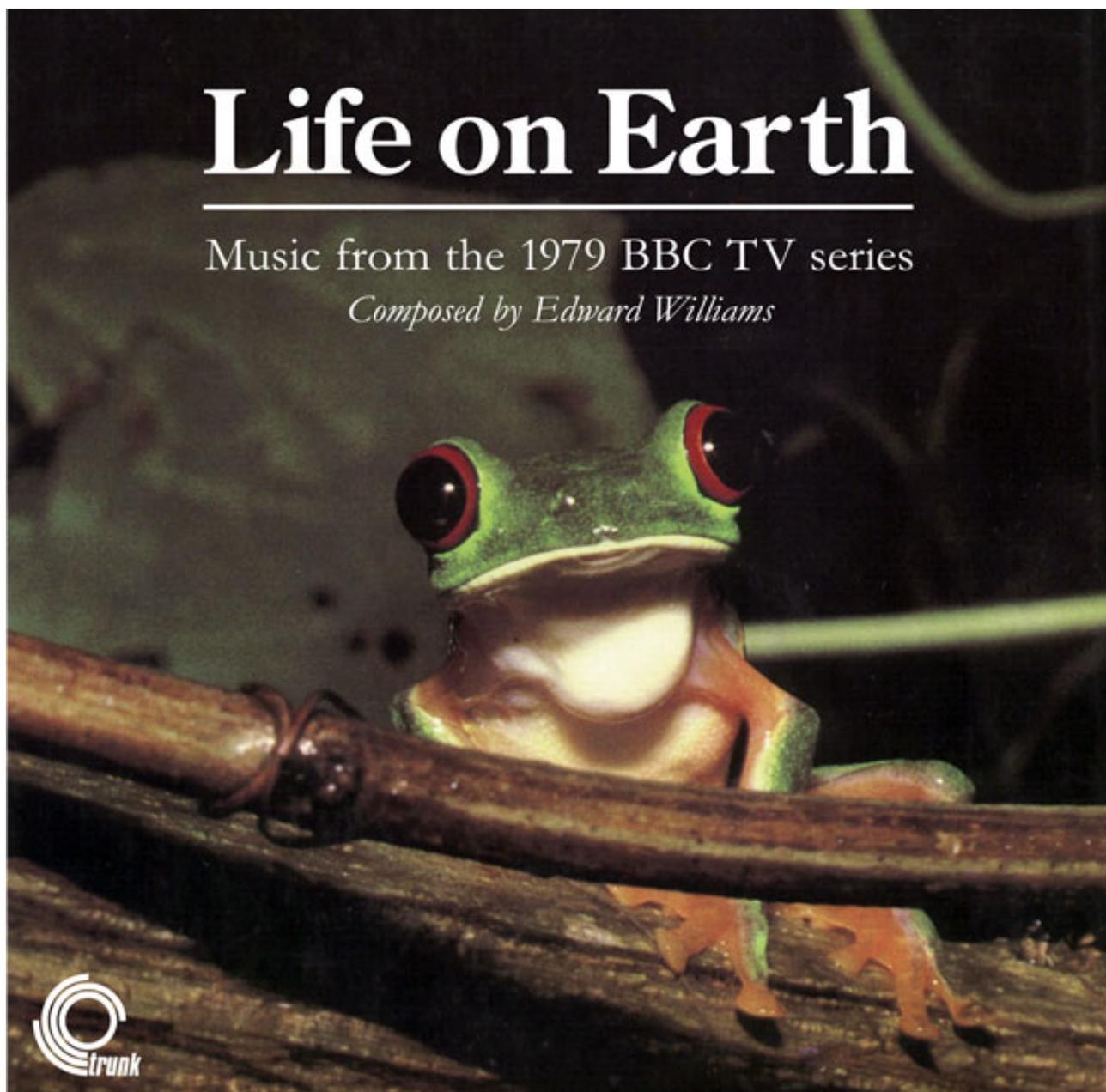


Life on Earth

MUSIC TO THE 1979 BBC TV SERIES BY EDWARD WILLIAMS

Cat number JBHo34CD / JBHo34LP



by Jonny Trunk

As is usual with Trunk releases it's best if I just tell it like it is and was. So, here's the story of this remarkable thirty year old recording, followed by a biography of the great Edward Williams. And a full tracklist. All very exciting...

