

On June 5th, 1966, 50 years ago, Benny and Björn met each other on the road while touring. That evening, Benny was invited to party with the Hootenanny Singers in Linköping. Since that evening, the two have been working together. Last year when Benny and Björn were having dinner with their wives, they started to talk about this happening and suggested to have a party. Soon after, they started to organize this private party in secret, and almost 300 guests were invited to the special party which was held at Berns on Sunday, June 5th.

There were members of the Hep Stars and Hootenanny Singers, former musicians who had played with ABBA, technical staff, people who had worked at the office or on tour, in the studio, etc. There were some involved in *Chess* (Tim Rice and Murray Head), *Mamma Mia!* (Judy Craymer) and the first and most recent cast of *Kristina Från Duvemåla*. Siobhan McCarthy, who was in both *Chess* and *Mamma Mia!* was present, too. Everyone was personally welcomed by Benny and Björn.

After a few glasses of champagne, the doors to the big room opened, and 29 tables were beautifully set up for a very special dinner, with great food, wine and entertainment. Benny and Björn went on stage to welcome everyone again and to say a very special and heartfelt thanks to everyone in the room. Then Clabbe (Claes af Geijerstam) was introduced as host for the evening. Clabbe went through the history of the two friends by telling us the story and showing us images and videos. A lot of friends came on stage to perform a song by Benny and Björn. The first one to perform was Svenne Hedlund (Hep Stars) who sang the first song written by Benny and Björn, Isn't It Easy To Say. Other performers were: Jerry Williams – Cadillac, Claes Af Geijerstam, Tomas Ledin & Anders Glenmark – Jag Väntar Vid Min Mila, Lill-Babs & Peter Jöback – Det Kan Ingen Doktor Hjälp, Ludvig Andersson – Rock Me, Helen Sjöholm – Where I Want To Be, Lena Philipsson & Pernilla Wahlgren – Hole In Your Soul, Tommy Körberg – Du Är Min Man, Niklas Strömstedt – Kan Man Ha En Solkatt I En Bur (Swedish version of Slipping Through My Fingers – Niklas wrote the Swedish lyrics for the musical *Mamma Mia!*), the Swedish Dynamo's – Kisses Of Fire and Frida Hyvönen – Min Astrakan. In the band there were musicians from BAO but also Peter Grönvall, Ludvig Andersson, and Clabbe played along now and then.

In between, Clabbe read some messages from people who had been unable to make it, and some video messages were also

shown. Among them was one by Lasse Hallström and his wife Lena Olin, alluding to the Knowing Me, Knowing You clip, in which they were asking Benny and Björn to write them a hit score for a new film. A very nice surprise was a video by Paul McCartney congratulating Benny and Björn – or should it be Björn and Benny, he was wondering.

Of those who were present, some guests were named and thanked, receiving applause from everyone. Michael B. Tretow was given a special gift, a rare old microphone from Swedish Radio (he is a collector). Benny and Björn came on stage to perform Does Your Mother Know, which turned out to be a real party song.

When we thought the show had ended, one final song was announced with a choir as well as two special ladies, Agnetha and Frida. Frida mentioned that they had been through both good and bad times together and said that she and Agnetha wanted to dedicate this song to Björn and Benny with all their love. They sang The Way Old Friends Do, and everyone was cheering and totally overwhelmed. They sounded absolutely great, and it was so good to hear their voices again - together. Afterwards, Benny and Björn came on stage to thank them, a very sentimental moment. They thanked everyone again for everything, there were some unexpected surprises, and Benny invited everyone to dance as he and his band were going to play soon afterwards. Frida announced another Swedish 'toast' song which she, Agnetha and the others sang. Frida said that the evening had brought back a lot of memories and she had been reminded of a song they used to sing when they were young and partied, and then she asked everyone in the room to sing it together. ABBA had actually performed Nu Alla Goda Vänners Skål, on Spanish television in 1980.

Before BAO started to play, the four leads of the recent *Kristina* production went on stage. They thanked Benny and Björn with a song from Dalarna, a very touching piece about friendship that they sang beautifully. Then BAO started to play, including a few new songs like En Natt I Köpenhamn and Hem Till Mamma as well as some ABBA songs such as One Man, One Woman and Why Did It Have To Be Me. Everyone was enjoying the party until the early hours of the morning, a truly big and joyful reunion.

We are so grateful that you two met 50 years ago. Thank you for all the joyful songs you have written, and we hope there will be many more to come...

TEXT: HELGA VAN DE KAR





Tim Rice and Murrey Head



Claes af Geijerstam

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B&B

5 JUNI 2016

