

Sydney (KvP) Torsdag 3.3.1977 Medan ABBA och resten av Australien sover vilar ett par bla argusogon pa dem, de tilhot '**BOB JONES**' som ar, om han ursaktar att jag sagger det, den mest osannolika '**GORILLA**' jag nagonsin har sett. Det kan man knappast sagas om Bob Jones. Han har valborstat tjockt rott har som hanger till axlarna.

The above Swedish extract was part of a full-page write-up. Its heading read as follows;

ABBA'S DYGNET-RUNT-VAKTER:
KARATEDEMONER I POPKLADER!

The article, from Sweden's leading daily, was an attempt to keep its readers assured that the four members of ABBA would be in safe hands in the South Pacific. The article described the two Australian bodyguards as well-muscled martial arts experts, one of which had shoulder-length flaming red hair and the

protective instincts of a *gorilla*. The journalist responsible for this description was Sweden's Monica Braw; she'd flown to Australia as part of the entourage. Her job was to report home to the fans news of ABBA's life on the road in Australia.

By the time they'd toured down under, ABBA had become one of Sweden's big three exports. Along with Bjorn Borg and Volvo cars, they were probably the biggest money-spinners. From their tour dates in 1977, and for the following three years, they were unquestionably the most popular performers in the world, and along with Australia's Bee Gees, they were the first to break the British-American grip on rock. ABBA's record sales as a group come second only to The Beatles.

The name of the band was devised by taking the first letter of each of the band members' first names. The first 'A' was Anni-Frid (Frida) Lyngstad Fredriksson (vocalist), the fiery red-haired siren. She was strong-willed and extremely forthright whenever the occasion demanded. A conscientious mother, Frida was always concerned about the whereabouts and welfare of her fourteen-year-old son and nine-year-old daughter who'd come to Australia for the tour.

Next came Benny Andersson (keyboards), the placid one, who was almost totally relaxed all the time. Out of all of the band members, Benny was the most at home on the road. When it came to Richard's and my martial arts physical training, he much preferred to talk about fitness. He was extremely good-natured and the joker of the troupe.

Benny had also brought his twelve-year-old son with him.

Frida's and Benny's three children were from

previous relationships. On this tour Frida and Benny were an item and within a year they'd marry.

Bjorn Ulvaeus (guitar), although very well-read, seemed the worrier, prone to uptightness offstage. And yet, he always knew what he wanted and was very precise in thought and action. His relationship with Anna was very close and loving, and for the most part he was the unofficial spokesman of the group.

Agnetha (Anna) Faltskog appeared almost fragile, but not as quiet as we'd assumed. She had a very well developed sense of fun and was very feminine, affectionate and liked to relate to others – even to the extent of touching during a conversation. Her three-year-old daughter Linda had stayed at home with family. Anna missed her constantly; she was also a couple of months pregnant with Christian.

After the tour, by the time Frida and Benny would marry, Anna and Bjorn would separate. By 1982 both couples would be divorced.

Before ABBA had come together as a foursome, all the members had established themselves individually in the Swedish music scene by the early 1970s.

Frida was born in Norway but raised in Sweden. She'd arrived in Stockholm in 1967 at the age of twenty-two, and had been having some success with her solo singing career.

Benny (born in Stockholm) was playing with a band called the Hep Cats. Meanwhile, Bjorn had led a successful band called The Hootenanny Singers during the late 1960s. Finally, a seventeen-year-old Anna was also starting to make hit records at this time.

By 1970 Benny was living with Frida and in July 1971 Bjorn had married Anna. This had become

something of a national event in Sweden as both were now well-known identities and thousands of fans were at the wedding.

Each of them had been unhappy with the lack of direction and progress within their respective groups. Unknowingly, both of the guys, within a short time of each other, had quit what they'd been doing and joined Stikkan (Stig) Anderson's record company, Polar Music. (Stig would go on to become the manager of the band.) It was here that they learned the art of production while composing material for themselves and others.

During the cutting of the album *Lycka*, both girls were brought in to add some backing vocals. A fun atmosphere developed among the four of them, which led to some live gigs. Eventually, as they all contributed more and more to the recordings, they came together as a group, and between 1971 and 1973 they worked on and polished their stage act. The intention, although premature, was to then represent Sweden in the Eurovision Song Contest as a means of gaining some international recognition.

