

In the 1970s, José Hoebee was one-third of the very successful Dutch girl group Luv'. Although Luv' had a recording career of just four years, during their heyday they sold more than seven million records worldwide, with hits such as You're The Greatest Lover, Trojan Horse and Yes, I Do. After Luv' disbanded, José formed a duo with Bonnie St. Claire to record what was then a novelty - a complete album of ABBA covers in Dutch.

## **How did the ABBA cover album *Herinnering [Memories]* materialise?**

Bonnie and I were colleagues and friends. One evening when we were on a winter holiday break, it happened that Bonnie's then husband was strumming his guitar, and Bonnie and I suddenly started to sing The Way Old Friends Do, in harmony. All those present were captivated by this little performance; they heard that our combined voices went together very well. My husband (producer Will Hoebee) said, 'You two should record a duet!' When the first single, Cassandra, became a hit, Will said, 'You should record an entire album with ABBA songs in Dutch, but without focusing on the big hits.' So we chose songs like I Let The Music Speak, which has a very complex structure and is difficult to sing. It is one of my favourite tracks. Normally I'm not inclined to sing in Dutch; it is not my cup of tea. That's why I asked that we should involve several talented Dutch lyricists. It was for them to decide whether to make a translation, or completely new lyrics for the chosen songs. A fun fact is that, in our duo, Bonnie is the blond one, and I am the dark one, but our voices are reversed compared to Agnetha and Frida, as I have the higher pitched voice.

## **For *Herinnering*, I understand a TV special was shot on location in Stockholm?**

Yes – although much of it was recorded at the Wisseloord studios in Hilversum, we shot some video footage for the TV special at Polar Studios. The special was also meant as a kind of fun promotion film for Stockholm. We were shooting from dusk until dawn; it was very tiring.

## **Björn was featured in the TV special, but you didn't actually meet him?**

The director of that special was Bert Van der Veer. Sadly, although he interviewed Björn, it wasn't the same week that we did the video shooting in Sweden; otherwise, we might have met him. It was a real shame for us at the time! Anyway, Björn said that he was prepared to

collaborate, but not before having heard our record, and that if he didn't like it, the deal was off. That he liked the end result was therefore a huge compliment, and we were very happy with Björn's acknowledgment of Bonnie and José (*she then pronounces her own name wrongly, as if it were a Spanish boy's name, just like Björn did in the TV special, and laughs*).

## **Looking back, is that album one of the projects you're really proud of?**

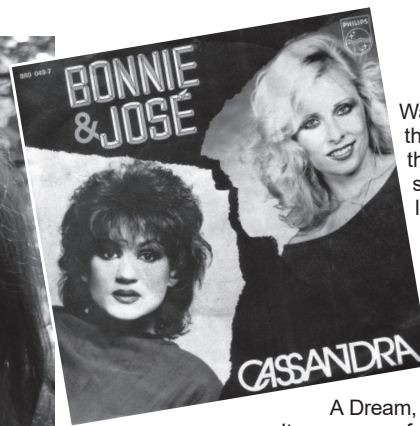
I'm very proud of the whole project. These days, all pop music seems to come 'out of a box', but this album was recorded with a full live orchestra. Conductor Harry Van Hoof was one of the top arrangers at the time.

## **I understand that, shortly after that, you actually got a chance to record at Polar Studios for real?**

In the early 1980s after Luv' disbanded, I was approached by Piet Sauer, who co-wrote the Luv' hits with Hans Van Hemert. Piet was also the producer of girl group Doris D & The Pins. This group already had one hit (Shine Up) but was then scheduled to record a whole album. It was clear it would take too long with the actual girls, for they were not really singers. Although they later did some live appearances, I provided all backing vocals for their album.... in ABBA's studio! I went twice to Polar Studios with Piet Sauer, which was fantastic. Back in Holland, the lead singer of the group, Debbie Jenner, sang her part on top of my vocals. Naturally, this was all not supposed to be public news and had to be done in secret. Nevertheless, some listeners recognised my voice when the album was released, and the record company Phonogram let me know that, due to this, they would not use me for subsequent recordings!

## **Your husband, Will Hoebee, also produced Bonnie St. Claire's cover of Agnetha's hit *Wrap Your Arms Around Me*?**

That's right; he did. I went to Sweden with him on what was supposed to be for a relaxed city trip, with no work planned. However, Will heard Agnetha's version of the song, by then a Swedish hit, in the taxi on the way to our hotel. He thought a Dutch version would have big hit potential, and was especially keen to see if he could arrange a Dutch-language version ahead of a single release of the song by Agnetha in the Netherlands. He proceeded to spend the whole weekend on the telephone making arrangements for the song to be



Waterloo was their best; their better songs came later.

**Do you have a favourite A B B A song?**

I Have A Dream, for personal reasons. It was my father-in-law's favourite song. It brings back fond memories. For our album, Bonnie and I chose the beautiful songs that were lesser known.

**Did you see ABBA live in concert when they came to Holland?**

Yes, I did. I went to their concert as part of Luv'. There was a lot of press. We had been invited; we were expected to attend certain important events for publicity. I remember the show being very flashy; the girls wearing white lycra suits. It was a great show, but I got just as much pleasure listening to the records, actually.

**Would you agree there is a clear Influence of ABBA on the Luv' sound?**

That is very probable. Our producer, Hans Van Hemert, is the one who should confirm that, though.

**I hear the ABBA sound in the track Ann Maria...**

Yes, that's true. That's a song by Piet Sauer, a bit in the style of I Have A Dream. Our producer's initial references for the Luv' sound were the Shangri-Las and the Ronettes, old school girl groups, but my voice was not sharp enough for that kind of sound. He then opted for a more sultry sound. It wouldn't surprise me if Piet had been influenced by the ABBA sound; nearly everybody was at the time. After Luv', a lot of other girl groups even took after us which, I think, was an honour. We were the first girl group from The Netherlands who did very well internationally though, something we were very proud of.

*(Please support the Facebook page to release Herinnering by Bonnie & José as a CD:  
<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Herinnering-Bonnie-José>)*

recorded the following Monday, with release as soon as possible afterwards. His hard work really paid off, as he was rewarded with a Top 10 hit in the Netherlands and Belgium.

**You were also involved in the Dutch version of the musical ABBACADABRA that celebrated its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary last year.**

Yes - my husband had heard the French version and thought it would be a good idea to produce a version with Dutch artists. The complete recording was done in one day. The whole cast was gathered at Wisseloord Studios, and the atmosphere was very cosy and relaxed. After that, a TV special was recorded. As Snow White, I sang the very beautiful song Spiegel, which is the Dutch-language version of I Wonder (Departure).

**What do you think is the greatest power of ABBA's songs?**

The compositions, of course; the combination of the two voices....is there anything that is not good about ABBA's music? It is fantastic, dynamic.... The fact that they were friends was pretty unique. Not many groups have achieved what they have worldwide. I don't think that