The genesis of this release is a little unusual. A good friend of mine, John Cooper, mentioned over a cup of coffee that he'd recently found a couple of interesting records in a charity shop in west London. Acton I think he said. One was the work of composer Chris Gunning, the other the music from Life on Earth. I knew about the first record, but the second was far more curious. I'd never seen an album of music from this TV series, and if I had seen it I would have bought it. According to John, who didn't have the album with him at the time, it had no label information, no real information anywhere except for a track listing and composer name. He said I'd like it, so my quest began to investigate it a bit further and try and find myself a copy. As much as I tried very little could be dug up about it – there was no listing of the recording anywhere at all. In fact very little more information could be unearthed apart from the name of the series and the composer both which I already knew. An even more peculiar incident then occurred a few weeks later. Someone posted a picture of this mysterious album on a music website called Waxidermy, and included in the description that he'd found the record in a charity shop. He also added that “there is a plaintive John Cameron/Basil Kirchin-esque quality to the compositions that Jonny Trunk would approve of”.

Right I thought, this is all getting a bit too weird. But still I couldn't find a copy. I approached the BBC to see if they knew much about it, and they knew nothing. Then a couple of months later I got a call from a major London record collector, Steve Stasis. He had experienced a peculiar musical epiphany and had decided to sell every record he'd manically collected over 20 years all at the same time. He asked if I'd be interested in buying his entire library collection of 500 albums. I went to have a look, and in the collection was the green, black and white sleeve of the Edward Williams Life On Earth album. I really couldn't believe it. I bought the library collection, sold it on to a friend the next day and just kept the Edward Williams album for myself. At last I could hear it. And what joy. The music reminded me very much of my first encounter with library music and the magical, twinkling ambient sounds of science, nature and music for jellyfish.

Some frantic letter writing followed. Edward Williams had to be traced. Eventually I tracked him down and on a fine spring morning went to meet him at his home in Bristol. It was fascinating to learn that he had connections with other important musical characters that I was dealing with, like Tristram Cary. I also learned that Edward had invented the Soundbeam, an incredible musical education tool. He also told me about his extraordinary 1970s VCS 3 touring band called “Uncle Jambo's Pendular Vibrations”.

Edward also explained the genesis of the rare and elusive vinyl album. Basically he'd had less than 100 copies privately pressed for any members of the orchestra who had played on the recording and wanted one.

By the end of Summer 2009 I had licensed the whole recording from the BBC, but then the problem arose about the artwork. I had tried the picture

licensing department of the BBC but had no response, and then luckily found a pristine copy of the famous Life On Earth book in a second hand store in Lower Marsh. The photo credits for the front and back images were not attributed to the BBC as I originally thought, instead they belonged to David Attenborough and John Sparks the renowned naturalist and producer on the series. As you'd expect Sir David Attenborough is not the easiest man to track down, but with a little detective work and with the help of a freelance editor friend of mine called Mike Crawford (formerly of Springwatch), a chain of messages began to crawl across the hierarchy of BBC Natural History that ended a week later with a phone call from the great Sir David himself. He told me that they had had the idea of chamber music for the series, and thought that Edward's music was "jolly good". Sir David also gave me permission to use his famous frog for the cover art, even though someone had lost the photo on his behalf some years ago. I then managed to contact the great David Sparks and he gave permission to use his Galapagos Attenborough image too. So, the music was in place, artwork all organised and pressing at last could begin.

And so in late 2009, 30 years on from the day it was created, we can all enjoy some of the most beautiful music made for some of the greatest TV ever produced.