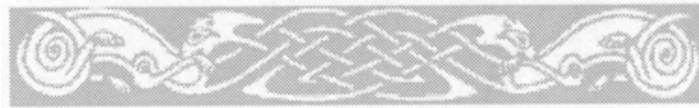
For the 1973 contest they sang 'Ring Ring', but in 1974 in Brighton, watched by an estimated TV audience of 500 million, even against very strong opposition, they were declared outright winners with 'Waterloo'. Thanks to such exposure this jaunty, catchy single instantly made the top of every national chart in Europe, and reached as high as number six in the US. They became household names in Australia, with both 'Waterloo' and 'SOS' (1975).

Bjorn's and Benny's production on these songs was backed up by an attractive and wholesome group image. Their act was now superbly professional and their material had hit a winning formula. It was very

tuneful, easy on the ear with its pleasant harmonies and had appealing hooks in the melody. And above all, it was all so sing-along and danceable.

For all these reasons the hits just kept coming. In 1975 they produced 'Mamma Mia' and in early 1976 came 'Fernando', followed by their trilogy of chart-toppers: 'Knowing Me Knowing You', 'The Name Of The Game' and 'Take A Chance On Me'.

Due to the fact the boys had taken the production to such a superb level, the band was reluctant to play live. However, in 1977 they undertook a world tour, complete with a seventeen-piece string orchestra, two drummers, two extra guitarists, an organist, a moog synthesizer keyman, and a small army of technicians.



'Richard, is that you? Richard we've both died and gone to heaven. You're not gonna believe this! I'd called Richard Norton at the Immigration Department.

'Mate, I've just spent a couple of hours with Paul Dainty and he's booked us to bodyguard the two girls from ABBA.'

'You're right, died and gone to heaven! That's us!' Richard's initial response was followed by, 'It's an even better deal if I get to look after Anna and you Frida. That'll make a couple of blondes together, and a couple of fiery redheads together!'

Funny thing was, that was exactly how Paul Dainty had said he'd wanted it ...

'Bob, it sounds like Frida and Benny are the extroverts who like to party and are prone to occasional outbursts. I figure you'd be more suited

to them. Bjorn and Anna are a more introspective couple, perfect for Richard's personality. Plus, this way we have the coincidence of a pair of blondes and a pair of redheads, classic match-up security'.

It turned out that none of us could have been more off-centre. Although Paul was right on with his concept of matching us up (when it came to our appearances on TV) it'd only been a year or two since Australia'd got colour TV, it was still quite a novelty for a touring band as spectacular as ABBA to be presented in full colour, and *we* did all stand out!

On every international tour that Richard Norton and I'd worked on together, we'd had this friendly contest to see which of us could get any members of the crew (for example, sound and lighting guys) or of the band, its leader, or everybody, to train in the martial arts with us. There was an unofficial grading points system or simply *feathers in our cap* if we would get them interested in training in the shortest period of time from the commencement of the tour dates.

Since poor diets, a lack of any form of exercise, or of normal sleeping hours, plus too many cigarettes, too much alcohol and copious amounts of drug-taking were so prevalent among almost all the bands we'd looked after, Richard and I both figured we were doing them a huge favor if we could get them *hooked* on our routine, even if it were only for the time they'd be with us. Any break from such negative social activities for any amount of time would be feathers in our caps in the eyes of the promoters and the bands management.



ABBA arrived in Australia for a summer tour, in a time of dismal overcast skies and tropical storms that threatened with strong gusts. The band had managed a good night's sleep to combat the jet lag they'd suffered after such a long flight. I'd introduced myself to Bo Norling, the band's tour manager and suggested a drive around the traps, including the venues. As we drove around Kings Cross, and then on our way out to the venue, I made small talk about the tour with Paul Rodgers and Bad Company, how on that last night the sprinkler system had flooded the entire floor. That mishap had got all future touring rock 'n' roll bands barred from staying at The Hyatt Kingsgate up the top end of Darlinghurst Road, where Kings Cross invites everyone into Sydney's flashing bright lights and sinister dark side. Instead, we now all stayed at the downtown bottom end of Darlinghurst Road at the Sebel Townhouse.



During the last half a dozen tours everyone had gotten quite used to the Sebel and its reputation of having almost zero staff turnover. After a while we knew everyone on a first-name basis, of its inhouse 24-hour limousine service with Maxs' Limo Service where even Max the owner would stay out all night looking after us if need be. The Sebel was a smaller hotel than most five-star complexes. That way, no matter who we were looking after, between the corridors, lobbies, pool, gym, foyer and famous club bar, we'd forever be bumping into the Elton Johns or Rod Stewarts, or anyone else staying there.

