

on make-terrate relationships.

Kings of Leon's massive British success is probably what pushed them to move away from their old American sound. You can't blame them for that. But, if they want to make a truly great album, they need to write the kind of songs that brought in listeners in the first place.

—Tony Sclafani



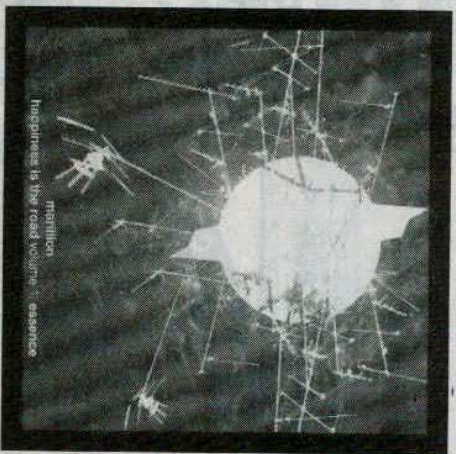
*Smokey and his Sister*

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## Smokey And His Sister

Sundazed (SC 6248)

This eponymous CD compiles 13 tracks recorded by singer-songwriter-guitarist Larry "Smokey" Mims and his sister, Vicki Mims, for Columbia Records between November 1966 and June 1967. Four songs were issued on two singles during 1967; the nine previously unreleased numbers were cut for a wondrous album that has materialized some 40 years later. A treasure for fans of baroque pop, *Smokey And His Sister* manifests the intricate delicacy of the Left Banke and the folk-guitar textures of Simon and Garfunkel, even plumbng the melancholy celo



## Marillion

*Happiness Is The Road, Vol. 1 (Essence); Happiness Is The Road, Vol. 2 (The Hard Shoulder)*  
NWDaudio (NWDAA4814; NWDAA4815)

With the two-CD set *Happiness Is The Road*, Marillion has taken a further step away from its prog roots and inched into a world of lush, dreamlike soundscapes — think late Pink Floyd meets Tangerine Dream. In the end, it's Marillion, that uncategoryzable quintet that writes music for itself, never knowing what the beginning or end result will be.

The music on *Essence* is a concept about the meaning of life and happiness, while *The Hard Shoulder* is an odds-and-socks mix of different sounds and ideas. Both discs are layered in sound and require a few passes to hear everything that's going on. The recording, though, is superb and seems to open new doors with every new listen. Vocalist Steve Hogarth has become a frighten-

The band set a high standard with the award-winning DVD "Rush in Rio" in 2003, and the 30th-anniversary tour DVD in 2005 featured not only a concert filmed in Germany but also a pile of Easter eggs and bonus material dating back to the 1970s.

"Snakes & Arrows" niche is in its sound and visuals, both of which exceed the previous DVDs by a large margin. Especially in high def or on Blu-ray, this DVD looks as amazing as you would expect, but more importantly for fans, this is finally an audio mix that sounds like you'd like the band to sound live. Guitarist Alex Lifeson comes through loud and clear, which, depending on where you're standing, isn't always true in concert. And, as usual, he's amazingly spot-on.

Highlights of the show include the second and third songs, "Digital Man" and "Entre Nous," the former being possibly the best live performance the band has ever caught on tape. The lowlight is undoubtedly the audience. A "Valium in Holland" Google search netted no

ingly good lyricist, willing to expose every fiber of his being in song. In "Happiness Is The Road," Hogarth relates a story of meeting a man who helped him cast off his baggage and realize that "Happiness ain't at the end of the road. Happiness is the road." It's one of the band's most powerful numbers. With "Essence," Marillion has delivered another masterpiece: Listen as Hogarth carries the tune through its spiraling lyric and melody. If you blink, you also might miss the elegiac, two-minute instrumental "Liquidity," a deeply moving track and superb band effort.

*The Hard Shoulder* opens with the rocking "Thunder Fly," a sprinter and a song where guitarist Steve Rothery gets to spread his soulful wings. Amazing vocals, here, too: "The Man From The

(The Gorge and Red Rocks in early 2008 come to mind.) The extras are not worth watching, either: with the exception of more concert video shot in Atlanta in 2008 added to the disc so all of the songs played live on the tour were represented.

Critics of the "Snakes & Arrows" album were not thrilled with the nine songs the band played from the new effort on this tour, and they may be skipping them on this DVD as well. That could be a mistake — the enthusiasm the band gives the new songs outpaces the older material. They absolutely attack "The Way the Wind Blows," for instance.

This is a must-buy for Rush fans because of the sound and look. For the casual fan or as a gift to a casual fan, "Rush in Rio" and its crazy fans are still the place to start, and "R30" offers a better sampling of the band's career, but almost any music lover will enjoy watching three of the world's best musicians in a near-perfect performance.

—Rocky Landsverk

Planet Marzipan" has a distinctive Eastern vibe, with some exotic percussion, and it is the proggiest tune of the set.

"Asylum Satellite #1" is a beautiful, floating track that sounds great in headphones. "Throw Me Out" is a broken-relationship affair with a pastiche of instruments including strings, clarinet and accordion! And I love Hogarth relating an Englishman's confusion over Major League Baseball on "Especially True." Watch out for the unlabeled bonus track on *Essence*, the "Half Empty Jam" that follows a blank Track 11 on *Essence*. It's one of the most energetic performances here.

—Todd Whittesell

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