Thanks for listening

Jonny Trunk, August 2009

COMPOSER EDWARD WILLIAMS

Edward Williams was born in 1921, at Hindhead, Surrey – his poet, journalist and art historian father a keen amateur naturalist and folksong collector, his mother the musical daughter of a Colorado cattle rancher. After boarding schools, a year at university and five years service at sea in the Navy, he spent two more as assistant to the conductor Muir Mathieson, before getting his first commission for a documentary film score in 1948.

During the next twenty-five year he wrote the music for a large number of documentary films, including several devoted to wild life subjects, as well as some music for theatre and radio. Two films from this time, "Dylan Thomas" (an evocation of the poet's life and work) and "Wild Wings" (about Peter Scott and the wildfowl sanctuary at Slimbridge) were awarded Hollywood "Oscars".

A move to Bristol in 1968, with his wife Judith – daughter of the poet, Randall Swingler and the pianist Geraldine Peppin - and their four children, led, shortly afterwards, to work on several programmes for the BBC Natural History Unit, culminating in David Attenborough's "Life on Earth" BBC series

- with “The Discovery of Animal Behaviour” and “The Living Isles” following later.

Music for the three-part ecological series “Earth” for Thames Television and for various drama documentaries was followed by work on a Channel 4 series of tv biographies of Goya, Gillray, Mary Wollstonecraft, Pushkin as well as of the Welsh writers Niclas y Glais, Saunders Lewis and his own great, great, great grand-father, Edward Williams (the 18th century bard and scholar known as Iolo Morganwg). In 1995 Edward Williams won a BAFTA Cymru award for the best original music for Colin Thomas’ 3-part BBC/S4C series, “Excalibur: The Search for Arthur”.

A fruitful association with the Bristol violinist Roger Huckle began with performances of “Landscapes” – a trio for horn, violin and piano, partly based on music for a BBC film about a NATO exercise area in Germany which has developed unexpectedly into a safe haven for wildlife – at Woodchester Priory, Gloucestershire (October 1997) and in The Holywell Music Room, Oxford (January 1998) – with Donald Clist (horn) and Susan Bird (piano). Subsequently, “Five Pieces from Life on Earth” (arranged by Oliver Ledbury) were given by Roger Huckle and the Emerald Ensemble in October 2002 at the Music Centre, Bradford-on-Avon and a week later at St George’s, Brandon Hill, Bristol.

More recently, in November 2003, again at St George’s, Roger Huckle and the Ensemble with actor David Collins as narrator, gave the first performance of “A Selborne Suite” - music and words (by Laurie Lee) selected from the Ralph Keene’s documentary film “Journey Into Spring”.

Since the 1960s, in parallel with his work for films and TV, Edward’s growing interest in electronics, electronic music and multi- media technology in live performance, has led him to develop the movement-to-MIDI converter Soundbeam, which enables electronic musical instruments to be played and controlled at a distance, and without physical contact, by body movements in a ‘beam’ of ultrasonic pulses.