It was just like one big family, with an unwritten law that no-one should muck up such a good thing – and most times, everyone abided by this rule.

When opened by businessman Harry Sebel in 1963, the owner of the Sebel and his manager Henry Rose were to as rarely as possible say *no* to any request; that is, anything and everything that most (almost every) other hotel would consider as unreasonable, the Sebel considered a normal part of customer service. Hence, if somebody wanted a typewriter and a glass of freshly squeezed orange juice at 3 a.m., then it was a typewriter and orange juice with a smile that was promptly delivered.

Accepting the bad with the good, The Sebel always had celebrities on board: this meant it was often a gathering place for fans as well as stars. The staff always worked in well with us bodyguards, helping to keep autograph-hunters at arm's length, or at least on the opposite side of Elizabeth Bay Road from the hotel. ABBA and The Bay City Rollers were just two of the acts that caused hundreds of fans to mill around the entrance for a glimpse of their heroes. However, a simple request from the *maître d'hôtel* would have them line up across the road in an orderly fashion.

Former general manager Nick Truswell had started as duty manager in 1971. He'd had more than his fair share of rock 'n' roll excess to deal with.

'Led Zeppelin were a wild lot,' he recalled. 'Not because they were all that difficult, but because it was during the time of everybody being into the sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll thing.'

Nick could recall only one TV set being thrown from a window during his lengthy reign and he couldn't remember who threw it.

But he does recall, however, the England Cricket team, including Ian Botham, dressed in drag, using water-filled balloons as ballast. They'd flooded the dance floor as a result.

Everyone from Frank Sinatra to Tori Amos has been seen balancing on the barstools in the Sebel Club Bar. Nick had been best man at a handful of impromptu weddings in the hotel's lobby and Shirley Maclaine liked to cook her own porridge in the kitchens.

During its thirty-seven years the Sebel had been home to all major acts and celebrities passing through Sydney. Elton John had married there, as had Mark Knopfler, and towards the end Sheryl Crowe, Art Garfunkel and U2 had been guests. The traditional post-ARIA Awards in October 2000 were the last major hurrah party for the hotel that had been witness to some of the most eccentric guests – and had always done its best to accommodate even to their most bizarre eccentricities and requests.

By 2000 the Sebel Townhouse, as it was known to all of us, would be torn down to make way for a block of luxury apartments. A very rich part of Sydney's heart died that day. The entertainment industry will be hard-pressed to find a new home with customer service even similar to the once-legendary Sebel of Sydney.



Bo Norling, ABBA's tour manager, was impressed to have learned so much local goss' and to have had such a quick look around the traps, simply by the time

we'd gone with Max and his longest stretch-limo (still a big thing for me) to the venue and back.

But then Richard Norton had me impressed – while I was away he'd broken all our tour records for minimum time–maximum performers training in our martial art.

Bjorn Ulvaeus had woken from a good night's sleep; Anna was still catching up on her beauty sleep, as were both Frida and Benny. Bjorn had showered, donned his tracksuit and rang for his bodyguard to accompany him on a morning run. One of Max's other drivers had taken Bjorn and Richard down to the Reg Bartley oval in Rushcutters Bay Park. When they'd got there, however, it was pouring with rain; of course, this created the problem of Bjorn catching a cold, losing his voice. The morning jog was abandoned.

'See if you can find an indoor swimming pool,' was his next proposal.

Richard and the driver tried, but the torrential rain had set in solid. Besides, many of the leisure centres around Sydney were closed tighter than a clam. It was decided, thanks to Richard, that it'd be better to give the rain and traffic a miss.

However, Bjorn really wanted to do his morning exercises. This in itself was something totally new to us – someone in the rock 'n' roll industry actually wanting to work out!

Now ABBA hadn't even been in the country twenty-four hours and Bjorn hadn't even been out of bed an hour yet!

'Why don't you let me run you through a martial arts warm-up?' Richard was really hopeful.

Bjorn was agape. 'Why not? I'll try anything once – long as it doesn't kill me.'

They'd been working out for about ten minutes in the aerobics area of the Sebel gym next door to the pool when the girls arrived, complete with music tapes, tights and leotards, all set for one of their daily jazz ballet routines – their way of keeping in shape.

