



# Abbasolutely Fabulous

**M**y first time around memories of ABBA revolve around a scene involving me, my younger sister, and one of those concrete sun umbrellas stands with the bottom piece of the umbrella sticking out of it. The toughest decision was choosing who got to use this makeshift mic stand for the routine which would follow. The easiest decision was choosing the song: 'Nina Pretty Ballerina', every time.

Such memories will undoubtedly come rushing back to anyone who ever played the ABBA game as a kid when they hear Flying Nun's *Abbasolutely* compilation album, which is being released this month. The project was co-ordinated by Flying Nun's Natasha Griffiths and Lesley Paris. Natasha recounts the legend of the album's beginning.

"It was about five and a half years ago, [Able Tasmans'] Graeme Humphries, I think the way the story goes, came up with the idea to do an ABBA tribute album. It's sort of been a running joke at Christmas parties, everyone getting drunk and saying which ones they'd like to do. I started working for Flying Nun about a year ago. Not long after I started, I saw Lesley wandering around with an ABBA folder. I thought that was a joke, and she told me all about it. I said: 'Great, let's do it.' This year, I talked her into doing it. I was incredibly enthusiastic 'cause I love ABBA."

The idea that became *Abbasolutely* gave the cream of the Flying Nun crop the opportunity to relive those halcyon days when the inter-married Swedish super-group ruled the airwaves.

Floss of Loves Ugly Children, who did the damage on 'Honey Honey' for *Abbasolutely*, has somewhat sticky memories of the time.

"When I was about nine or 10, and went to a school dance, 'Dancing Queen' was playing, and this boy asked me dance. He went off to get some lemonade. So, I sat down, and then he came over with the lemonade, and he stuck his

tongue in my ear. I just tipped my lemonade over him and left the place. I still remember his name too! Patrick O'Keeffe."

That event obviously scarred Floss for life. "I think I hate them now," she says. "Yeah, I definitely hate ABBA now."

Chris Knox, who was another long term nagging force behind *Abbasolutely*, loved ABBA then and he still loves them now.

"I was a fan, basically," Chris confesses. "I thought they were great, just unashamed, glorious, no holds barred pop. All my friends were into Little Feat, Steely Dan, and stuff like that. I hated that crap, so ABBA and Kiss were my revenge."

After much agony over the selection process, Chris and fellow Tall Dwarf Alec Bathgate selected 'On and On and On' as their tribute to ABBA.

"'On and On and On' kept coming to the forefront of my four CD collection of ABBA, 'cause it's

we danced to ABBA. I guess that went on until I was quite old, 11 or 12."

"I was fairly young when they were really big," says Jane Sinnott of Magick Heads, who covered 'When I Kissed the Teacher'. "I remember us having a song book with the words on, and singing along to all the music. That was the big deal for me, that there was so much hype you could buy all the words, and sing along and pretend you were one of ABBA."

"They were too clean to represent anything nasty, except for being a huge conglomeration, I suppose, in the end. For me, they were just a huge band that wore glittery clothes."

Andrew Brough of Bike, who covered the "soppy love song" 'My Love, My Life', jumped on the ABBA bandwagon while he was at intermediate school.

"As far as I could tell, everyone was talking

Jeremy Eade of Garageland, who picked the definitive ABBA song, 'Dancing Queen', for their contribution to *Abbasolutely*. "The flip side is the gems still are pretty kinda cool."

"A lot of people who weren't ABBA fans at all get the chance to actually recognise the quality of the music that was there, outside of the packaging that can be really sickening," says Graeme Humphries. Able Tasmans got first pick of the much coveted 'SOS' for their *Abbasolutely* track. "Songs lifted out of their context can really, really shine, I think some of the tunes on the ABBA compilation do that — a lot of them do it."

As a case in point, Graeme selects the Shaynie and Fifi 95 (aka Shayne Carter and Fiona McDonald) duet of 'The Name of the Game'. "Spooky eh?" he says breathlessly. "It's beautiful. It's just beautiful. They've changed one major chord into a minor, and it just... it makes you poo your pants."

Loss of bowel control — you can't ask a listener to surrender much more than that. Indeed, many may not be willing to surrender that much (and who could blame them?). Nevertheless, the album was put together with fun in mind, so if your idea of a good time doesn't involve giving birth to a baby skunk, that's okay with Flying Nun. Just try and enjoy yourself when you spin *Abbasolutely*. Believe me, it's not that hard to do.

"It's a good party album," vouches Natasha Griffiths. "You can dance to it. It's probably our first dance album. A lot of it's really groovy. It's not like it's going to sell millions. It's not going to make anyone famous. It's just fun. In a way, we're showing a lot of people we can have fun. Flying Nun's taken as such a serious, studious label in a lot of quarters. Not that we have to prove we have fun — we have a lot of fun, and a lot of the fun you wouldn't want anyone to know about — but here's something we can show."

BRONWYN TRUDGEON

**"My mother prepared jam and cream scones, and we danced to ABBA"**  
— Greta Anderson, Superette.

a great recording on the original. It just really fuckin' blats along, this Velvet Underground cum Beach Boys sort of feel, and the lyrics are really unusual. It seems like whichever of the women was singing it was speaking about personal experience, about dorks coming up in bars and going all cosmic on her to try and get into her pants."

Anyone who has seen Greta Anderson's performance in Superette's video for 'Killer Clown' will have no problems conjuring up a picture to match her memories of ABBA adoration. Superette contributed their take on 'Knowing Me, Knowing You' to *Abbasolutely*.

"I remember Standard Three, our class party, and there was Bay City Rollers and ABBA," says Greta, who pitched her tent in the ABBA camp. "We'd play that, get up on top of the tables and dance, and eat food our mothers had prepared. My mother prepared jam and cream scones, and

about ABBA. I bought an ABBA record (*The Best of ABBA*) because everyone in my class had one. It was kind of exciting, I suppose, [there was] sort of a fervour about it all."

"It was a couple of years later, with the punk thing and all that, that the backlash happened with ABBA. Then they're forgiven, then there's that renaissance with them. I've been to parties, even in the last few years, where everyone gets up and dances to ABBA. It's quite fun."

"It's always good for a new generation to be thrust into the bowels of an old generation's pop magnitude," reckons Chris Knox. "On the other hand, when retro becomes trendy, in any of its facets, it gets a bit dull after a while. But I think ABBA can withstand that because they've got basic quality on their side."

"I guess the bad side is you realise there are an incredible amount of dodgy ABBA songs that haven't really stood the test of time," says

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