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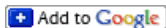
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Review by [David Cornelius](#) | posted May 11, 2009 | [E-mail the Author](#) | [Start a Discussion](#)

In 2006, Marillion frontman Steve Hogarth began a series of solo concerts - to find out, as he jokes, if anyone would pay money to see him. Of course they did. Marillion fans are loyal to the end, supporting side projects with great delight, and they knew Hogarth is enough of a showman to make much from a solo evening. The resulting tour, dubbed "h Natural," was a collection of stripped-down, piano-and-vocals-only performances of songs from Marillion, his solo band H, his pre-Marillion groups Europeans and How We Live, and a smattering of assorted covers, filled out with excerpts from Hogarth's diary (he's a notoriously detailed and flourish-heavy journal keeper) and stories behind the songs' creations.

Luckily for fans, Hogarth sticks to Marillion's habit of archive overkill. Recordings of most of the singer's solo shows have been or are expected to be made available online, and two DVDs of his shows were filmed. The first, simply titled "h Natural," found Hogarth at the beginning of his tour, and now comes the follow-up, "h: Naked in the Chapel," which captures the tail end.

The film finds Hogarth at the Union Chapel in Islington, London on September 22, 2007. By this point, he's comfortable with the show's layout, joking with the audience, stopping mid-song whenever the mood strikes to tell a story or kid the crowd. It's such informality that might not make this show the perfect introduction to Hogarth or the many Marillion songs on display (although as newcomers, they might take nicely to the several well-spun covers), although novices may still enjoy the friendly atmosphere.

Hogarth opens the concert with an odd choice: "The Hollow Man," a somber, bitter, low key track from Marillion's 1994 *Brave* album. It's a sad tune, all slow tempo and melancholy, hardly the first choice for getting the crowd excited. Then again, its laid back sounds also serve quite nicely in setting the tone for the evening: tonight will be quiet and personal; let's leave the bombast and the theatrics for the plugged-in Marillion shows.



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Indeed, the first half hour or so of the program contains only three songs, as Hogarth stops to chat about his adventures. The second song, "Three Minute Boy" (from Marillion's 1998 album *Radiation*), is halted frequently, as our host pauses to cajole the audience into a sing-along and mock his own vocal mistakes. We don't mind, though, as Hogarth is such a charmer. All these stops and starts have the feel of gathering around the piano with old friends.

This new "unplugged" take on "Three Minute Boy" brings out the unflinching heartbreak of the song. The absence of the full band elements removes the rock anthem tone, and Hogarth digs into the haunting story the lyrics tell - as he does well with all the songs that follow, whether they're his own or not. (Standout covers include "Life on Mars" and "In the Ghetto," the latter an unexpected reworking that brilliantly transforms Elvis' country-pop to fit Hogarth's own style.)

The singer is sure to make sure the evening doesn't become a drag, despite the regularity of solemn tunes. Jokes prevail, smiles are bright, and the audience remains in a bright mood, shouting out their requests and cheering along in all the right spots. And Hogarth makes sure to include a few upbeat numbers throughout, such as a beaming cover of Paul McCartney's "Maybe I'm Amazed" and a giddy redux of Marillion's "Cover My Eyes" (which leaves him - and everyone in the room - straining for the high notes).

The DVD

After being available exclusively through Marillion's website for several months, "h: Naked in the Chapel" is now receiving a wide release.

The songs included in this concert are:

"The Hollow Man," "Three Minute Boy," "House," "Life on Mars," "Beyond You," "Afraid of Sunlight," "A Collection," "Cage," "The Party," "When I Meet God," "No One Can," "War Baby," "Man of the World," "Maybe I'm Amazed," "In the Ghetto," "Famous Blue Raincoat," "Cover My Eyes," and "Fantastic Place."

Video & Audio

Like all modern Marillion-related concert films, this was shot on hi-def video for a lavish, crisp look. The 1.78:1 anamorphic widescreen transfer is, for the most part, downright gorgeous, with deep blacks and crystal-clear colors. One problem is some rare but highly noticeable combing, noticeable on close-ups involving rapid movement. Fortunately, it only occurs a few times throughout the program, and the rest is outstanding.

As is the soundtrack, offered here in 5.1 surround (mixed by Hogarth himself), which puts you squarely in the middle of the room, all the speakers put to best use to create a rich, full ambience. This mix is, simply put, amazing. A simpler but still enjoyable stereo mix is also included. No subtitles are provided.

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Extras

Hogarth's reading of four of his lengthy diary entries are included here. The first, "God Bless America" (20:49) is a deleted scene from the concert itself, wisely cut due to its massive length yet far too good a story to leave out completely. The three other diary monologues - "Air Rage" (21:24), "One Hot Ohio Night" (5:20), and "The Prisoner of Ponzan" (17:17) - place Hogarth in what appears to be his (or somebody's) living room, with soft lighting and reading glasses making him look like Uncle Steve, gathering us around for story time. All four entries are wonderful tales of travel misadventures.

Final Thoughts

"h: Naked in the Chapel" is a fabulous show, enough to satisfy any Marillion fan. And while the casual presentation might not be the best introduction to some of these songs, Hogarth's charms and talents are enough to serve as a fine introduction to the singer himself. **Highly Recommended.**

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