Anna and Frida watched for a couple of minutes. Seeing how different it was to anything they'd been used to, they asked, 'Mind if we join in?' Richard had created an all-time record: 75 per cent of the group in just on twenty-four hours!

Benny heard the noise and had wandered up to the gym with a cup of coffee. He sat on the bench press and watched the proceedings with great interest. (That was as close as Benny ever got to our exercises, but he used to laugh, pat his stomach and always promise to get in with the action soon.)



As already mentioned, Paul Dainty's tip for how Richard and I should fit in with the band wasn't so clear-cut. As it turned out, our first night in Sydney pretty much set the format for the whole tour. My couple, Frida and Benny, had three children with them. We would all eat at the hotel restaurant at night. After dinner the family would settle into their penthouse for an early night. I'd leave the door of my suite next door to them open, just in case, and kick back to watch a bit of television.

Meanwhile, Bjorn and Anna had said to Richard, 'We've heard all about Sydney's Kings Cross, we want to see it from top to bottom.'

At about 5 a.m. Richard had come up to my

room. ‘Man, I had to take them to every place in town. For a couple of rock stars who don’t do drugs, they sure have got some energy! “Take us here, take us there, take us everywhere!” They never let up. What did you get up to with the outrageous couple?’

‘Oh, we just kicked back, had a lazy one. Watched a bit of telly. That was cool.’ I had to lie through my teeth about it being cool.

The next afternoon saw the holding of the national press conference at the Sebel’s Convention Centre. Paul Dainty had certainly whipped up a storm with his pre-tour marketing strategies. Everyone was here, as well as several international journalists, media from every state and by the look of it from just about every major country centre. ABBA were sitting up on stage behind a large trestle with a microphone each. All of them looked very sporting, all decked out with their new Bob Jones martial arts uniforms, giving them the appearance of being really comfortable. They were pleasant, answering questions about drugs and the trivia that they were just not into. I kept hoping for some researched questions about their backgrounds, music and song-writing. Instead ABBA explained how, since arriving in Australia, their bodyguards had put them on this fantastic fitness regime of martial arts training. The press, all of them, ate it up. (By halfway through the tour, press articles and pictures of Richard and me getting ABBA fit and teaching them self-defence had been beamed all over Australia and Europe.)

About halfway through the press conference, without any warning and totally unexpected, a very poor-imitation Elvis Presley appeared, complete with brushed-back black hair, ear-lobe-length side-burns, black suede shoes, black-flared bell-bottom pants and,

wait for it, a purple shirt with the pointed collars turned up, buttons undone down far enough to expose a hairy chest and at least a dozen thick gold-plated theatrical chains. Plus, of course, not dark but black thick-rimmed extra-large sunglasses. Not that the shades are out of character in rock 'n' roll except that it'd been overcast with a torrential downpour for most of the day.

Rather than instantly move in and evict this Elvis clown out on his arse into the middle of Darlinghurst Road, I thought I'd better check with somebody, just in case Elvis was a simpleton Kings Cross cronie who'd conned his way in.

By now, Elvis was strutting up and down, right in front of the group, and telling some of the television camera crew that they were working far too close to the band.

Just then I saw my mate, Patty Mostyn (Paul Dainty's Sydney publicist).

'Patty, who's the walking gold mine in the black glasses? I'm thinking seriously of bouncing him on his arse out of here.'

'Oh no, Bob, don't do that, that's Tom Oliver, the actor. You know Tom, from "Number 96" and "Bellbird". Someone said he's moonlighting as a security guard. I even thought he was a third bodyguard working with you and Richard.'

I couldn't believe it; I'd known Patty for a few years and that smile, or something in her body language, said that something here was out of whack.

About an hour after the press conference we were all back at the Sebel Club-Bar. There was an air of excitement, thanks to the success of the afternoon's media meeting. Suddenly, in came Elvis, a.k.a. actor Tom Oliver, who'd bowled straight up to Frida and

Anna and commenced laughing and joking like he'd known them since high school. Eventually, he asked both girls, in quite a loud voice, loud enough for the whole bar to tune into the conversation, 'Well, Frida and Anna, what did you both think?'

'Oh, the whole thing was fabulous,' Frida replied.

