

HELLSINGLAND UNDERGROUND - UNDERSTANDING GRAVITY – BIOGRAPHY

This will not be a commercial text, masked as a biography. I will only tell you the truth, however strange it may sound, about how this album came into being. Nothing else.

September 21, 2012.

Two days previously, our third album *“Evil Will Prevail”* was released, and on this night we have a big release party at Bryggarsalen in Stockholm. The atmosphere is fantastic. We're as surprised and delighted as always over how many fans we seem to have. Real fans. In a few weeks time, we're going out on a two week tour of Germany. We are incredibly excited, and the album is getting rave reviews everywhere. Things look very promising. But from this point on, everything starts going straight to hell.

October 9, 2012.

We were supposed to be sitting on the bus on our way to the tour premiere in Berlin. Instead, I lie on the sofa at home in Ljusdal and stare blankly at the ceiling. The day before departure, we had been forced to abruptly cancel the entire tour and end the cooperation with our German booking agency. We've been screwed. We were told that there was money available which didn't exist. The tour would have become a pure loss business, as it turned out. They remind me of a contract and threaten to sue. I remind them that we never signed and returned the contract, "Scheiße!" For the first time in my life, my sloppiness has paid off. I shoot a movie where I hold the unsigned contract in my hand and burn it up with a lighter. I'm thinking about putting it up on YouTube and sending the link to the company, but I am feeling too low to even bother.

Instead of an autumn tour, a spring tour and a festival summer in Europe, there is nothing. Absolutely nada. It's too late to book a tour in Sweden during the autumn, and everything just falls flat on its face, and the air goes out of the whole band. Just some gigs scattered here and there. I sink down into a deep depression, which I later will need to seek help for. What am I doing with my life? I've been in bands since I was 12. Have I thrown it all away? Is it worth it? We have invested everything and lost big time. I'm trying to think that we still have the music, each other, and the spark that never dies. It *is* worth it. It must be. But the doubt and self-hatred is about to swallow me whole.

We did a rather successful tour of **Sweden** and **Norway** in **March 2013**. And some other scattered gigs here and there. We play a few gigs with **The Temperance Movement**. Look forward to a gig at Sweden's biggest festival **Peace & Love**, in the summer, but alas they go bankrupt. We play at **Brävalla Festival** instead, but nothing feels really good until we go on a Spanish tour in autumn 2013. A full year after the cancelled European tour, this is a much-needed joy injection. We meet a lot of Spanish super-fans that we've never met before. Plus people that have travelled from England, Sweden and Germany just to see us. My depression gets cured on a sunny beach in **Estepona**, with something as simple as a drunken bath in the **Mediterranean Sea**, with the whole band.

But when we get back home the misery continues. We are arguing with our beloved manager over a stupid triviality, and she tells us to go fuck ourselves. Our new distribution company refuses to give the band a single sales statement for the album, and we see nothing of any returning records or money due to us. We switch back to Sound Pollution again. Better a late payment than no payment at all.

We begin working with a new manager who soon reveals that he has fixed a European support tour for us, opening up for one of the world's biggest rock bands. We are very skeptical, to say the least. But he insists he has the contracts, he just needs our signatures on them. But we never see any contracts, and the whole thing is basically a figment of his own very vivid imagination. The guy is clearly a mythomaniac. Other shows and festivals that he claimed to have booked don't even exist. We tell him to go fuck himself. We do a few shows in France and Germany. A small comfort at least.

In January 2015, we enter a new studio, with a new producer, to begin the recording of this record.

“Understanding Gravity” is the working title. It will be a sort of concept album, lyric wise. Everything feels very good to begin with, but **Henning** (Keyboards) is beginning to show up less and less - on both rehearsals and in the studio. Irritation, frustration, fights and arguments. He is forced to quit. He doesn't seem to understand it himself, so we have to tell him. He explains that he “no longer has the energy to go through all the creative mayhem that it means to be in this band”. And we understand him, fully. During this period, all the band members seriously consider leaving. Including me.

The recordings are put on hold. It sounds very good, but not as we have imagined. The new producer is trying hard to understand what it is we're looking for, but we fail to successfully express our ideas to him. There is too much chaos and turmoil in the band right now. We have never analyzed our music. We just play it. And we know when it feels good, and when it doesn't. Words are superfluous.

