

STUDENT LIFE

Music Column: Perfect moments in pop

Deconstructing Abba's "Take a Chance on Me"

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I was nine years old when Swedish foursome Ace of Base released "The Sign," their American debut that included the smash single of the same name and the Diane Warren-penned "Don't Turn Around," among many others. One night, my mom was flipping through the TV Guide (I was sitting next to her on the couch), and she came across an article about the group. "Isn't this that band you like, ABBA?" she motioned the mini-magazine toward me. I almost had an aneurysm. "Mom, that's NOT ABBA," I hissed, defending my favorite pop act, "that's Ace of Base, duh." (Eventually I'd express my unconditional love for Ace of Base by performing "The Sign" at a 4th grade talent showcase, but that's a totally different story.) I had an inclination of the band she was referring to -- I knew they were from the 70s -- but it wasn't until a decade later that I realized just how sensational and larger-than-life ABBA were, and still are today.

Originally, the song's title was "Billy Boy," which was ultimately scrapped after group member and songwriter Björn Ulvaeus, according to legend, went jogging one day and heard the sound (of heavy breathing, apparently) "tkch-tkch-tkch" in his head. Inspired by his exercise epiphany, he stretched out the "tkch-tkch-tkch" to form the beginning of the song title, "Take a Chance," later adding "on Me" to top-off the ending. With the help of songwriting partner Benny Andersson and the band's foremost members, Agnetha Fältskog and Frida Lyngstad, ABBA recorded "Take a Chance on Me" in the summer of 1977. It was released on the album *The Game* later that same year.

"Take a Chance on Me" begins unlike most songs -- a cappella. Agnetha and Frida open the gates of musical heaven by belting out the song's chorus while Bjorn and Benny monotonously chant the brilliantly catchy "take-a-chance-take-a-chance-tkch-tkch-chance-chance" line underneath the

ladies heightened vocals. Nearly twenty seconds later, a wormy synth-line slithers into the four-person vocal, and suddenly the song bursts into full-band arrangement -- streaming synths from above and below, left and right, soft and subtle guitar interjections, lite rock drums.

A minute in, the song mellows out a bit; the rep-

in both of the solo passages. Sexual momentum continues to build and reaches a climax when, like a stick of dynamite, Agnetha explodes in sexual frustration, exclaiming, "When I dream I'm alone with you, it's magic" over a warm, zigzagging, pulsating synth-line that bounces around her voice like a slinky. She sounds angelic, and I can't help but

undeniably recognizable.

*If you change your mind
I'm the first in line
honey I'm still free
take a chance on me
if you need me
let me know
gonna be around
if you got no place to go
when you're feeling down*



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Swedish super group ABBA is still recognized as one of the most-influential pop bands of all-time.

etitious "tkch" disappears, and a breathy, sexually-famished Agnetha sighs, "That's all I ask of you honey." The ladies then begin pleading to their men: "We can go dancing/ we can go walking... listen to some music/ maybe just talking..." Agnetha commands most of the song's vocal presence, appearing

shiver with goose bumps when I hear her sing.

Like most ABBA tunes, the hook is sugary-saturated, relying on the vocals of Agnetha and Frida to pull the listener in with elementary, often ultra-corny lyrics. But as simple and watered-down as the lyrics are, they're completely mesmerizing and

Yes, I could continue to produce synonyms for the word "catchy" to further describe the lyrics, but the song does more than that. Not only does it grab your attention, it makes you *feel*. A song simply becomes a beat with words sung over it when the listener is unable to make a connection with it. "Take a Chance on Me" (and many other ABBA songs, actually) hooks the listener in with lyrics that all humans can comprehend, with a subject we all can relate to and successfully arouses our emotions. We've all had a crush that completely ignored our advances, no matter how hormonally charged we were. Whether it was an affectionate note slipped into a school locker or passed on to a friend of a friend or an unexpected phone call to the infatuated-with, we've all experienced that stomachache of denial and devastation, that pending heartache.

The song continues on with the women becoming a bit more breathless and a lot more aggressive: "I'm in no hurry/ I know I'm gonna get you" -- over twangy guitars and synths that sound like spiders crawling up your spine. And Agnetha lets out one more, last-ditch, ecstatic yearn to her man: "You say that I waste my time/ but I can't get you off my mind/ no I can't let go/ cause I love you so..." It's a final plea for affection before the chorus repeats. And although it seems she may never receive the attention she so desperately wants, I, the listener, am fully invested in her search for love, rooting her on until the last of her voice fades into synthesizer space.



KJ Margraff Jr./ THE BEHREND BEACON

Focal Point

Penn State Erie Theatre Department students work on the set for upcoming play *The Laramie Project*. Performances are scheduled for March 31, April 1 and April 5-8.

All questions concerning the play should be referred to the director, Dr. Christine Mangone, at cbm11@psu.edu

Avoid a viru

By Logan Stack
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Dear ASCII,

I got a virus warning e-mail from a friend; it says I should delete a program in `c:\winnt`. I'm afraid to do that because my system may break. If the file says to delete is there, should I delete it?
- Infected

Dear Infected,

There are a lot of virus hoaxes out there. This e-mail may be one of them. Some files in `c:\winnt` are not needed and may not cause your computer to break or at least may not break it immediately.

