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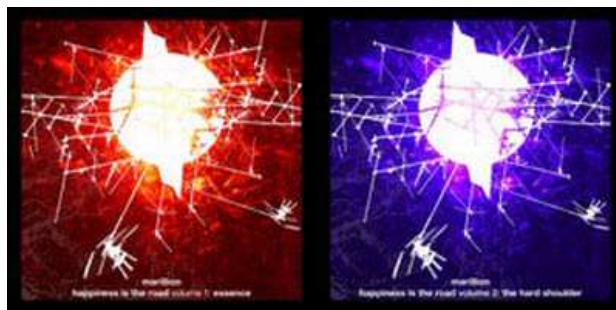
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Marillion

Happiness Is the
Road Vol 1 & 2

MVD Audio

www.marillion.com

Marillion is one of those bands that have been around for decades yet is still a band many people (in the U.S. especially) have never heard of. Like many bands that have been around for nearly 30 years they have two distinct eras. The first consists of four CDs fronted by vocalist Fish and is probably their most well known era (which produced most of their "hits" like "Incommunicado", "Assassing" and "Kayleigh") and the second era fronted by current vocalist Steve Hogarth with 11 albums under his belt. However the transitions of singers has been well accepted by fans (with a few exceptions) for the most part. Marillion's sound is also unique in some would describe it as prog rock, others have labeled them "neo prog" and others have been so bold as to classify them as a pop rock band. However in my opinion labeling the band as one specific genre is like pinning jello to a wall... It's nearly impossible. There are moments of prog, moments of pop, moments of guitar and piano driven rock, moments of alternative. I guess I consider them more of "mood music". This means sometimes they can get the adrenaline pumping, other times lull you to sleep and other times get you lost in a complex web of intricate sounds.

Happiness Is the Road is the 15th full length studio CD and contains two discs, 20 songs and almost two hours of new material that is guaranteed to satisfy Marillion fans across the globe. In all honesty I didn't like the CDs when I first popped them in the player; it took me a good two SOLID listens to really get into it. The first disc entitled Essence gets off to a slow start with moody and quiet piano and guitar ballads and doesn't really pick up until track six "Nothing Fills the Hole". This isn't to say the first five songs aren't good it's just that they are very mellow songs and don't pull the listener in immediately. By track seven "Woke Up" I am hearing what I consider vintage Marillion and is clearly the best track on the first disc. Closing out the disc is what is supposed to be a hidden track entitled "Half Empty Jam" which I think should have been either an opening track or one of the first three songs. Disc two is titled The Hard Shoulder and is the stronger CD of the two. Opening the CD is "Thunder Fly" and sets the tone for the remainder of the CD. It is the "rockier" of the two and captured me a lot quicker than Essence. Personally I would have made this disc one, but I am sure they had their reason for doing it the way they did. Honestly there is not a song on this CD that I skip over and feel this CD can stand alone.

Overall Happiness Is the Road is a solid release from Marillion. If you are a fan then this two disc set is a must for you. If you are new to the band then I would at least suggest you check out this CD, however if you only can afford one disc I would suggest getting the second one. Having been a fan of Marillion since their second record Fugazi I am very pleased with their new effort and look forward to more similar releases in the future. It is apparent that these guys love their fans and get great pleasure from making their fans happy which ultimately makes the band all the more appealing to me. They will not sell out to the industry and will do whatever it takes to make great music for their loyal fans. Check these guys out you will be glad you did.

Reviewed by Jeff Holton

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