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## Anders Helmerson

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Interview Editor

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**Topic: Anders Helmerson**  
 Posted: 12 February 2011 at 10:12



Born in Sweden, Anders Helmerson started out studying classical music in Demark and Sweden. He became interested in Progressive music, and dabbled in some recording while in Stockholm. After school he spent three years on his debut. The result was 1981's "The End of Illusion." It failed to take off, so he did. Canada was his next stop, but success was still elusive. Disheartened, in 1987 he returned to Sweden and entered medical school. During this time, there was new interest in "The End of Illusion." It was on its way to cult status, so Helmerson cut a re-release deal with Musea in 1995. Still, he did not return to music.

While serving as a ship's doctor, he discovered Rio

de Janeiro. He later moved to London and I caught up with him for an interview. Here is his story.

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**You are from the safe folk hem Sweden where everyone could get a secure job without any hassle. So why did you start up with music and why did you move to South America ?**

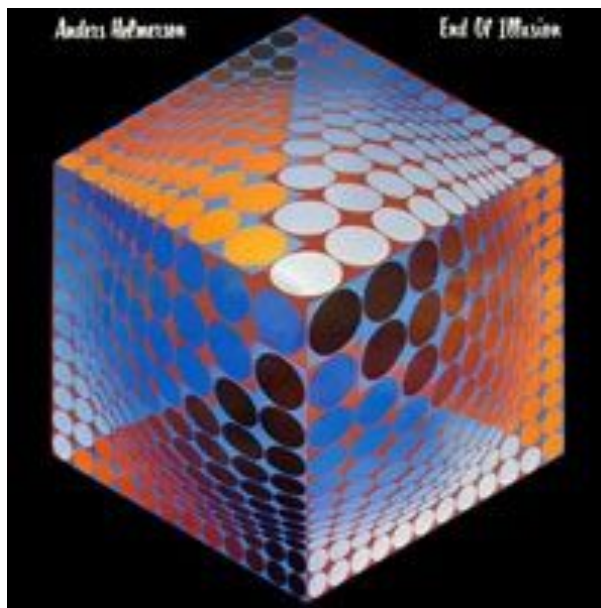
Well you know I am not a nine to five man. To be secure is too boring and Im not that bigoted that I would trade my freedom for my folk-hem back yard. But first let me make it clear I am not really living in Brazil any more. London has been my base now for quite a few years. I thrive in the international environment in London and I am to much of an adventurer to settle down any where else. But why did I move to Brazil? Well that deals about a passionate love for the culture, the people the climate and the whole experience. To produce music is also an experience, so why not do the both? Maybe one day I will move back to Sweden but for now the folk-hem has to manage without me for a while.

**Who were your musical inspirations, when and where did you take up music and and how did you get a record deal for the first album ?**

To be honest, I think my first real musical "kick in the butt" was when I heard Yes on the radio. That was a great moment. The Fragile album had so much inspiration in it self and I think I got contaminated. I saw images in their music and I felt I wanted to be a part of it, step in and be a creative part of it. I think many young lads at that time felt the same, actually. Prior to that I was very interested in music, both jazz and classical but this realm of early progressive music was something special. I started to listen in particular to Patrick Moraz and I think still today he is my greatest hero. That was when I was in my mid teens.

From that point until End of Illusion was released was a turbulent time. Following the study of music and classical piano in Denmark I moved to Stockholm to study composition but I just did not fit in to that academical environment and the prog music I was doing was far away from accepted, neither in the academic circles nor in the more contemporary youth movement featuring punk rock all that stuff. My music was considered ludicrously old-fashioned and it was an almost

impossible task to get a record deal. Besides recording the End of Illusion I was lobbying the record companies and got a pretty cold reception every time until one day when a publisher at Warner Bros heard it and signed a contract and from there it was not difficult to get a label deal. Unfortunately the label was not suitable but that is another story.



