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## Review

Have you ever fallen into a dream? That's what listening to **Marillion** is like. The band's sonic embrace materializes through lush melodies, orchestral passages and seductively somber vocals. However, their 15th studio album, *Happiness is the Road*, isn't just one dreamscape; it's two, and they're both worth delving into. Separated into two halves, *Essence* and *The Hard Shoulder*, the album's a weirdly inviting ride. Marillion challenge listeners, through creating layered soundscapes that require and reward attention to detail. It's a challenge well worth taking for any discerning fan.

Prog rock has always been a strange genre, but Marillion take the very notion of "progressive" and bend it to their collective whim. Over the course of these songs, aural textures segue from experimental to ethereal, yet the band never loses sight of melody. "This Train Is My Life" and "Nothing Fills The Whole" both feel elegantly morose, while "Happiness Is the Road" hypnotizes through a massive web of **guitar** and key orchestration. "Liquidity" flows with a fire that only a band this seasoned could muster. That's only just the first half of *Happiness Is the Road*. The second matches the first, but dives below the "prog" surface and into an ethereal darkness that culminates on "Real Tears for Sale," a veritable epic.

Marillion have remain a cult sensation, but they deserve the mainstream's attention now more than ever. In a musical climate dominated by the "style over substance" mantra, it's refreshing to see a band that's not afraid to still take chances. The "initiated" already know about Marillion's brilliance. However, if you're new to the band, feel free to close your eyes and drift away on this *Road*.

—Rick Florino  
12.01.08