



## ATLANTIS STUDIO

by Carl Magnus Palm

REPORT

On May 4, 2013, I hosted a special viewing of the Atlantis Studio on Karlbergsvägen 57 in Stockholm for about 160 members of the Fan Club. The studio is formerly known as Metronome Studio, and this is where ABBA did most of their work before their own Polar Music Studio opened in 1978. In more recent years, various ABBA members have returned to the studio to work, and so the connection to the group is still very strong.

Helga had made arrangements with Janne and Katarina Hansson, the husband and wife team who had bought the studio in 1983, so that the fans could get an exclusive visit to this historical ABBA place. As you may imagine, it is not easy to get access to a recording studio that is still very much in use today.

My job was to put together an introduction to the studio and to remind all the fans of the work that ABBA did there. The following is a pretty much complete version of my talk.

The premises originally housed a cinema, which opened in 1941 and closed in 1959. The Metronome record label, which was a very famous record label in Sweden, needed a new recording studio and so when the cinema closed, Metronome bought the premises. After much work and renovation, the Metronome Studio opened for business in 1960. Today, it pretty much looks like it did 50 years ago.

Metronome Studio quickly became Stockholm's - if not Sweden's - top studio and, with time, it became even better, as the acoustics were adjusted and refined. It became a studio that many record companies wanted to use, especially those who did not have their

own facilities. Among them was Polar Music, founded by Stig Anderson and Bengt Bernhag.

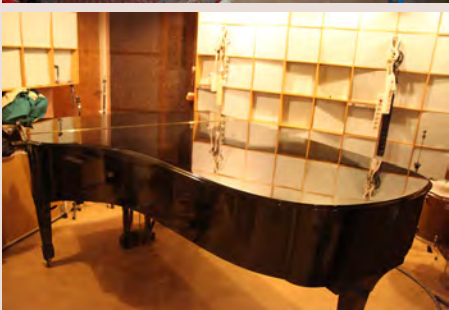
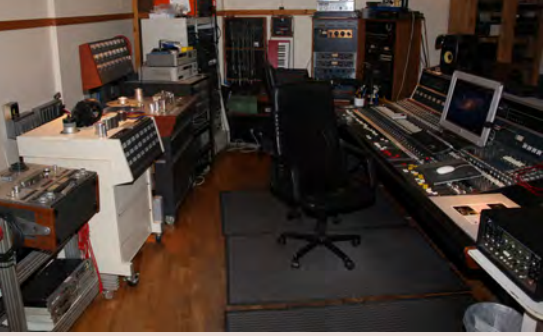
In the 1960s, all the future ABBA members recorded there at one point or another. Hootenanny Singers recorded virtually all of their work, Frida did at least one session, and Agnetha complete albums. Benny's band, The Hep Stars, recorded elsewhere, but the first time Björn and Benny appeared on the same record was when Benny played the organ on a Hootenanny Singers track called Blomman [The Flower], which was recorded at Metronome in 1966. The Hammond organ they used is still in the studio today.

Then, by the early seventies, when Björn and Benny had started working as house producers at Polar Music, much of their work was recorded at Metronome. They recorded their album *Lycka* there in 1970, and this was the start of their relationship with engineer Michael B. Tretow. He had begun working at Metronome in 1967, and so Björn had been working with him several times, but it was only then that Michael and Benny really got to know each other. Of course, the *Lycka* album also featured Hej Gamle Man!, the first recording by all four future ABBA members - another historical moment taking place at those premises.

Moving on to the ABBA years, there are many different opinions of how, when and why they began to work together but, if you ask me, ABBA were born at Metronome because that is where, in March 1972, they came to record People Need Love. When that day's work was finished, the very first ABBA recording existed.

Then the ABBA story started for real. Between 1972 and 1976, Metronome was where they

Utväxat  
Inspelad i Metronome studio och även i  
KMH och Europafilmm studio.  
Tekniker: Michael B. Tretow med  
assistenter av Åke Eldström och Bengt



would do most of their recorded work. The problem was that, at the time, the studio was so popular that the different record companies that needed to use it only had access to it on a specific day of the week. Thus, for the *Ring Ring* album, the group had to use other studios as well, but most of it was recorded at Metronome - certainly the ground-breaking title track, when they made their first really progressive recording with that big, multi-layered ABBA sound.

The *Waterloo* album was recorded in its entirety at Metronome. By the time the third album, *ABBA*, was recorded, Michael Tretow had left his employment at Metronome and started working at GlenStudio, and hence most of that album was recorded there. However, some tracks were still recorded at Metronome, including some of the biggest hits like *I Do, I Do, I Do, I Do, I Do* and *Mamma Mia*, on which Benny famously used the xylophone for that tick-tock opening - he used it on *Tropical Loveland* as well.

This xylophone is still in the studio today.

The final ABBA album that was really recorded at Metronome from start to finish was *Arrival*, with the exception of the basic backing track for *Dancing Queen* that was recorded at GlenStudio. If you have seen the clip of Agnetha and Frida recording the vocals for *Dancing Queen*, the music-stands, the microphones and the headphones are still used by the studio. The timpani that were used for the final drum roll on *Money, Money, Money* are still there today, as is the Wurlitzer electric piano that Benny played on *Knowing Me, Knowing You*. There is a grand piano with a wooden finish in the studio and if you hear a piano on a Metronome-recorded ABBA track, this is the piano you hear.

After *Arrival*, ABBA used Metronome for only a handful of sessions - one or two sessions for *The Album*, the basic backing track for *Summer Night City* and they also liked to mix their recordings there even if they had recorded them in another studio. In 1978, they opened their own Polar Music Studio.

The studio control room is obviously where Michael B. Tretow would have been sitting, recording the group, and that is where he, Björn and Benny would have sat and mixed the recordings. The clip from the *Dancing Queen* recording session, where Michael, Björn and Benny were sitting behind a mixing desk, and Agnetha, Frida and Stig Anderson were standing on the other side - that was filmed in the Metronome control room.

The Neve mixing desk at Metronome was bought in 1973, and so everything from the *Waterloo* album onwards was recorded on that desk. Much of the technical equipment has also been retained although, of course, today the studio uses computers and the likes.

After the ABBA years, at least Agnetha and Benny have returned to Metronome from time to time. Agnetha recorded her album *My Colouring Book*, as well as the video for *If I Thought You'd Ever Change Your Mind*. Everything on her latest album, *A*, except vocals and strings, was also recorded in there. Benny recorded the first BAO album back in 2001 and, famously, he gathered the original ABBA musicians at Metronome to re-record the ABBA songs for the *Mamma Mia!* film soundtrack.

From my own point of view, I have to say that it is really emotional coming to Metronome since it is the only remaining place in Stockholm today that is truly ABBA-related and has remained virtually unchanged since they were there. Most of the other places have closed down or been taken over by companies with no relation to the music business and, for this reason, it is a very important place in ABBA history.