**Your debut album is End of Illusion from 1981. Please tell us more about this album.**

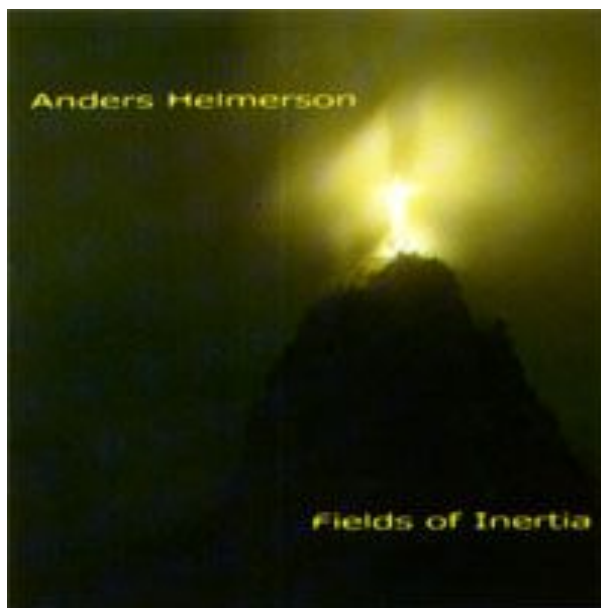
That was the result of three years of hard labor. I was lucky as the studio manager at Decibel i Stockholm - one of the major recording studios in the 80ies believed in me and let me use the studio when it was free and a young engineer Olle Larson also did a lot of work for me for free. I think I was very lucky as to record this type of music in the 80ties was very expensive and I would never dream about where the costs would have ended up if I was to pay full price. That was ironic, in the business I was known as the guy who did the most expensive Swedish record production after Abba although I had no big sales on my rooster. A few hundred LPs where pressed and the sales numbers where basically nil. Today a few lucky heads owning that vinyl can sell it on auction for hundreds of dollars. Strange world we are living in, not? It was all an enormous learning process for me and the title End of Illusion alludes to what I just mentioned - to step into a piece of art and be a part of it. It is a breath taking experience but one day you have to step back in to real life - at the other side of the painting and face the reality. A painful process in it self.

I think five years after the release the album was getting

sought after and I was approached by several labels for a reissue but I could not find the master tape. Eventually it was found in possession with the former CEO of the record company but he refused to give it away. After continuous research it was actually found a copy of the master in the warehouse of Studio Decibel. That was a lucky day! The tape was sent to Musea in France and reissued. At that time the album sold pretty well I must say.

**And then there was a 21 years long break before the second album. What were you up to during these years ?**

Yes I went away to Canada and worked in a cover band. Coming home to Stockholm a year later I realised that the only thing I knew was the music business. I had lots of contacts and I started to work as a producer, something I did for for a few years. I was mainly working with metal and hard rock but after a few years I surrendered and enrolled medical school and hence dropped out from the music business to be a doctor. I did not want to do other peoples music. It was during this time End of Illusion started to sell and got a world wide cult status. Later on, just before the millennium I was working as a ships doctor and disembarked in Rio and decided to stay there and work on a new music project. Something that I had been thinking of for years and now was the time to do it. A life without music was apparently no option for me!



**Your second album is Fields of Inertia from 2002. Please tell us more about this album.**

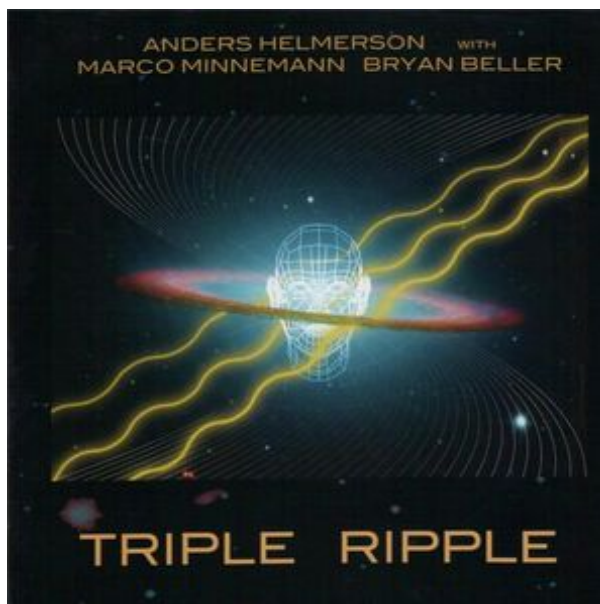
Yes that was my comeback, maybe not that brilliant if I think