Before deleting anything, you should search online for the name of the alleged virus. Symantec.com and McAfee.com both are authoritative sources on both real and hoax viruses. They will tell you if the virus is real and what you can do about it.

If you find that it is a virus, you will need to log in as an administrator to delete anything from `c:\winnt`. It is dangerous to remove things from there, so Windows does not let normal users do so.

The best solution is to install anti-virus software and keep it updated. Anti-virus software can actively prevent you from ever getting infected. And if you do get infected, it is better to actually eliminating all traces of the virus than a manual deletion usually is.

Viruses do not have to be a separate program, so they can't always be fixed by deleting a file. More sophisticated viruses work like a biological virus: they infect a host program. If the virus has infected `excel.exe`, deleting it would remove Excel from your computer. Anti-virus software can open up `excel.exe` and remove the virus code without breaking Excel. It's possible to do that by hand but it would be difficult even for an expert.

Penn State gives you Norton Anti-virus for free. It came on the CD that was on top of the microwave when you first moved into your dorm room.

If you don't live on campus, have no idea where the CD ran off to or have microwaved the CD for fun, do not despair! You can download Norton Anti-virus from <https://downloads.its.psu.edu>.

Anti-virus and anti-adware software are important programs that every Windows computer needs to have. Norton Anti-virus automatically updates and protects your computer from becoming infected. None of the anti-adware software I have used is that sophisticated yet, so you need to manually update and run it periodically.

You should update and run it between once a week and once a month, depending on the sort of web sites you visit. Big name web sites don't have advertisers that use spyware. You can download some anti-adware programs from <https://downloads.its.psu.edu>.

One of the most common ways viruses and adware spread is through the Internet Explorer web browser. If you switch to Firefox or Opera, both of which are free, you will be less likely get infected.

In general though, if you have anti-virus software and get a virus warning, the best thing to do is update the anti-virus software and run it. Norton and McAfee have people who are paid to find viruses.

Do you have a computer question? Then ask ASCII! Send an e-mail to ascii@psu.edu with "Ask ASCII" in the subject line, and you may see it answered in next week's column.

There's always today to see There's Always Tomorrow

By Kevin Forte
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There's Always Tomorrow and many more tomorrows for this rock quartet, out of your own backyard. Brandon, Chris, Kiel and Greg, best friends and bandmates from Millcreek, Pennsylvania, have been playing the Erie area and the east coast since the winter of 2002.

Set to release their debut full length album, *XOXO* -- an album packed with songs about young love and relationships -- There's Always Tomorrow has been sticking to their own brand of music and are eager to share it with their fans. With influences ranging from Bon Jovi to NOFX to Blink182, There's Always Tomorrow has created a rock sensation for all music lovers. "We try to do our own thing, never copying another band or jumping on a bandwagon to sound like someone else," says frontman Brandon. "Some bands try to imitate what appears to be popular, but that's not us," added Chris.

After a few years of traveling locally and playing random demo songs at their shows, There's Always Tomorrow is ready to take

their act around the country with a new album. A spring tour in March will take these young and talented musicians up and down the East Coast and through some mid-western states. "It's always nice to play at home in front of the hometown crowd, but being able to travel and play our music to a different audience is so exciting," all the members agreed.

With establishments like Forward Hall and The Hangout, Erie's music scene is rapidly growing, and There's Always Tomorrow hopes to keep the fun and excitement intact where they first experienced it. "We grew up around the music scene listening to bands like Punchline and Down to Earth Approach, the bands that came to Erie and made it worthwhile to go to concerts," Brandon said. "We now get to play a show with the bands that made us want to keep playing music, so others can experience the same thing we did." Shows and music in Erie give kids a new thing to do on a boring Saturday night, instead of going to the mall and the movies. "It's something new and something that can be easily passed on to other kids in the area," they said, referring to the shows in Erie.

There's Always Tomorrow has loved being

in the Erie spotlight as winners of the Garage Band Blowout at Pepsi Amphitheatre; they hope this new album will be a success. "It's amazing how you play a show and kids are singing along to your songs. It makes us want to give more to those kids and hopefully this album does that," said Brandon.

After a vanilla frappuccino and few laughs at the mall, There's Always Tomorrow still make time to have fun and do what they enjoy doing -- making music. With their record complete and the release date and show set for Saturday, Jan. 21, There's Always Tomorrow has time to make new plans for their future. "We aren't sure what is going to happen. Nothing is set in stone yet, we just want this album to be a hit with our fans," said Brandon. With a release show full of great bands including Punchline, the Audition, and Down to Earth Approach, the performance will be one you won't want to miss. So buckle up and sit back because There's Always Tomorrow is ready to hit a stage near you.

For more information on There's Always Tomorrow and other great local bands and shows check out: www.theresalwaystomorrowrock.com and www.erieshows.com.