

Image: TT | Abba 1980 – after this, the group’s admirership has only continued to grow

## **Abba fans are only becoming more numerous**

Musik Once an Abba fan, always an Abba fan

Despite the pop group not having published new music for over 30 years, their admirership continues to grow. But what makes them different from other fans?

Elisa Amorelli/TT

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The wedding bells are ringing and Jason Tuazon-McCheyne turns towards his man to say “I do”. From the speakers, a mellow version of “Dancing Queen” sounds and during the vows, he promises to always put his husband before Abba. At least as good as it goes.

As you notice, I am maybe their biggest fan, says 46 years old Jason Tuazon-McCheyne after he told about the wedding which happened earlier this year.

He is from Melbourne in Australia and has plastered his home with images of the group. Jason Tuazon-McCheyne travels across the world to see different sets of the musical “Mamma Mia” and spends thousands of Dollars for flight and entrance tickets in order to come as close to the members as possible.



Image: Private | According to Shanika Ranasinghe (here with Agnetha's body), who is doing a PhD about Abba fans at University of London it is exactly this loyalty which characterises Abba fans around the world.

Abba is the soundtrack to my entire life. The love of my life. Because if you have once started loving them, then you love them forever. But don't say this to my husband, says Jason Tuazon-McCheyne.

## **The dark era**

According to Shanika Ranasinghe, who is doing a PhD about "Abba fans" at University of London, it is exactly this loyalty which characterises enthusiasts in the entire world. For irrespective of age, gender, country or generation, what counts is "once an Abba fan – always an Abba fan".

This is a cultural phenomenon. Despite them not having published new music together in 36 years, people continue to praise and admire them, she says.



Image: Private | Jason Tuazon-McCheyne meets his biggest idol Anni-Frid Lyngstad.

But being an Abba fan hasn't always been easy. Shanika Ranasinghe has studied the development during the eighties and came to see that the fans were on a real rollercoaster.

During the 1970es, the supergroup was active and the fans were spoiled with the Eurovision victory, hit after hit and tours.

But then came the 80es and "the dark period" – Abba fans' dark era, she reports.

The album „The visitors“ didn't really sound like what you were used to. The band split up and despite the fans' loyalty, more and more began to doubt if they still loved them.

It was almost painful to admit that you liked Abba during this period, Ranasinghe explains.

## **Most fans now**

But under the 90es, things looked up again. The first "Abba gold" album was released, went right top of the charts and made fans free to express their love and admiration again.

After this, they have held onto it, Ranasinghe says.

That the love flourishes and lives on is even noticed at the international Abba fan club. It was founded in 1986 by two Dutch women and has since grown big with thousands of members who meet at least once a year to praise the band.

We are so happy and surprised that the group continues to grow and that new young people join. Many who come to our meetings weren't even born when Abba split up, says Helga van de Kar who was there at the beginning of the club.

And according to researcher Shanika Ranasinghe, it is most remarkable about Abba that their time of greatness in terms of enthusiasts is right now.

They have more fans than ever before. New generations discover the music and “fill up” the crowd every new year. The new “Mamma mia” movie and two new songs show in addition that the interest isn't even close to cooling down.

## **Facts**

### **Abba and the fans**

36 years have past since Abba threw in the towel but despite this, the Swedish pop group is smoking hot right now. “Mamma mia – here we go again” comes to cinemas in summer and later this year, the band releases two entirely new songs.

In a new series of articles, we look closer at Abba now and then. The third part deals with the band's admirership – which only continues to grow.

### **Facts: Abba**

The band was founded in 1972 by Agnetha Fältskog, Benny Andersson, Björn Ulvaeus and Anni-Frid Lyngstad. In 1974, Abba had their big international breakthrough with the song “Waterloo”, which won the Eurovision Song Contest in Brighton. Afterwards, the band was one of the world's most successful in the 1970es with international hits such as “Dancing Queen”, “Money, money, money”, “Chiquitita” and “The winner takes it all”.

A dozen albums were recorded before the band split up in 1982. Almost all songs were written by Benny Andersson and Björn Ulvaeus.

Source: NE

### **Facts: Agnetha Fältskog's romance with a fan**

A Dutch fan, Gert van der Graaf, was besotted with Agnetha Fältskog for some years. He went to Stockholm and crept around her house. By coincidence, he caught a glimpse of Agnetha in 1997 and stepped forward and greeted her.

This became the start of a two year long relationship. When Fältskog ended it, Gert van der Graaf refused to release the grip.

He was later sentenced for both molestation and assault and was prohibited from visiting and deported from Sweden twice.