “With the Internet, a lot of new people are listening to us all the time,” he says.

“Our audience has a high percentage of people in their mid-twenties to thirties,” says Rothery. “Plus, there are those who’ve been around with us a long time. The audience is not just in their fifties. It’s quite a wide cross-section.”

Marillion has built that audience on the foundation of its swirling neo-prog sound, distinguished by Rothery’s nimble guitar runs and Mark Kelly’s symphonic keyboards. The solid rhythm section of Trewavas and Mosley holds things together, while the emotive vocals of first Fish and now Hogarth enliven poetic, thought-provoking lyrics.

Long years together have lent synchronicity to the creative process. “We’re bound to improve as musicians,” says Trewavas, “and we’re bound to learn more about our art and craft.”



PHOTO: CARL GLOVER



Mosley concurs. “There is still some kind of magic that happens when all five of us are in a room making music,” he says.

Adds Rothery, “We’re lucky we have a great natural rapport” when it comes to songwriting. “We jam and record to mini-disc. We get things through that process you wouldn’t get any other way. It’s kind of a musical telepathy. We have confidence in each other as writers and musicians.”

Marillion had early success in the ‘80s recruiting fans in its native Britain with singles such as “Market Square Heroes,” “He Knows You Know” and “Kayleigh.” American radio, unfortunately, failed to embrace the band’s unusual (for that time) neo-progressive sound.

While the melodic hit single might be a thing of Marillion’s past, band members retain a soft spot for great melodic rock singles. They acknowledge bands such as the Beatles and other ‘60s-era rock groups as influences, alongside their prog forebears.

“I started out listening to the Beatles, the Kinks, the Who,” says Trewavas. “They played well-crafted songs. Tears for Fears’ ‘Sowing the Seeds of Love’ is a great song. It’s a well-crafted pop song. And I enjoyed early Genesis, *Selling England by the Pound*.

“We always have some radio-friendly songs,” he says. “But they’re more likely to be accidental rather than attempts at hit singles.”

Nor does the band disdain trendy pop. Rothery mentions Moe, Coldplay and Muse as among his current favorites. “I quite like the Kooks,” notes Trewavas.

Marillion is unafraid to look back critically on its own body of work. When band members consider what they’ve created through 20-20 hindsight, certain songs and albums stand out. Trewavas has a special fondness for 1995 album *Afraid of Sunlight*, while Mosley brings up songs such as “Easter,” “Invisible Man” and “Warm Wet Circles.”

“We do strong individual songs with a lot of energy,” says Rothery.

The band currently is mulling tour plans, but nothing was planned at this writing for the U.S. “Europe is being scheduled now,” Rothery says. “We have no firm plans for the U.S. We’ll definitely be coming back, we just don’t know when.”

When they do hit the road, Trewavas and Rothery hope the vibe is as good as it was on the *Marbles* tour. Trewavas believes he and the band played as well as they ever have. That applied to festival gigs as well. “We did a convention in Holland,” Trewavas says. “We did tunes from *Radiation* [1998], *This Strange Engine* [1997] ... we played our favorite tracks. We had the best lighting we’ve ever had. We hope to release a DVD. We can’t have that kind of production over the course of a tour, of course.”

Ultimately, Marillion strives to deliver intelligent music for audiences that have come to expect nothing less.

“I think we make interesting music that has a lot of integrity,” says Rothery.

“A lot of honesty,” adds Trewavas.

“There’s a lot of passion in what we do,” Rothery concludes. “People either get what we do, or they don’t.” **Ω**

## Finding Marillion

### ‘somewhere else’

#### Trewavas, Rothery, regale crowd in intimate setting

By ANGELA SCHULTZ

This writer has been a Marillion fan since being coaxed by *Kerrang!* magazine to check out “Peter Gabriel’s younger brother” back in the ‘80s. There was a picture on the cover of *Fish*, sporting a cut-off T-shirt and bandana around his head. Being the big Genesis fan that I am I bought the issue, curious to read about the man who could “sing like Gabriel.” I then obtained *Misplaced Childhood*, their new record at the time, and have enjoyed Marillion to this day.

Twenty-three years later and Marillion still is making fresh music for legions of very loyal fans who travel far and wide to concerts and attend special band-sponsored weekend getaways. So it’s not unusual at any given time to find the group “somewhere else” – not only the title of its new album, but also an apt description of a special promotional appearance in wintry New York City.

It promised from the outset to be a very special evening. Mainstays Peter Trewavas (bass, guitar) and Steve Rothery (guitar) treated a guest audience of about 100 people to a preview listen of *Somewhere Else*, plus a rarely witnessed duo live performance.

As they casually chatted with fans and journalists and signed autographs, strains of the new disc could be heard above the chatter of merry patrons bellied up to the bar. The grungy, homey vibe at Kenny’s Castaways was a comfortably accessible setting — especially for a chilly late-February weeknight in the Big Apple.

The music was especially pleasing to these discerning ears. Songs were: “Last Century for Man,” “The Other Half,” “Most Toys,” “Thank You Whoever You Are,” “Somewhere Else,” “The Wound,” “See It Like a Baby,” “Voice From the Past,” “No Such Thing,” and “Faith.” Marillion appeared to have challenged itself once again by creating a record of fresh dramatic beauty.

The duo’s live performance was a special treat — so up-close and personal. Trewavas sang while playing his bass alongside guitarist Rothery. He explained that vocalist Steve Hogarth, keyboardist Mark Kelly and drummer Ian Mosley were in Europe promoting *Somewhere Else*, so he would have to sing, (much to the crowd’s delight).

With the group’s good friend, David Levine, playing drums, Trewavas and Rothery performed acoustic versions of “Easter,” “Sugar Mice” and “The Answering Machine.” The audience cheerfully sang along, as is customary at Marillion shows. Pete was applauded by the crowd, but was admonished by one listener to “Stick to the singing, Pete!” when his attempt to share a joke fell flat.

As the evening drew to a close it seemed no one wanted to leave. Unfortunately, the band that followed Marillion needed to set up onstage, so the trio was hurried off. This rushed conclusion put a damper on what could’ve been a wonderfully perfect night of music and merriment. But as unique events go in the unpredictable world of progressive music, this one won’t soon be forgotten. **Ω**