'Tom, you were the best – you trick everyone!' Anna's positive reply had everyone in the bar nodding and murmuring about how well *it* had gone down.

'Ladies and gentlemen, can I have your attention? There's one man among us whom I really respect, therefore I really value his opinion about this – and that's Mr Bob Jones. Bob, tell me, what did you think?'

What did I think about what?

Patty Mostyn hadn't told me anything, neither had anyone else. I could've told her what I really thought about Elvis and his stupid outfit that almost got this actor's arse kicked earlier that afternoon. But judging by the reaction of everyone there so far, I went along with the flow.

'Well Tom, the girls were right, you were fabulous. And you definitely did trick *everyone*.'

'Ladies and gentlemen, did you hear that? Straight from a *real-life* bodyguard, the best, and he thinks *it* was great! Christ, now I do feel like a real bodyguard. I know we *got* all those journalists, and they all thought I was moonlighting by working as a bodyguard for ABBA!'

A couple of hours later, after several opportune questions, I finally learned that there was going to be a full-length movie of ABBA in concert. The idea was the brainchild of Reg Grundy, who put up 25 per cent

of the deal, with ABBA, who were to be 75 per cent partners in the venture. Bob Caswell wrote the film, and it was to be directed by Swedish film whiz kid Lasser Hollstrom, who'd been labelled as 'the new Ingmar Bergman'.

The basic plot was Ashley Wallace (played by actor Robert Hughes), a resident DJ at a not so well-known country radio station, worked a dead-end midnight-to-dawn shift. This station's only executive got the bright idea that the station's failing ratings would definitely soar through the roof if only their all-night DJ could get an exclusive interview with the hottest band in the world, ABBA, which any reporter would know was a downright impossibility.

Armed with a tape recorder and a lot of guts, Wallace followed the four Swedish singers around Australia, bursting late into press conferences, pushing through crowds and always trying to outwit the bodyguard (Elvis a.k.a. Tom Oliver).

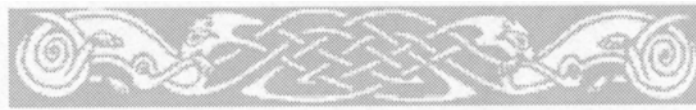
'That's it Bob, and as well as the bodyguard I also play a very gay butler, an ocker taxi driver, a golf caddie, and a dirty old barman in a wild west saloon. It's quite challenging for me, playing these different parts. It's a ridiculous comedy, but we're all having humungous fun doing it.

'The film is going to include a lot of scenes from this tour as it happens, including concert appearances, backstage scenes and press conferences. As we go, the footage is mostly shot secretly for an air of realism.'

'That's a great way to catch realism on film,' I said, thinking how real it would've been if I'd kicked his arse and bounced him across the bitumen out front of the Sebel.

Tom continued: 'The DJ will annoy ABBA

during a picnic at a beautiful outdoor setting, during a game of poker in a smoke-filled room and while they're trying to relax on their boat. Robert Hughes, the DJ, will be the only media personality to get aboard. At another time he will share their picnic, with Anna and Frida tempting him with berries and wine. In his dreams he'll be seduced by the girls.'



On one of those long flights from one city to another we'd taken up all the first-class, business-class and about the first twenty seats of economy.

The talk about a movie of ABBA in concert, and the relationship of the group to Tom Oliver, *their* bodyguard, had me thinking back to my American tour, and the guy that had started all this celebrity body-guarding and movie stuff: Bruce Lee, in his role as The Green Hornet, himself a famous martial artist playing the bodyguard to a celebrity.

It was also Bruce Lee who had inspired me in 1975 to develop the idea of Richard Norton and Bob Jones getting *their* own TV series called 'The Bodyguards'. This was three years before 'Miami Vice' (1978) and four years before the British version, 'Minder' (1979).

It was only during these long flights that I could find the time to dream up thirteen one-hour episodes, commencing with a two-hour feature pilot called 'The Final Twist'. Toshiro Mifune, in our correspondence, had been impressed with my idea of two expert martial arts Western bodyguards fighting crime and evil forces while at the same time

adhering to the Asian concept of Bushido (martial arts valor). He was the most famous actor in Japan at the time (he'd just completed *The Red Sun* with Charles Bronson), due to his involvement in *The Seven Samurai*, a Japanese epic that was remade in America as *The Magnificent Seven*.

Meanwhile, my earlier exchange with Tom Oliver now had him working out with Richard and I during our routines almost daily.

