

SCAN

M A G A Z I N E



THE RETURN OF ACE OF BASE
CULTURE IN SWEDEN 2011

BERGEN - GATEWAY TO THE FJORDS OF NORWAY
ISLAND HOPPING ADVENTURES IN DENMARK

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British critics were impressed with Swedish comedian and illusionist Carl-Einar Häckner's solo show *Big in Sweden* in London in December last year. For those of us who missed his UK stage appearance, Carl-Einar Häckner is returning in February with a new show entitled *Swedish Meatballs*.

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The Return of Ace of Base

By Karl Batterbee | Photos: Niclas Brunzel/Söderberg Agentur

Swedish supergroup Ace of Base are back! After an eight year hiatus, they have come back with their fifth studio album, *The Golden Ratio*. They will be returning to UK shores in 2011, but Scan Magazine met up with the group in Stockholm at the end of 2010. We wanted to talk about the new album, but also about the fact that the line-up is now a little different, too. The band's famous front women, sisters Jenny and Linn Berggren, are controversially no longer present, amid rumours of a rift. In their place are two new vocalists, Julia and Clara, joining original founding members Ulf and Jonas.

It has been eight years since your last album. What on earth have you been doing since then?

Jonas: Ha! Raising kids!

Ulf: And that's taken up some time of course. But also, we needed to have a break from the music industry to try to focus on different things. I think in the early part of the 2000s we kind of lost the spirit of it all, and it wasn't fun anymore.

Jonas: There was too much politics there. With my sisters Jenny and Linn, and then companies who would say, "Oh you have

to do it like this, and you have to do it like that." All kinds of things, it becomes too heavy. In the end, we were only really happy with some songs on each album. But on the first album we did exactly what we wanted. And with this album we have been able to do that again. It's very nice. Without compromising, with me and Ulf working, it's all very positive. We have the energy back!

Ulf: With the first album, we locked ourselves away in the studio for almost three years. There were no record companies involved, no producers, nothing. The second album – we'd been number 1 all over the world, so suddenly we had record company executives from all over the world, from every single country, who had an opinion.

Jonas: Everybody wanted to put their thumb on it. And it doesn't help the music production one bit.

Ok, so *The Golden Ratio* is of course the new album. But for those who know and love the old Ace of Base sound, how would you describe this new album in comparison?

Jonas: I would say it's a mixture of 1994 and 2010. You take the best parts of each

and put them together. We wanted to do the music that we love, which is around 1994 music-wise. And we wanted to add some 2010 spice to it.

Ulf: But it's also really inspired by most of the inspirational sources from the first album, which are from the early eighties. It has a very typical Ace of Base sound on some songs, the reggae beats and so forth. And then it has a really heavy dance influence to it as well. And we've been working a lot to enforce the girls' vocals, to really show the girls' vocals as naked as possible, because they sing so amazingly.

So, the new album is the return of Ace of Base, but it is also the introduction of Julia and Clara as the group's new vocalists. But girls, it must have been quite daunting to front an album for a band, whose fans have been used to two different vocalists for the last 15 years. So how did you deal with that?

Clara: Well we're not here to take someone's place or anything like that. Julia and I have just tried to do a good job, and do what we love, and just sing.

Julia: They were also Ace of Base but in another form, and we are a new form of



Ace of Base. It's not like we are the new Jenny and Linn. They were wonderful, and now we are something new, something else. We're just trying to be ourselves.

And how did the new Ace of Base come about and the old Ace of Base cease to exist? There were rumours that the record label didn't want Jenny fronting the band on her own after Linn had finally left.

Jonas: Yes, they wanted a new girl, a new lead vocalist.

Ulf: When we write songs, we write songs for two girls. That's the dynamic we always want to have in the songs, the harmonies.

Jonas: They missed Linn's voice very much, the record label. Jenny can't sing like that, so they wanted us to get a lead vocalist in. And it's hard to tell your own sister that. They didn't say it to her, they said it to us.

Ulf: We wanted to continue working, but the record label demanded that we have two girls singing. They were not interested in releasing anything otherwise. So it's not like we had a choice either. And Jenny wasn't interested in doing that. So the only way for us to continue was to get two new girls.

Jonas: It's sad. At first Jenny said, "Yes, I can do that." But then it was always no. You say yes, but then you have so many terms, and it has to be this and this and this and this, that you actually really mean no.

So did she ever actually officially leave?

Ulf: Now she has left, yeah.

And how are relations between yourselves and Jenny and Linn now?

Jonas: I meet Linn as she also lives in Gothenburg. So we meet often, and she

likes my kids, and we hang out. But as for Jenny, I would say... if it were just me, Ulf and Jenny playing together in the band, all would be fine. But there were so many factors from outside, some that we've just mentioned, but a lot of other ones too.

Ulf: We tried. We tried everything in our power to make this happen, but it didn't work out. But now she can do what she loves to do, to work and do her solo career, which is great. And we can do what we love.

Jonas: We wish her all the luck in the world. There's no problem on that side, from our side.

For more information, please visit:
www.aceofbase-music.de