

The Longplayer Orchestra – the biography

How it all started

The story about *The Longplayer Orchestra* (LPO) started in 2008. Ulf Holmberg and Göran Danielsson Hjertstedt met for the first time when they were hired as music consultants for a local revue project. They soon discovered that they shared the same musical roots and ideals. Pop and rock from the 1960's to the 80's is what they had in common and a collaboration was inevitable.

Ulf and Göran worked hard and determinedly even though none of them were sure where they were headed. They met every Friday afternoon in a little studio in Ekeby, Uppsala and improvised melodies, chord progressions and arrangement ideas. During that time it had not been discussed whether Ulf and Göran were going to start a band or even release a CD, but it was the desire to create and find tunes with a partner which was their motivation. The starting point was based on a live guitar sound with strong elements of harmonies that when collided it recreated an atmosphere influenced by *The Electric Light Orchestra*, *The Beatles*, *Moody Blues* and other bands from the same era. Ulf took care of guitar, bass and drums all by himself, while Göran sang everything between lead to wide choir arrangements. Both played the synth and other keyboards.

The first songs - sidetrack

A couple of songs started to take shape during spring 2008 and *The Morning News* became the first song the duo completed. Then the manager inside the record industry heard their music and was immediately impressed. Ulf and Göran were convinced to try to bring old artists back whom needed new energy in their music. This took time and focus from what later would become *Longplayer*, this did not lead to concrete result though, but during fall 2009 they continued their work with writing and producing their own music. Songs were rewritten, ideas were rejected and new songs came to life. Ulf and Göran were still alone in the studio till Jon Sundberg started doing short visits and colored Göran's vocals with his own changes at times. During 2011 the duo felt like it was time to add up. They collected the best out of their catalogue, safely introduced their material for friends and acquaintances and their answer was: You have to release this!

After a time of consideration Ulf and Göran decided that it was time to publish their work, but in what name? It still felt like a project of two people playing around in the studio. It sounded like a band, but it wasn't a real band yet. Eventually the name *Longplayer* was born as a reference to the name of a vinyl disc of full length and they were now ready for release. But once again things came in between. Ulf and Göran received a request on writing and producing material for the Swedish competition which ended the process without any worth. On the contrary, they let a big selling Swedish group to record a song from the album, *Cool Cat Walk*, and they promised not to release their own album too early.

The first album - Liverpool

In January 2011 it was finally time. During a time when a lot of artists sold less CDs, *Longplayer* thought it be a better idea to publish at certain amount of CDs and rely on putting it out on the internet. It proved to be a wise decision and the results were above all expectations. From all over the world orders were received from private people, newspapers online and radio stations. Soon the CD played in several places in the states and Japan and the two members in the *Longplayer* were

astonished with the response. A concert organizer placed in California attracted *Longplayer* to come see him in England and Ulf collected ex members from his coverband during his teen years. In the former band was Ulf's brother Göran Holmberg who played the base, Per Saavendra on drums, Jon Sundberg on acoustic rhythmic guitar and vocals while Ulf handled the electric guitar and Göran Hjertstedt played keyboard and shared the vocals with Jon.

2011 the *Longplayer* played their first time on stage at *The Cavern Club* in Liverpool. A week later the group played in London, followed by several gigs in different places in Sweden but they still had no idea of what would come next.

Various sidetracks - LPO take shape

A new sidetrack came up when a nameknowing pop artist from the 70's needed song material and production for a whole new album. Ulf and Göran took to the task with great enthusiasm and the summer of 2011 they spent a lot of time to compose songs for someone else. At the same time Ulf and Göran release a for Scandinavias most selling dance bands which resulted in a huge commercial success. But on the side new songs were being created, songs with deeper meaning and could not be interpreted by no other than the writers themselves - if they didn't let other musicians into the studio of course.

Now an intensive period of time followed an old idea of starting a real band production in the name of the *Longplayer* was regenerated. From January 2012 to July 2013 grew *The Longplayer Orchestra* piece by piece and the choice of the name came naturally. The inspirations was flowing when demos transformed in to finished productions with live recordings in the background.

The same group that stood on stage in Liverpool released new songs with new dimensions. While Göran Hjertstedt wrote lyrics and vocal arrangements with his wife Katarina giving him feedback, Ulf Holmberg was directing the orchestra. Saavendra with his tasteful drumming and Göran Holmberg authoritative and intelligent bass lines became a steady base for the rest of the band.

The pianist Kjell Haraldsson delivered a valuable contribution in the sound image with Staffan Ebbersten on violin. Jimmy Stålberg made a guest visit as composer to *Raining Down* while Jon Sundberg took a more engaged role as a singer, arranger, catalyst, inspirer and video director.

A wider collaboration

Together Holmberg/Hjertstedt/Sundberg created a dynamic triumvirate in the control room in Vassunda which flooded with energy during long and nightly sessions. Songs were rewritten, changed tunes and beat and were tried in different rhythms, Ulf tried guitar sounds and sound images while Jon and Göran experimented with antiphonal, harmony arrangement and voice timbres. Göran Holmberg and Jon enriched with their vocal arrangements which completed the work. Old work that had been hidden in the drawer during the production of the first album was later taken out again found its natural place in the new production. *New Dreams* and *Mine* is a good example. The end result of the album started in the middle of July 2013.

Release - How's Life On Earth?

A video of *The Manning In You* had discreetly been presented on the *Internet* in June 2013 and in October it was time for a single and a video to *In The Corner of My Dreams*. The video had been produced in the streetlife of Uppsala and also in the Linne garden earlier during the summer and Jon Sundberg was director and lead. Saturday 30th of November it was time to release the album *How's Life on Earth?* The reaction came immediately. A big stream of old and new fans from *Facebook* and *Twitter* let the band know that the world was full of music enthusiasts that were ready to follow *The Longplayer Orchestra* on their journey.

The songs on the album had several times a pensive undertone. Titles as *Raining Down*, *The Manning In You* and *How's life on earth?* reveals from what perspective the band members see the world. Another track is going to be released as a single, *Hot Blooded Mary* with a video will be open for the world on internet during winter.

And then what? A hand full of ideas already wait to be tested in the studio. It's all about musical thoughts, draft and sketches that needs colour and a frame. In other words 2014 is going to be an intensive year for *The Longplayer Orchestra*.