

LOGGINS AND MESSINA

Over 35 years since first *Sittin' In* together, Kenny Loggins and Jimmy Messina are again side-by-side in Loggins' living room. The two men are in the early stages of putting together a new nationwide tour that picks up where 2005's hugely successful "Sittin' In Again" reunion tour left off.

All this shared activity marks the unexpected and unlikely return of the most successful duo of the early Seventies – a group whose most enduring songs were so well crafted that they have never really gone away. At the same time, Loggins & Messina find themselves rebuilding the personal connection that was lost long ago.

"This is less about a musical reunion and more about reuniting a relationship that's become more of a friendship than ever before," says Jimmy Messina, "It's funny how our separate journeys have somehow brought us back around, into each others lives again," Kenny Loggins says.

Though Loggins & Messina's first Greatest Hits collection was called *Best Of Friends*, both men confess that their relationship has long been a complex and sometimes difficult one. When they first met, Jimmy Messina was already a well-established success story, having produced and played with the legendary band Buffalo Springfield and later with the country-rock pioneers Poco. Loggins, meanwhile, was a young singer-songwriter with far less experience, but with talent to burn as evidenced by early compositions like "House At Pooh Corner" and "Danny's Song." Then *Sittin' In* (1971), originally envisioned as a one-off joint release intended to introduce Loggins as part of a Messina six-album production deal with Columbia Records, became a smash hit.

So, by public demand, this accidental duo was created. In the next few years, a series of albums would follow in rapid order – 1972's *Loggins & Messina*, 1973's *Full Sail*, 1974's double-live *On Stage*, the same year's *Mother Lode*, 1975's cover song set *So Fine* and 1976's *Native Sons*. The *Best of Friends* collection followed later that year and in 1977 another live album fittingly called *Finale*. With that, Loggins & Messina, who had sold sixteen million albums and become one of rock's most popular draws, was over and apparently done.

In retrospect, the once close connection between Loggins & Messina was torn apart by the unusual nature of their working relationship and by what Messina calls a "divide and conquer strategy that's been around since Napoleonic times."

"The trouble with duos is inevitably it becomes a competition," explains Loggins. "We were just kids in search of our individuality. Being suddenly cast in a duo makes it very hard to find yourself. You begin to blame your partner for your own confusion. And everybody wants to get on your good side by convincing you that your partner is the problem."

Complicating matters, Loggins & Messina's partnership was from the inception not one of equals. "In our original relationship, I came in and auditioned for Jimmy," Loggins remembers. "Right from the beginning, Jimmy was the producer, I was the artist. I'd never made a record. I'd never put a band together. I'd never found a manager or an agent. So Jimmy was the leader and in that way, he became my mentor."

"The inevitable thing when you grow through a mentor is that, sooner or later, you have to leave and go off on your own. Our relationship had become teacher-student, father-son, big brother-little brother and eventually it was not healthy for me. I had a lot to prove to myself and, subconsciously I think, I had a lot to prove to Jimmy too." Adds Loggins, "You have to remember, I thought I was going solo when I met him. Finding success via Loggins & Messina was a two-edged sword. I was compelled to pick up where I left off and prove I could do it on my own."

In the decades apart, Loggins established himself as a solo artist with a series of albums starting with 1977's *Celebrate Me Home*, 1978's *Nightwatch*, 1979's *Keep The Fire*, 1980's *Alive*, 1982's *High Adventure*, 1985's *Vox Humana*, 1988's *Back To Avalon*, 1991's *Leap Of Faith*, 1993's *Outside: From The Redwoods*, 1994's *Return To Pooh Corner*, 1997's *Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow: The Greatest Hits of Kenny Loggins* and *The Unimaginable Life*, 1998's *December*, 2000's *More Songs From Pooh Corner*, 2002's *The Essential Kenny Loggins*, 2003's *It's About Time*, 2007's *How About Now*, and his newest children's CD on Walt Disney Records' Disney Pearl Series *All Join In*, as well as a number of soundtrack contributions.

During this period, Jim Messina recorded five solo albums: 1979's *Oasis*, 1981's *Messina*, 1983's *One More Mile* and 1996's *Watching The River Run Revisited*. Messina also reunited with Poco for the 1989 album *Legacy*, as well as establishing the Songwriters' Performance Workshop whose purpose, explains Messina, "is to empower amateurs."

Looking back on those early days, Jimmy Messina explains "Today, it is a big relief knowing that Kenny no longer needs to look to me as the one who is in charge with all the answers. As Kenny noted earlier, in the beginning I was 'the leader' while Kenny was the artist who'd never made a record or put a band together. Now, with Kenny's many years of success as a solo artist and a leader, he brings to our working relationship, a maturity that allows us to work, and lead together, as equal partners contributing ideas or suggestions that are only exercised and implemented with respect and mutual approval. I enjoy being the artist now without all the responsibilities that once fell upon heavy upon my shoulders. I'm very excited about playing our music, listening to our arrangements and pulling out some of the old instruments of mine and recapturing the nuances inside my guitar style that characterized the sounds we created together."

Until a series of low-key benefit performances together in the middle of this decade, there had been precious little contact between the two men. "It wasn't that we were enemies," Loggins says, "We'd just let our friendship atrophy, the way friends sometimes do over the years." When Jimmy joined Kenny at a benefit at Santa Barbara's Arlington Theater in 2004, Loggins noticed something else: "As soon as we hit the harmonies, I was struck by the fact that I hadn't heard that sound in a long time," he says. "It hit me like the Everly Brothers hit me the first time they got back together. There was something that in thirty plus years I had not been able to duplicate with anyone else. There was a spark that I'd completely forgotten about. It's still there!"

That spark fueled a series of festive shows in 2005 with the duo playing their seminal songs that, says Messina "spoke to a generation, not just to a radio station." Adds Loggins, smiling, "Our show now is about being faithful to the music we made way back then. I want the audience to be transported in time, back to a simpler time, when 'the future' was about having fun on a Saturday night."

"You know I spent years trying to leave Loggins and Messina behind me," Loggins jokes to Messina. "I guess being able to reconnect now is somehow proof that I did." Today, Messina, too, seems struck by the harmonic convergence and of the sound of their original band -- Al Garth, Jon Clarke, Michael Omartian, Merel Bregante, and Larry Sims. "All the forces came together to create one hell of a band," Loggins recalls. "We were very lucky."

As for hitting the road again, both men want to celebrate the past while leaving the future an open and intriguing question. In fact, Messina recently joined Loggins to duet on the old Beatles tune "Two of Us" on Loggins' recent children's CD release, All Join In. This marks the first time Jimmy and Kenny have sung together on a record in over 30 years! "I'm proud of this collaboration," says Loggins. "And the best news is, we had fun doing it, so who knows what tomorrow may bring?"

Continues Loggins, "When people ask, 'What do you see coming for Loggins and Messina?' I see that we have an incredible second chance at actually having fun and celebrating who we were then and who we have become. I remember we were so tight at the beginning, our musical sensibilities were so connected, it's great to get to share those feelings again, with the clarity and compassion that 30-some years can bring."

For both men the new tour represents what Jimmy Messina calls "a great and meaningful opportunity." Kenny Loggins adds "I'm especially looking forward to the L&M audiences. I love to see the good old friends from the 70's, and the ones we made in '05 too, as well as the friends I've picked up as a soloist along the way. This reunion proves to me that anything is possible. Now we get to see where it goes from here."