In between tours I found time to work with a well-known Melbourne journalist, Jim Simmonds. Jim also was a practitioner of the Korean martial art Tae Kwon Do (the first style that I'd trained in with Jack Rozinsky). Jim, sympathetic to my cause, had worked with me on the first three episodes, including the two-hour pilot. The second episode was titled 'The Bakers Dozen'. This was about a sinister gang of twelve of the most notorious bikies coming together from different gangs, to form one powerful and impenetrable gang. Of course, I would gain acceptance into this inner-sanctum; hence, 'The Bakers Dozen'. The third show was to be called 'The Missing Link' and Jim did a great job on this screenplay. The story line had Richard and I training with Masutatsu Oyama at his Kyokoshinkai-Kan (his headquarters in Tokyo). Mas Oyama, a tenth-degree Black Belt, the highest achievable level and depicted by the wearing of a solid red belt, was the highest profile martial arts master of the time. His empire of karate, with multiple millions of students, was spread around the globe. Like Mifune, Oyama was excited about the concept, and its potential to market the martial arts to a broader audience. This episode also had Richard leaving me in Japan to train with Oyama, while he went to Okinawa to save a damsel in

distress. This would see him fighting in a death match in an Okinawan Buddhist temple in the mountains.

We couldn't get the series off the ground. The powers to be reckoned it would be too much of a risk committing money to an unknown concept that starred a couple of unknown martial arts bodyguards. As it turned out 'Miami' and 'Minder' broke all ratings records. It also turned out that Richard by 2000 had acted in more than sixty movies worldwide.

Just as the Qantas jet started its descent, there was a cry of, '*Eear – yuk!*' It was the blood-curdling scream of our newest martial arts student – movie bodyguard, Tom Oliver. He'd sprung out of his seat and leapt into the aisle in a Ninja stance (I don't even know who taught him that one) to ward off actor Robert Hughes a.k.a. country DJ Ashley Wallace, who was simply heading up to the first-class toilets.

'Oh no you don't!' was the strict command of ABBA's so-called *bodyguard* as he requested the DJ to use the toilets at the back of the plane and not to go anywhere near the group. With this, everyone present broke up with laughter.

The more shows ABBA did the better they sounded. And that wasn't an easy thing to do – the first show was near perfect. Swedish journalist Monica Braw kept interviewing me for behind-the-scenes snippets of news to send back home. I kept flirting with her as if she had a bounty on her head.

Before every show, as ABBA were about to go on stage, Anna would ask: 'Oh Richard, where are you taking Bjorn and me tonight?'

Whereas, when it came to Frida it was, 'Oh Bob, where are the kids? Promise me you will look after them while I am on stage.'

So much for the two fiery redheads together.



The next clash with the bodyguard, the DJ and the film crew didn't happen until we hit Melbourne for three packed-out shows at the Myer Music Bowl. Naturally, every time Tom would appear to play his part in the movie, either Richard or myself, or the both of us, would be there.

At the first show in Melbourne, down on the right-hand side of the stage, with all cameras strategically out of sight, there was Tom the *bodyguard* hassling Ashley Wallace, that conniving DJ still busting his arse to get to ABBA for his interview. Again, the *bodyguard* had a problem with all of this – according to the script, of course.

In the name of realism, no-one had told my Black Belts on backstage security. (Why should I tell them – no-one bothered to tell me?) They figured Elvis to be a part of the whole travelling circus; after all, he was wearing his access-all-areas pass. The aggressor, Ashley Wallace, certainly did look like your average country DJ trying to con his way backstage (thanks to good casting agents). Robert Hughes, in his capacity as actor, kept trying to explain to my Black Belts as they bounced him off the stage and continued to bounce him over to the side exit of the Myer Music Bowl perimeters; never to be allowed entry for as long as he would try.

'Listen, it's this movie deal, you know we're pretending,' he'd insist. 'Oh, you know Bob – Bob Jones! Well, I know Bob. If you could just ask him, he'll tell you I'm not just a DJ trying to get backstage, I'm really this actor, and it's my ...'

'Yeah, sure man, we'll tell Bob Jones. He's got

nothing better to do than listen to a bullshit story like this. It's not like you're the only one that wants to get backstage and, you all know Bob Jones.' Frank Chick, who looked after backstage would then inform the exit gate security, 'Hey, Tum Joe, this guy's not a DJ, he's a movie star!' *Wink, wink.* 'It's Mel Gibson! Will you make sure he never gets in here again?'

