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## **Progressive Ideas: Marillion breaks new ground in file sharing**

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by Michael Popke

Marillion.

### **The Marillion Dollar Question**

Some music fans argue that progressive rock remains mired in the dark ages. They point to the genre's reliance on concept albums, vintage analog instruments and overlong songs as proof. Then there's Marillion, a British group that enjoyed mainstream success during the 1980s with such albums as *Script for a Jester's Tear* and *Misplaced Childhood*.

But since the late 1990s, Marillion has embraced the Internet, asking fans to subsidize tours and pre-order albums to finance their recording. Now, with its 15th studio album, *Happiness Is the Road*, Marillion becomes among the first bands to legally distribute albums via peer-to-peer Internet networks. A partnership with [www.MusicGlue.com](http://www.MusicGlue.com), an online marketing and retail service for artists and record labels, enables the band to deliver a video message to fans downloading the music and invite them to check out albums and other merchandise at [www.marillion.com](http://www.marillion.com).

"While we don't condone illegal file sharing, it's a fact of life that a lot of music fans do it," says keyboardist Mark Kelly. "We want to know who our file-sharing fans are. If they like our new album enough, then we want to persuade them to pay something for it, or at least come back and see us on tour."

No word yet on how the strategy is working, but Kelly adds that it is a way to make "something positive from the dire situation most artists find themselves in today."

*Happiness Is the Road* ranks among Marillion's strongest and most diverse albums in years, regardless of the format — although it also is available on traditional CDs. Suggesting that the band has left its Genesis-like roots far behind, the album is divided into two separate discs (*Essence* and *The Hard Shoulder*) that musically reference everyone from Radiohead and Interpol to Traffic, Pink Floyd, David Bowie and even Marvin Gaye.