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## Top of the pops



### **The Hindu presents Bjorn Again, the ultimate ABBA experience**

Forty-two years have passed since a pop group from Stockholm went on to become one of the most successful commercial acts in the history of popular music. ABBA (an acronym of the first letters of the band members first names — Agnetha Faltskog, Bjorn Ulvaeus, Benny Andersson and Anni-Frid Lyngstad) has seduced thousands of fans over the years with its fresh, energetic and unmistakably own brand of music.

The ABBA template — blonde hair, pointy white shoes and sequined suits, not to forget the songs — touched a chord with almost everyone and spawned a rash of tribute bands who have become headliners worldwide and kept the music of ABBA alive.

Bjorn Again is one such successful group. Founded by John Tyrrell and Rod Woolley in Melbourne, Australia in 1989, the light-hearted parody show has been performed in over 90 countries. It has entertained a spectra of audiences from kindergarten children and royalty to hardcore music enthusiasts, bringing ABBA to a whole new generation of fans.

The band members — vocalists ‘Agnetha Falstart’ (Crystal Hegedis), ‘Bjorn Volvo-us’ (Jamie Jardine), ‘Benny Anderwear’ (Ashley Reeder) and ‘Frida Longstokin’ (Helen Nikolopoulos) and musicians Thomas Scott Thornburn (bass player) and John Tyrrell (drummer) are all set with an

unbeatable songlist, satin and sequin costumes, not to forget the wedges and blue eye-shadow, and a bag full of surprises.

In an email interview, John Tyrrell co-founder and manager of the band speaks on why Bjorn Again is the ABBA of this generation.

### **Of all the popular bands of the 1970s, why ABBA?**

When Bjorn Again was founded, we were trying to create a new live entertainment concept and thought an ABBA tribute / parody show might capture the imagination of the public. ABBA was one of the most popular bands in Australia in the 1970s. So it was the perfect band to imitate and, most importantly, parody. Rod and I were inspired by the 1984 U.S. film *This Is Spinal Tap*, a funny take on a once-famous rock band at the end of its career. We thought that if we combine ABBA with the film we might have the makings of a great live show. It worked. So, as well as being a high quality tribute to ABBA, the show has other fun elements that make for an enjoyable experience.

### **Songs that are a must on your list.**

There are about 10-15 songs we must do at every concert or else the audience will scream the house down! Mostly, songs from *ABBA Gold*.

### **Do your concerts have themes?**

We have special themed shows such as a 1970s revival night when the audience dresses up in 1970s clothing, hair and makeup. We've also done shows that recreate various ABBA albums, under-18 shows, asking the audience to dress as their favourite rock star etc. Our ideas for Bjorn Again are endless!

### **Is your music a faithful re-creation of ABBA's?**

Yes. And, the band takes a great deal of effort to get the music, vocals, harmonies and instrumentation spot on. Many people have said that Bjorn Again sounds exactly like the real thing, which is a great compliment, but we work very hard at achieving this. I urge Indian ABBA fans to come to the concert and have the time of their life.

### **Any memorable reactions from your audiences?**

There have been many — here are some:

\*Sarah, Duchess of York, came onstage in London and tried to sing and dance with the band!

\*We have even had a few marriage proposals during our shows.

\*At the opening of the IPL in March 2010, when we performed at the opening ceremony, the crowd went nuts! Even the great man Sachin Tendulkar came over to say hello.

\*Bill Gates, Russell Crowe, Vladimir Putin are fans and Rowan 'Mr Bean' Atkinson booked us for a private show.

*For details look up [www.bjornagain.com.au](http://www.bjornagain.com.au)*