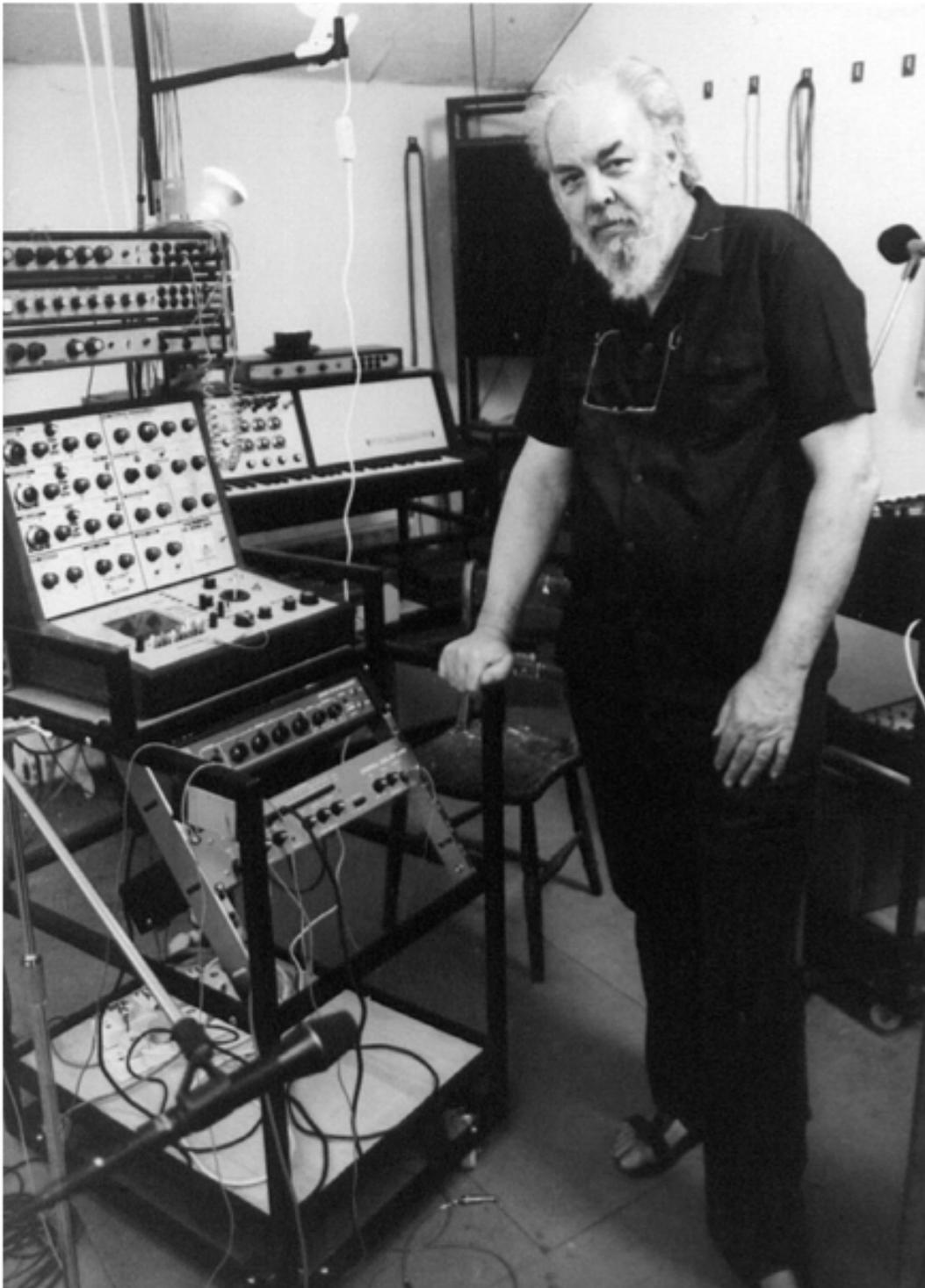
In addition, Elektrodome, the charity of which he and Judith Williams are joint artistic directors, commissions composers (and other artists), and gives performances, one of which, “Transformations”, at L Shed, Bristol, in November 1999, included his own “Imitation Games” - a multimedia piece about the mathematician, code-breaker and computer pioneer Alan Turing, and his intellectual forbears, the scientist Charles Babbage and the mathematician Ada Lovelace, Byron’s daughter, for singer, dancer, actor, realtime video animation, 2 musicians and live electronics, with a text by Nick Otty.