All the bouncers around this exit gate would laugh their arses off.

However, there was a problem in Sydney. Each day's shoot was being filed and sent there for previewing, before going on to Sweden with the band after the tour. The producer, director and the editor viewed the rushes daily, and every time ABBA appeared there were these two guys that looked like they could be related to the group, or they at least look like they were really serious, real-life bodyguards.

'Who are these men? What are they doing here?' the producer would ask; after all, he was paying the bills.

'They're the real-life bodyguards. What a pity we didn't pre-plan this into the script!' the director, as any director would, replied.

I could just see Richard and me, with those black glasses, turned-up collars and purple shirts, and all those gold chains hanging around our hairy chests. What hairy chests?

'What if we write them into the script? Have them do something that makes them look like understudies to Tom, the boss of the *bodyguards*?' The editor knew that if he edited out Richard and me every time we appeared on film, instead of a feature movie, he'd wind up with a ten-minute documentary.

‘When they come back to Sydney for the finish of the tour, we’ll think of something.’

The third and final show in Melbourne at the Myer Music Bowl drew by far the biggest crowd and it was the most spectacular of the shows. Thousands of fans roamed the exterior’s perimeters. They either couldn’t get tickets, or were there because the sound was great (never mind not being able to see the band).

After the show, Frida, Benny, Bjorn, Anna, Richard and I bailed into the limo in the security compound at the rear of the Music Bowl, and proceeded to head back to our hotel. Unfortunately, thousands upon thousands of fans had milled around the rear access road that would take us back to St. Kilda Road. The driver had, for safety reasons, slowed right down, to a point where he couldn’t continue, and actually had to stop the car. The fans couldn’t see the group through the tinted windows, so they started yelling and pounding on the car. I could see the boys were coping, but Frida started to look concerned. As she looked at me I could feel her thinking, oh, Bob will fix it all up! The biggest problem was that Anna was not only showing signs of paranoia, she was petrified!

‘Richard, stay in the car, make sure everyone’s okay. I’m gonna get us moving again.’ I found it hard to force my way out. Richard and I both had to put our shoulder weight against the door. Then I had to get out while around a hundred ABBA fans were trying to get in. Once out, I had to edge my way along the length of the limo until I’d positioned myself to the front of the car. Now it was merely a matter of encouraging people to shift to the sides, and we slowly got the momentum of the crowd and the car

moving at a slow walking pace. Unknown to me, the episode was being filmed by the ABBA film crew with their strategically positioned cameras.

The ABBA film was released several months later. One of my Black Belts, who was living and working in London, had called. Excitedly he'd said, 'This pub I'm working at in the East End showed the ABBA movie on the big screen the other night. The whole pub was going ape shit over all of ABBA's music, and I kept screaming out over the melee, "*Hey!* That guy with the blond hair, that's Richard Norton! And the red-haired guy is Bob Jones! And they're my martial arts instructors and that's the Myer Music Bowl, Melbourne! That's where I live! Where I come from!" It was great to see you guys so far from home, in a downtown pub! And Chief, that thing in front of the stretch limo with that mass crowd, fuck that looked real!'



We were back in Sydney for the last gig and back at the Sebel Town House. The group was resting while Richard and I were watching a report on ABBA on 'A Current Affair'. The show host had been interviewing Tom Oliver about his role as the bodyguard, and asked Tom what he thought of the ABBA girls.

'Anna and Frida are beautiful. I find Swedish girls very charming, very conservative and so hospitable.'

European women seem to combine sophistication with femininity and individualism.

‘Australian men haven’t learnt how to treat their women properly,’ said our local English-born *body-guard*, Tom.

Richard and I agreed, Tom couldn’t have said it better, until he blew it when he got to the bit about Australian men ... But then again?

Meanwhile, Paul Dainty had organised a spectacular end-of-tour dinner at a major Sydney restaurant. After that we’d all gone back to the Sebel Club-Bar and everyone was enjoying the spirit of the moment. Each of us, in a way, was a little sad that the following night would bring the curtain down on the tour. The vibrant nightlife of the previous weeks had Anna looking a little tired, and she may have had that one drink over her limit. Bjorn had asked Richard to see Anna safely up to their penthouse as he was in a busy rave with Benny and Paul Dainty, Michael Chugg and Keith Bradley, the production manager, about specifications of the following night’s spectacular finale.