Self-examination. What the hell is it that drives people around us crazy all the time? No answers are forthcoming. But, out of this comes the conclusion that there has only been one single person, who himself is disturbed enough

to bear with us. The guy, who has recorded all our previous albums, and the guy who never gives up, who can stay awake for 37 hours straight, on a diet of coffee and cigarettes, in order to find the ultimate bass and drum sound. Shortcuts and simple solutions don't seem to work for this band. So. We will have to throw ourselves headlong into the rabbit hole again. With **Martin Karlegård's** annoying headlamp as the only guiding light. I have known him for over 20 years. We are both Pisces. Both have ADHD. We are both stubborn as hell. But he's weirder than all of us together.

We rent a big old 16th century castle in Sörmland, called **Ökna Slott**. On the first of May, the whole band and some extra people move in and stay there for 10 days. Suddenly, everything start to feel good again. The whole band is recording live together in the castle's main hall. Days and nights. Wine and inspiration is flowing. Everyone tell us the place is haunted, but we are too absorbed in the music to notice anything. When we come out again, it is summer. Everything feels awesome. Hallelujah.

During the recording, we are having talks with a new keyboard player. His name is **Thomas Petterson** and he has been jumping in for Henning a couple of times. He's an old friend of mine from **Ljusdal**. Unfortunately, he's in China at the moment, so he can't be with us. But he says yes to joining the band. He hasn't heard a single new song, so it will take some time before he can get it all down on tape. But in early September, everything is recorded. It sounds fantastic. Martin Karlegård estimate is that it will take about two weeks to mix. Maximum.

Two weeks go by, then three, four, five and six. He claims there are a bunch of problems with the recordings. Errors that he didn't discover earlier and that no one else seemed to have heard either. He also reveals that his left arm has turned completely numb. He eats antidepressants in combination with the strongest ADHD medicine that can be obtained legally. Sitting in the studio for 40 hours straight. During his 1.5 hours of sleep every now and then, he dreams that he is inside a computer, surfing around on the sound waves to our songs. We smell trouble. Is he heading into a psychosis? The recordings sound worse and worse with each new mix. Sometimes it gets a little better, just to sound even worse on the next version. Is he *really* a crazy genius, as we previously thought? Or is he just crazy? We argue with him. Threatening him that he won't get paid if he doesn't deliver a finished album soon. He responds that "Money is not an issue. I am beyond that". We argue even more. Wondering what the hell he is doing in there. He has kidnapped our child! Now, give it back! He tells us to go fuck ourselves. We tell him to go fuck himself.

This goes on until December, and our hopes that it will ever sound as good as it did in the castle are almost gone. We get mixes mailed out with titles like "As Dreams Go By Mix # 76," etc. Meanwhile, Wild Kingdom is really liking what they hear. In fact, they like it so much that they offer us a record deal, in the middle of all this chaos. The stress is profound. We have also just signed with a new Danish management / booking agency (SSM Music) that it all feels very good with. Small flashes of light at the end of the tunnel. But the upcoming European tour, which first was supposed to begin in November to coincide with the album release, has to be postponed until January, then late February, early March, late March, and then finally, the first of April. Everything now feels like a bad, stretched out April fool's joke anyway, so why not.

But then suddenly, I get a call from Karlegård.

Not in the middle of the night as I'm used to: babbling on about oscillator syndromes, phase errors and other weird things that don't make any sense, but on a Saturday afternoon. He sounds different. Calm. Not as manic. Says he's feeling better. The album was no mixed and mastered, and we were all pretty happy with it. Thinking, this is as good as it gets. But he then asks for yet another week for remixing the whole album - on his noble quest for the perfect sound, and we let him have it. One week more or less doesn't really matter at this time. After one week we get the new final mixes. And I am crying out of happiness and relief. It sounds marvelous. The way it sounded when everyone thought it sounded fantastic, at the castle 6 months ago. And in the first few mixes. Raw, rough and unpolished. More like we sound live. Just like we wanted.

"I had to walk a long detour to get back home. But I found the drawings. They were lying around in a corner under an old dusty trunk, 14 miles into the northwestern tunnel down the rabbit hole. But it's okay. I have my head lamp, you know", he says.

"Understanding Gravity" will be released on April 1, 2016. It is a concept album of sorts. Exactly what the red thread is? I could make a long lecture about, but I don't want to destroy people's own perception of it. But I think the conclusion I have tried to make with the lyrics, is a new way of looking at things. Not to take life so seriously. If you think of it as a big joke from time to time, it will be easier to get through it. At least for me.

**Peace, Love & Hellsingland,
Charlie Granberg,
Ljusdal, Halsingland, 2016-01-10**

PS. 2016 also marks the 10 year anniversary since the formation of Hellsingland Underground! Let's make it another 10 years, shall we?