The ABBA story starts in 1966, when Björn Ulvaeus and Benny Andersson meet for the first time. Björn was a member of the Hootenanny Singers, while Benny was the keyboard player in Sweden’s biggest pop band, The Hep Stars. They wrote their first song together later the same year and towards the end of the 60s they were established song writers and began working as producers for Stig “Stikkan” Anderson at Polar Music in 1971. Stig would later become ABBA’s manager and also wrote the lyrics for several hits during the group’s early years.

In the spring of 1969 Björn and Benny met the two women that would make up the other half of ABBA: Agnetha Fältskog and Anni-Frid Lyngstad. Agnetha had released a single in 1967 and was already a successful solo artist. Frida was also an established singer and, among other things, had toured with Charlie Norman.

To start with, the four friends collaborated by appearing on the recordings they each made, but as early as 1970 they performed together in the cabaret show Festfolk. The first recording to feature all four members was Björn and Benny’s hit single “Hej Gamle Man”, on which Agnetha and Frida contributed backing vocals.

**Björn & Benny, Agnetha & Anni-Frid**

By 1972 they had changed their name to “Björn, Benny, Agnetha & Anni-Frid” and released a single entitled “People Need Love”. The name of the group finally became ABBA, derived from the members’ initials. In order to have the name approved, however, they first had to negotiate with the classic Swedish canned fish company Abba Seafood.

In 1973 the group enjoyed their first major success, when they appeared in Melodifestivalen, the Swedish selection for the Eurovision Song Contest, with a song entitled “Ring Ring”. They finished third, but the single was a hit in several European countries.

**Waterloo**

Strengthened by this success they entered Melodifestivalen again the following year. This time with “Waterloo”, which brought them all the way to the finals. April 6, 1974, became the most famous moment in ABBA’s history, when they wiped the floor and won the Eurovision Song Contest in Brighton. “Waterloo” was soon number one in Great Britain and many other European countries, also collecting ABBA’s hit singles plus two new songs. Out of those, “The Winner Takes It All” and the title track. The group continued working together and towards the end of the year their eighth album, “The Visitors”, was released, including the hit “One Of Us”.

In March 1980, the tour reached Japan, where ABBA made their last live concerts. This year saw the release of “The Singles – The First Ten Years”, collecting ABBA’s hit singles plus two new songs. Out of those, “The Day Before You Came” was one of ABBA’s most accomplished recordings. Despite this fact, it was not a hit of the magnitude that ABBA were used to. At the end of 1982, the group decided to take a break.

**Mamma Mia!**

Three decades after this break ABBA still haven’t reunited, but their music lives on. Not least through the musical Mamma Mia!, which so far has been seen by 50 million people. “ABBA Gold”, which was released in 1992, has sold more than 28 million copies so far and is the all-time biggest-selling CD in Great Britain.

In 2010 ABBA were inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, and today, with more than 379 million records sold, they are regarded as one the biggest pop bands of all time.

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