About twenty minutes later Benny and Frida decided that they’d had enough. While I was taking them to their room, and as we came off the elevator on ABBA’s floor, we could see Richard and Anna at the door of the penthouse.

‘Bob, what’s that your best friend’s doing with my best friend’s wife?’

‘Well, maybe he’s teaching her some *stand-up* grappling techniques for self-defence ... *Maybe!*’

Christ, what else could I say?

‘Wouldn’t they be more comfortable laying down?’ Benny asked as we walked past.

It’d been over six weeks since we’d been in Sydney. At around 10 a.m. Sebel management had sent up to

my room a variety of accumulated presents for the band. Most were for the two girls, and a lot were for Linda, Anna's baby daughter. I'd rung Richard to give me a hand. Before we could pass the gifts on to the group we had to be quite meticulous and search for any narcotics or crank messages that could offend. This proved to be tedious as we had forty-three koalas of all shapes and sizes, twenty-eight boxes of chocolates, fourteen nicely wrapped gift boxes and twelve large bunches and displays of flowers. Finally, Richard and I joked about which one of us would open a box, about twelve centimetres square, with a slow, quite audible ticking noise coming from within ...

'Good morning guys, how's the bodyguarding business going this morning?' asked the movie star bodyguard as he entered our room.

'Great mate! We were just going through all these presents before we give them clearance to ABBA. You know, the usual, checking for cannabis among the flowers, any plastic bag substances among the koalas, *cool* cookies in those gift packages, and *crank* offensive love notes among the flowers ... Stuff like that ...' To me it was as if this were an everyday occurrence.

'Oh man, that's perfect! Bob, the director, Lasser Hollstrom says he has this dilemma in the cutting room. The editors keep asking, "who are these two guys who keep appearing everywhere? One has blond hair and the other has red hair, and they are fucking everywhere!" He's sent me to work something out with you and Richard where we could film something that would make it look like you two are my understudies. Like you know, I'd look like the boss of the bodyguards.

‘What you just said before is perfect, we could film you two checking all these goodies on camera and I could be sort of overseeing the whole thing’.

‘All right Tom, let me see if I’ve got this thing right. Richard and I are to look like understudy bodyguards to you – you’re the boss?’

Tom nodded.

I looked at Richard and tugged at my ear lobe with the thumb and bent index finger of my right hand. I then wiped my chin with my index finger.

Richard read my Shelley Berman hand language: Are you tuned in: the bullshit’s about to flow!

‘Hey Richard,’ I joked. ‘Can you pass over that gift box for Linda, Anna’s daughter? You know, that one on top of the television; I think our boss should check it out.’

Richard brought it over, as if he were carrying a full-to-the-brim bowl of hot soup. I took the brightly packaged box off him, as if I’d just taken a name card off an Asian entrepreneur, and looked square at Tom Oliver, as if I were trying out for a Logie for best supporting actor.

‘Tom, Richard and I have opened two of these this morning, but I think we were lucky. Listen to this,’ I whispered, ‘can you hear that slow ticking inside?’ I handed him the box.

Tom held it ever so gently with his fingertips. Slowly, without a word from anybody, he leaned down and ever so carefully placed it at his feet. There was fear in his eyes as he left the room as quickly as he’d come in.

I went over to the box, tore the gift-wrapping off: inside was a small statue of a cute kangaroo with boxing gloves on, standing on a plaque in the shape

of Australia. In the middle of the plaque, which read 'ABBA we love you', was a clock:

Tick, tock, tick, tock, tick tock ...

Richard and I both fell about laughing and laughing, and then we laughed some more.



It's now more than twenty-five years since ABBA's debut mega-global hit, 'Waterloo'. Their music is still revered and has a new generation of fans, thanks to the success of *Muriel's Wedding*, 1970s nostalgia and a revamped enthusiastic following among the gay community. ABBA may have broken up many years ago, but in a sense, they've never really gone away.

Now, in the new millennium, as Sweden's biggest earning export after Volvo, the band has sold in excess of 350 million albums worldwide. Recently, they received the ultimate accolade when *Mamma Mia!*, a stage tribute to their music, and written by Benny and Bjorn, opened in London's West End and received rave reviews.

There were more rave reviews as *Mamma Mia!* made its mark on the Australian stage.