

The year after ABBA's victory, the Eurovision Song Contest (ESC) held its 20th event in Sweden. For the second time in the history of the song festival, the victory went to a pop group, more precisely the Dutch band Teach-In who won with Ding-A-Dong. I caught up with lead singer Getty in Utrecht one sunny afternoon in November, after she had fulfilled an 'acte de présence' at a Seventies event.

When Teach-In won the ESC in 1975, your performance had a big impact on me. This was even before I fully discovered ABBA.

Really? That's funny. But look, you can't compare ABBA to any of the other artists that have won the ESC, that includes Teach-In. ABBA themselves were responsible for their own music and lyrics, they had a whopper of a manager in Stig Anderson, who also invested their money at that time but, most importantly, they turned up exactly at the right moment with a follow-up to Waterloo [Honey, Honey]. Personally, I find that Waterloo, although it's clearly a winner when you hear it, is not that exceptional compared to their other songs. But they rightly won, because the two boys are outstanding composers and the girls great singers. When they won, you really felt that they were a world class act. You can't deny that. The biggest success of the song festival. It doesn't matter who your favourite artist is, ABBA will always stand out. They are just so fantastic. Their music is *real* music.

Do you have a favourite ABBA song?

They have so many beautiful songs... but if I had to choose one, it would be Thank You For The Music because it represents everything that music is about and depicts accurately what emotions mean to people.

With ABBA, the song festival drastically changed as it was the first time a genuine pop group won, and may I say this subsequently influenced the choice of winner the following year?

That's right. But this kind of influence on the following year's competition is quite common at Eurovision, it's a constant factor. But we were not ABBA, we were Teach-In with a very strong close harmony and only one lead singer. ABBA had a different sound, but they were, of course, a very influential band. Having said that, I must admit that an earlier hit of Teach-In, Tennessee Town, has a strong ABBA feel [winks].

In hindsight, what were the decisive factors for Teach-In's victory?

It was mainly a matter of finding the right song. We had to wait a very long time before the composer Dick Backer, who was also responsible for the wonderful arrangement, came up with the right composition. The Dutch preselection was quite relaxed, with Debbie and Albert West as the other contestants who had to perform the same song. After winning and finishing the recording, for which we did the



vocal arrangement ourselves, we were quite convinced this could be a winning song for the big contest although we had to perform first as a result of the draw. We had such a good song, we were sure it would come through, and the audience would remember it. The enthusiasm was obviously there. It turned out we were right.

Just like ABBA and many other acts, the look of Teach-In was also clearly embedded in that Seventies style.

The clothes of those days! They were completely bonkers when you look at them now [laughs]. Unfortunately, I lost my beautiful, pristine song festival blouse and skirt. I have no idea what happened to them, but I've still got my green dress that I wore in Utrecht [during the Dutch preselection].

That green dress is engraved in my memory. It was great to see it for real after all those years at the ABBA Museum at the Good Evening Europe exhibition.

Oh, you saw it there. I really regret that I didn't see it at the exhibition, but we did bring the dress to Stockholm ourselves, and I got a lot of pictures from OGAE [General Organisation of Eurovision Fans] members.

Could you describe how special it was to experience your ESC victory?

Well, after having been busy and preparing for the performance for several months, making sure everything is alright, the moment itself you don't enjoy as much as when it's all over. It all needed to sink in first [smiles].

But it must have been a highlight of your career?

Of course, it was and the older you get, the more you realise you can't just win a song festival just like that. We were the last ones who returned to the Netherlands victoriously.

After Teach-In's victory, did you meet ABBA, the previous year's winners, a common tradition at the ESC?

No, that was very strange. They were not



there. When we were at the ABBA Museum, [my partner] Cor noticed a list that included all dates of the ESC, and that's how we figured out they were on holiday in Sweden right then. To be honest, I thought their absence wasn't very sporting. There was supposed to be another opportunity to meet them in Berlin, but we also missed out on that one. It was not destined to happen [sighs].

Did you follow ABBA's career in the

subsequent years?