about it now, but that was my first contact with the new digital technique. I was really astounded how easy it was to produce this type of music. There is a "making of" documentary about Fields of Inertia on You tube that gives a more in depth insight of that story. That was done while I lived there. I worked with local musicians as f.ex Roberthimbo Silva who is the number one percussionist in Brazil. I was honoured by that. I signed with Brazilian label Som Interior. It was mixed in US though. Some recordings also done in UK, actually.

The reception of Fields of Inertia was not that cherished by some my End of Illusion fans, something I could understand in a way but for my self that album was a confirmation that I was still able to produce my own music!

**Another break followed before you returned last year. What were you up to during these eight years ?**

Well I would say I started 5 - 6 years ago to make a third come back now with some more knowledge of the conditions of "the new world" - I mean to learn technology and to accept all the work and time you need to sacrifice. Fact is I have spent years trying to find the right musicians to work with and I can now say my search is over. I first got in contact with Marco Minnemann through one of his friends when I worked in Startrek Studios in London and since 2007 I have made occasional work with him. To find a bass player was much more of a strain though. I wanted some one based in UK and I think I tried more that 20 different ones or even more. I also tried bass players in France and Holland but it did not work. I guess most bass players where frightened away by the grade of difficulty. I was on the brink of giving up. Marco had recommended Bryan Beller, in Nashville, as a brilliant bassist who was able to play in weird time signatures and so on. I sent the files and the scores to him to listen to and he answered "its doable". He made a trial recording of Touchdown and when I heard it I knew I had found the right cat.



**Last year's album is called Triple Ripple. Please tell us more about this album.**

I think that throughout my roller coaster career in music this album is the peak of my aspirations. I have put an incredible lots of work into it. Composing it took some years and to start with it was difficult but eventually I learned the trick how to do it and developed an efficient methodology. I think, during the last year or so, I have been working with a fantastic inspiration, sometimes bordering to plain madness. The process of recording drums and bass took a few months and when it was all ready for mixing I thought the work was almost over but hell it was not... It was like a ton of bricks falling over my head. I made a session in the New York studio where I mixed Fields of Inertia but I lost control completely. There where lots of issues involved and I just had to give it more time. It was a shock but I was determined not to give up until I was 100% satisfied. I ended up mixing in Abbey Road Studios and I must say, it was worth it.

The sound quality is perfect and uncompromising. The musicians are the best you can get. This is really an ultimate achievement and I am really happy with it.

But I have to admit - after having sent off the files to Musea for manufacturing I felt an emptiness and restlessness inside. It was almost like a bereavement. I guess again thats the peril of being a part of your piece of art.

**What is your creative processes and recording technics ?**

That an interesting topic and has really been the key for me to succeed to my goal. Pro tools is almost like a word program

and the production is like writing a novel. You start with the spine structures and then you can make many small improvements and shape it the way you want until it sounds well. The whole process; composing, recording, editing mixing and mastering is done in the same software and you can go back and make changes as much as you want to. You can sit on an airplane editing with just an USB chip, and then plug it into, for instance, Abbey Roads 96 track Solid State Logic console. and then take it all home.

