

EUROPE

Thank Jens for the music

Jens Elsborg and Nordic Rentals are supplying the PA for the leading European ABBA tribute show with an Adamson rig. The winning loudspeaker takes it all, finds **Dave Robinson**

I have a dream. As do a lot of people. And that is, that ABBA will reform and we will be able to hear the Swedish line-up – arguably Europe's best-loved band ever – play together once again.

But it's not going to happen. By all accounts, and despite being offered millions, the foursome ain't taking the chance.

So, what's the next best thing? It has to be *ABBA The Show*.

It began in 1996 when Camilla Hedrén and Katja Nord created an ABBA tribute act, named Waterloo. Not a piss-take version, like the brilliant Björn Again, but a genuine effort to bring the ABBA experience to the fans of the 360 million album-selling supertrouper. Now, *ABBA The Show* is recognised as being the most authentic recreation of everything ABBA. And how: during the show, original band



Jens Elsborg, FOH engineer

members such as Ulf Andersson (*I Do, I Do, I Do*) on sax and Roger Palm (*Dancing Queen, Rock Me*) on drums appear on stage with 'Agnetha, Benny, Bjorn and Anni-frid'.

The PA for the tour is supplied by Danish outfit Nordic Rentals, owned by Jens Elsborg, who is also the FOH engineer and sound designer. *PSNE* visited *ABBA The Show* at Wembley Arena, when the nostalgia-fest was half-way through a 12-day, 11-gig tour in the UK, before heading to Sweden and Germany. So, Jens – what's the name of the game?

"Our main rig is Adamson," he says during the soundcheck. "We have Electro-Voice XLC, but when you need power and throw and control, we use the Adamson. We still have shit-loads of d&b C4s, but when you need a reliable speaker, it's Adamson."

Elsborg and his team can rig the Adamson system in four-and-a-half hours, he says. "We are a small crew, compared with German or British teams... We are only four guys: me and the monitor guy, two PA riggers who also do the mics and

"[Adamson] is a very smart design. It's very in-your-face."

Elsborg tells *PSNE* how he has upgraded with Spektrix, and Matrix, and M15 monitors, and then the SX18 subs. But, he continues, the T21 subs are far more powerful than anything else he's encountered. "I need fewer of those to get the same coverage. The sound is very tight and very focused; I can get some real position and direction to the sound."

"Three in a stack are like 12 of the old unit. They produce a wavefront which is 'feelable' – you don't have to go up in very high volumes to feel them. But [ABBA] is not a sub-heavy show: I go more for a tone balance than where I can blow them apart!"

"I don't have a dB limiter, but there are some 60-year-olds, close to 70-year-olds, along with the second-generation ABBA fans, sometimes third-generation!" he smiles. "So normally it starts out quite gentle and then gets party-like..."

He's also likes what Soundcraft are doing. "I'm a very big fan of the Vi6, for shows that need a lot of inputs, for me it's the only console I can bring to a festival where amateurs get in, you have very fast



Dancing queens: Camilla and Katja are joined by ex-ABBA band members each night

stands and enclosures for the drummer. But that's because the Danish salary is close to double so we have to work twice as hard!" ("Though we pay 50% of it in tax," he says quietly.)

Elsborg has worked on the show since "they became big, maybe two years ago", he says.

"Sometimes we have up to 10,000 people watching: the O2 Arena Berlin, the Köln Arena, places in Bulgaria. That's when you have 90m, close to room of throw, and a width of 100m, 105m, so you need a lot of speakers to cover that..."

The Wembley Arena kit is humble by comparison: eight Adamson Y18s per side and four Y10s, an 8-box Matrix in the centre, plus three SX18 stacks. "You need to have boxes you can aim where people are sitting," he says of the central Matrix hang.

But no side hangs?

"Side hangs would mean one more PA rigger, one more truck and trailer – then it comes to budget."

Back to the set-up. "We have the [Adamson] Shooter software, we use that everyday. The biggest hang has been 16 Y18s per side and then 16 Y10s as out hangs, more than twice the size [of Wembley], that's a real full stadium rig."

Of course Elsborg's an Adamson fan: Nordic was the first company to use the Canadian systems in Europe, and is now a distributor too.

change over times – when you are at a festival you are babysitting, you need to be able to see what's happening, how the compressor is running and so on – this is the only console where you can do that.

Both consoles are using all 64 inputs, while an additional Yamaha LS9 performs a submix, mainly from the onstage string ensemble.

Elsewhere in his rack there's a Furman power conditioner, a couple of Avalon units (for the main vocals), a BSS DPR901mkII dynamic EQ, a TC DB Max and M5000, and the ubiquitous Yamaha SPX1000. Elsborg uses Sennheiser in-ears with Shure handheld mics and belt packs.

He started out with XTA management software, then progressed to Lake Contours, Dolby Lakes and now Labgruppen PLMs. The amps are Lab too: FP10000s running the 9" and 1.5" speakers and drivers, FP 7000s running the SX18s and the Y10s, then FP 6400 amps for the Adamson subs.

"The intention is to bring in the [Lab FP] 9000 amps to drive the subs – it makes a difference but then it's down to the money..."

Money, money, money. Where have I heard that before? 🍀

✦ You have to admire Jens Elsborg and his crew: after reported bad sound at Malmö in early January, he went online at abba-the-show.com to explain to fans why it wasn't right on the night. Respect due!