I remember watching *ABBA—The Movie* at the cinema, I was interested to see how they experienced the line of work I was also in, the tours and so on. You see the stress and them being swallowed up by everything and everyone. I experienced the same on a smaller scale when we were touring all over Europe after winning *Eurovision*. I felt that this was not what I wanted. At the time, it was a well-kept secret that if I couldn't handle things anymore, I would go to the loo. I would close the toilet seat and sit still to come back to my senses. One day, I even fell asleep, I heard the door opening and one of the band members shouted "Gettyyyyy!" The loo was the only place where I could be on my own for a few moments during that hectic period. You have no idea how blissful the silence of a loo is [laughs].

Besides Eurovision, you have another link with ABBA. In 1982 you recorded a Dutch version of a song composed by Agnetha Fältskog, originally called The Queen Of Hearts.

By coincidence, we stumbled on it when we went through my old songs earlier this week. That song, *De Eerste Liefde Is Een Feest*, was recorded for my Dutch language album. Very clever that you know this. I have always been particularly fond of this song that was selected by my producer Eddy Ouwens. The lyric about the feeling of experiencing first love fits Agnetha's melody perfectly. It's a perfect blend. It is one of the highlights of the album, together with *Een Beetje Triest* [A Little Bit Sad], the most beautiful but sad song that describes how nature has to give way to a building project.

How and when did you become a solo artist?

After *Eurovision*, we had been immensely busy, I was completely exhausted and pushed for us to have a much needed two-months holiday, one month to relax and one month to learn a new repertoire. However, to my great sorrow it became clear that nobody wanted to keep the band together any longer. I felt squeezed like a lemon. When I couldn't continue at the same speed for a while, they simply dropped me. Leaving Teach-In was not what I wanted. I felt

like a young hippy and was very attached to these guys. And suddenly you are on your own. I performed for a while with tapes, but I didn't like that at all. I had been used to playing with bands since I was 19 years old. The sad thing was that we could have come back with a great new song after those two months; there was enough potential within the band. They always say, "never change a winning team," but nobody stood up and when Teach-In later returned, it was with two other girls. Upside Down was the first hit of the new line-up, a stunner of a song that I'm sure would have been a hit with me as well. Talking about it still fills me with anger somehow. Anyway, it meant I had to move on, and I became a solo artist.

Were you satisfied with your album that featured Agnetha's song?

The album and several songs turned out very nicely, but I would have preferred to go in another direction. I was turning 30 and longed to become a grown up woman, also with the selection of songs. Maybe I shouldn't have done this album because my producer Eddy also had the new line-up of Teach-In under his wings. This was an impossible situation, it could not work. I felt again that things were going in the wrong direction, and then I decided, you know what you all can do, find it out for yourselves, but I'm gone! It was not fair towards Eddy because he had put a lot of effort into the record. So had I, of course, but I'd completely had it. In the following years, I had to re-evaluate things. I've had quite a journey since. It's only recently that I've picked up my musical career once more.

It surely was a disappointment to the fans that you left 'their' Eurovision group, but it is great to see you have reconnected with your fan base.

The other guys didn't understand that my battery was empty. I was the face of the group, the frontwoman, all the weight was constantly on my shoulders. When I did the interviews, the boys were playing cards and had a beer. All eyes were constantly on me, which still is the case today. I'm the one who is being invited to *Eurovision* gatherings all over the place, which is great fun, by the way. All these people are very nice and happy to see me, they can touch me, and they want to pose for photos. Recently I was in Madrid, Lisbon, Vienna and Budapest and, in all honesty, nobody asks for the guys. I always have to explain that we were a real band, that it was not just about me. Next January, I am going to perform in Tel Aviv with a symphony orchestra for a song festival show called *Douze Points*. It's a big event to celebrate Israel's ESC victory with Hallelujah 40 years ago. It becomes crazier with every year. Next year, it is 44 years since Ding-A-Dong. In 1975, I was 27, now I'm 70, I've come a long way, don't you think? I'm not expecting crazy things any more. Luckily, I'm still here!

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