

ABBA® THE MOVIE

ABBA - The Movie Restored

More than 25 years after ABBA attended the premiere of *The Movie*, it was time for another star-studded opening night for the film in Stockholm. For a while it looked like all four members would show up for a historic reunion, but with Björn having other commitments and Agnetha coming down with the flu the film itself got some well deserved attention. Far from the faded and scratched copies we've seen lately it sparkled in the intended colors, with an unheard crystal clear four channel stereo sound!

Among the guests were people that were involved in the Australian tour like Lena-Maria Gårdenäs-Lawton and Maritza Horn, Janne Schäffer, Claes "Clabbe" af Geijerstam and clothes designer Owe Sandström. Lasse Hallström had also planned to come, but he had to meet J-Lo to discuss a coming film project.

Swedish TV personality and ABBA fan Pekka Heino, who introduced all the speakers, took an interesting approach as he presented the film, saying it could be seen as a parody on cinema verite. This is a documentary style seeking to be brutally honest that has been popular in films about rock and pop musicians since the 60s, constantly seeking to depict the "rough, dirty, dark side" of the scene. With the idea of *ABBA - The Movie* being a forerunner to *Spinal Tap*, the rather cheesy story about a nerdy music journalist (incidentally the only person in Australia who doesn't know anything about ABBA) desperately seeking an interview with them, becomes less lame, even enjoyable.

When Åse Kleveland, head of Swedish Film Institute, described the film as a good document of the time and of a group that is an important part of Swedish culture, Frida - who sat on the front row with the other speakers (she moved back to sit with Benny as the film started) - looked proud, even if she should be used to not being seen as something the cat dragged into the parlors of high culture anymore. It is amazing though to see so many directors, renowned actors and culture personalities here, even the odd minister. People who wouldn't have been caught dead at anything ABBA related back in the day.

Åsa Falck, who's been heading the restoration, seemed a bit stunned by the huge interest the film had been attracting. None of the earlier works of the group that is trying to save older color films have been getting any media coverage, but this time not only every major paper and TV channel in Sweden has reported, but also the short press release issued has had international media constantly banging on their doors to get as much information as possible.

At first their work seemed hopeless. There were no original negatives to be found. The film companies, producers and institutes around the world had nothing to offer but rather worn copies of the film. After many fruitless attempts to get hold of a hopefully decent negative, they accepted that the restoration had to be based on faded copies. At the last minute, Universal discovered a negative among loads of material that they had called back from Germany in their efforts to catalog and gather as much original ABBA material as possible in Sweden to get a grip of what exists around the world.

They were very nervous as they opened the canisters. Not only had the film from these days aged - worse than both later and some earlier color films - but also in the 70s also special kind of film was used for special effects. These so-called CRI negatives have proven to have extremely poor durability and many scenes in other films have gone lost forever. Today we might not even think of it as special effects, but back then *The Movie* was considered rather technically advanced with split vision, double exposures and sped up film. Not to mention it being the first film ever to use a color flutter machine (in the elevator scene for *Eagle*). The negatives did need a lot of work. They were falling apart at the joints and were severely damaged in places, but much to their surprise the CRI negatives had survived and could be used.

While the restoration of the visual image started there were still problems with the sound. At the time all copies used in Sweden had been in mono, as most around the world. There were a few copies in stereo made although no one now could tell where they had gone. The searches for a stereo copy went around the world, but this time even Universal had nothing to offer from their vaults. Once again it wasn't until they had accepted to work with what they had that someone found that Polar Music had

Report





Vi vill fira att vi nu efter lång möda lyckats restaurera Lasse Hallströms ABBA – The Movie. Filmen har inte kunnat visas på många år men nu är det antligen möjligt tack vare varsam restaurering av Svenska Filminstitutets filmarkiv.

KONFERENCIER PEKKA HEINO
 samtalar med några av de som var med då det begav sig. Filminstitutets Anita Falk berättar om restaureringsarbetet.

Efter filmen blir det mat, dryck och mycket musik.

Varmt välkommen till nypremiären på ABBA – The Movie torsdagen 2 december kl 18.00 i Filmhuset på Borgvägen 1, i Stockholm.

Åke Klevealand
 VD Svenska Filminstitutet

Klädsel: Fest. Filmaningen inklusive introduktion beräknas starta kl 19.00. Inbjudan är personlig och gäller för en person. ÖSA senast 24 november till: premlar@stfi.se eller 08-665 11 61





Benny and Frida this premiere.

and there in the Stockholm suburb of Jordbro they discovered some dusty, long forgotten canister marked "ABBA - The Movie, four channel stereo sound tape." Not knowing if this was in fact all of the reels, the cheers were huge once they could compare the silent copy with the tapes. ABBA had been saved for the future!

Owe Sandström brought some clothes from the 77 tour, once again revealing how petite the girls were. Frida looked at a golden jacket that he held up and said, "Well, that was when I was a size 36," but from where I was sitting I rather looked like a small 34. Owe described some garments in his typical humorist way, with a skirt described as "nothing more than an excuse for a slit" and how they tried different ways to get the wigs right for the mini musical The Girl With The Golden Hair, including spraying them with gold paint.

Frida also shared some memories about these clothes, how the strong lights attracted an enormous swarm of bugs on the stage and they got loads of insects under their outfits. Frida - this evening wearing a black T-shirt with a golden leopard print and a very relaxed smile, obviously comfortable to take this distanced walk down memory lane - carried on talking about the opening night which had more than bugs to offer:

"All the umbrellas in the audience, the rain and the balloon like roof gave in and left the stage flooded with

water. For a while we didn't know if we could carry on with all the electric equipment and that water."

She gave an impromptu show of how she slipped before carrying on.

"At the time Australia might have been the biggest thing that happened in our career, but now 30 years on I don't know. There were so many experiences and perspective changes over time."

Claes af Geijerstam added that sometimes it was scary. As they were going to the airport people were driving 130 kilometers per hour with their kids hanging out the car window just so they would get a chance to see ABBA. Frida made a laconic comment to that: "Regular Michael Jacksons!"

Clabbe also told how Alice Cooper, who was touring Australia at the same time, ended up in the same hotel as the Swedes. He heard a crowd chanting "Alice! Alice! Alice!" and finally decided to wave from his window, amazed at how persistent the fans were. He retracted quickly when no one cared about him, but kept on screaming "ABBA! ABBA! ABBA!"

To summarize this evening, I'd like to quote Frida again. "I want to thank Filminstitutet for this, it will bring back a lot of memories to me and Benny..."

...and to all of us!

- Peter Palmquist