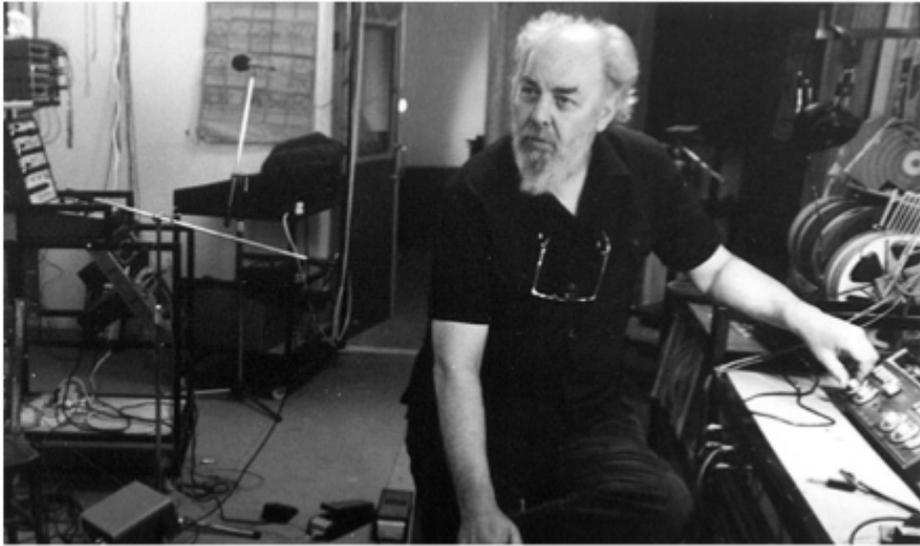
Since 2002, Elektrodome has been involved in promoting and seeking funds to commission composers to devise and compose a series of 6 Pilot Projects

for Group Music-making in mainstream primary or secondary schools, to explore the expressive possibilities of electronic music and multi-media technology with voices and instruments in live performance.

Edward Williams, August 2009.

Images of Edward Williams:





TRACKLISTING

- 1) Life On Earth begins in the Sun's Energy - Programme 1: The Infinite Variety
- 2) First Fossils - Blue Greens – Ciliates - Programme 1: The Infinite Variety
- 3) Comb Jellies - Hydromedusae - "Birth" Of A Medusa - Gymnopodie For Jellyfish - Programme 1: The Infinite Variety
- 4) Coral Larvae - Arabesque For Flatworms - Programme 2: Building Bodies
- 5) The Giant Clam - Slow Dance For Nudibranches - Glaucus And Valella - Programme 2: Building Bodies
- 6) The Sex Life Of The Fern - Spores, Fertilization and Growth - Pine Cones and the Petrified Forest - Programme 3: The First Forests
- 7) Coming Out Music - The Leaf Bug - The Spiny Leaf Insect Sheds Its Skin - Cocoon Spinners - Programme 4: The Swarming Hordes
- 8) Fish Of The Sea - Shoals And Loners on the reef - Programme 5: The Conquest OF The Waters
- 9) Eusthenopteron and the Primeval Swamp - Programme 6: Invasion Of The Land
- 10) Nile Crocodile Family - Oral Transport For The Young - Programme 7: Victors Of The Dry Land
- 11) Mating Dance For Prairie Garter Snakes - Programme 8: Victors Of The Dry Land
- 12) Birds In Flight - Stork - Fairy Tern - Sooty Tern - Tropic Bird - Frigate Bird - Albatross - Programme 9: Lords Of The Air
- 13) A Gallimaufrey Of Small Mammals - Duckbilled Platypus Swimming - Desman Underwater - Pygmy Silky Furred Anteater and baby - Flying Foxes - the Serval Pounces - Programme 9: The Rise Of The Mammals, Programme 10: Theme And Variation
- 14) The Big Mammals - Elephants and their ancestors - Lion Hunt - Wildebeeste stampede - Lion kill - Programme 11: The Hunters And The Hunted
- 15) Japanese Macaques - Warm baths in a snowscape - Programme 12: Life In The Trees
- 16) Man - A Choice for the future of Life On Earth? - Programme 13: The Compulsive Communicators



Erratum: I have just received an email from Michael Hartney. He's the man who found the LP in a Charity shop, told me about it and posted it up on the Waxidermy site. He is now officially a God. Although I'm not sure I have the budget to start making icons of him.