Talking about Abbey Road - fact is, at first, I was a bit disappointed with the sound of Marco's drum tracks when listening to it through my headphones, But when it was processed through the SSL the sound became just superb. Same thing with Bryan's bass - even if digitally recorded it will sound organic and analogue after such a remould. It did sound well not just in the studio monitors but anywhere. That is the bright part digital recording - the sound quality stays unveiled until you have processed it through the best gear. Also, the latest software allows notation which is an enormous advantage as I can give the scores to the musicians together with a prerecorded midi sample which makes it efficient and also later when it is time to play live you can look at the score and remember how put it the first time. I am working to publish the entire score on my website, then the listener can f.ex understand the time signature if so required. All those possibilities have made it possible for me to produce Triple Ripple. You couldn't do that in 1980 unless you where super rich.

**Just to give those of us who are unknown with your music a bit of a reference point or two: How would you describe your music ?**

My music is Prog Fusion - take it or leave it! You know, long songs (Triple Ripple is one single 53 minute long piece), complicated time signatures with virtuoso instrumentation. It's balancing between traditional fusion and prog rock type Yes. It is trio work with keyboard, bass and drums. There are no guitars and I work solely with synthesiser sounds. No sampling or or sounds of any other keyboards ( i.e. piano,organ etc). Most of the music is composed but there are occasional parts with improvisation. The music is recorded in a way as to make it possible to play live - so there are moderate number of tracks although the sound it throughout massive and dynamic. My keyboard rig is comprised mainly with Nord lead 3 ( there is 3 of them ) which is one hell of a synth with a mean

powerful sound.

From a more artistic point of view I would describe my music as colourful, intense instrumental keyboard wiz music that triggers imagination to step into the landscapes of my illusion...

### **What is your plans for the rest of this year and beyond ?**

Yea I am working hard now with my music. I have got the momentum and I am sure to surf on it! It is good in a way to be ready with the album so I can focus on music. Although I aspire to do some more recordings with Marco and Bryan rather soon, I spend most of my time rehearsing in order to play Triple Ripple live in a few months. One reason for this is that some people are convinced am not playing myself on the album but pre programmed sequencers. It doesn't matter what I say...they can't just believe it. Therefore I would like to make a video to prove it is actually by played myself and not by computers. I have always wanted to be a recording only artist but I have changed view and I am now really keen to go live. But it's not easy...I can tell you it is such a stunt...most of the time four synthesisers are in the air at the same time and apart from the hands both feet are busy working simultaneously so... Its damned difficult...but a niggling challenge.

### **To wrap up this interview, is there anything you want to add to this interview ?**

Maybe I would like to mention something about how the music business has changed since the 80 ies. You do know that albums are not selling anymore and people are downloading for free. In London, where I live, all cd shops has closed down and the industry people are getting bust. I was recently to MIDEM and it was so depressing to see all the gloom. Jeezus...who had ever believed that?

But I think this is an opportunity for progressive music as the business has gone much more fragmented and more specialised music are getting a larger share of the total output. Not only has the recording expenses lowered, the interaction with the fans has eased, the organisation has shrunk and given more power to the artists and I think that those artists with a burning passion for their art now has a much greater chance of getting themselves heard and those industry people only interested in quick money has been

cleansed out. Thats good!

Nothing more to add for the moment. Thank you for listening!  
See you on the road!!!

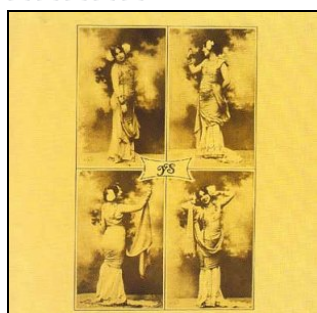
**Thank you to Anders Helmerson for  
this interview**

His PA profile is [here](#) and his homepage  
is [here](#)

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**memowakeman** ▾

Special Collaborator



Posted: 12 February 2011 at 14:27

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Great interview. I like his music since I discovered End of Illusion.

Italian Prog Specialist

Joined: 19 May 2005  
Location: Mexico City  
Online Status: Offline  
Posts: 11585



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