

## STUDENT LIFE

# Music Column: Perfect moments in pop

## Deconstructing Abba's "Take a Chance on Me"

By Sean Mihlo  
music columnist  
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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 Björn 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 sub-

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

*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.

tle guitar interjections, lite rock drums.

A minute in, the song mellows out a bit; the repetitious "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 in both of the solo passages. Sexual momentum continues to build and reaches

sounds angelic, and I can't help but 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 undeniably recognizable.

*If you change your mind*

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.

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## ASA's sell students for a good cause

By Ashley Bressler  
staff writer  
September 23, 2005

Looking for a good time Tuesday night? Having trouble finding a date? That's ok - just buy one. The Alpha Sigma Alpha (ASA) sorority is holding their annual date auction on Tuesday, September 27, in the McGarvey Commons at 8p.m. This year Courtney Straub, senior Communication and Media Studies major, holds the ASA Date Auction chair position. Straub explained that the date auction is ASA's annual charity event supporting the S. June Smith Center and the Special Olympics. The sisters have been taking volunteers all week to be auctioned off as dates for the event.

All students are invited to attend this event to enjoy the free food and music. Most importantly, all are encouraged to participate in the auction to help raise money for

the S. June Smith Center and the Special Olympics. The sisters have put a lot of time and effort into organizing this event year after year. The hard part is trying to find ways to incorporate new ideas into a long standing tradition, and this year's Date Auction will center on a tropical beach theme. The emcee for the event will be ASA's sweetheart, Justin Curry, and the DJ will be Jamall Erskine.

Date Auction is just as it sounds - students volunteer to be auctioned off and the audience places bids on them. All the proceeds will be donated to the ASA's National Philanthropy. Those who win the bidding are also given an entertaining date package. Some of the date packages may include gift certificates to local restaurants, movie rentals or bowling passes. These packages come with the purchased date, but do not guarantee an actual date with that person. Courtney Straub commented, "If the student

who is auctioned off doesn't want to go on the date, they don't have to. It's just a lot of fun and I encourage every student to attend even if they don't want to buy a date. It's always a lot of fun to watch!"

The ASA Date Auction has always been a great success for the sorority and they have been able to raise a lot of money in the past. This year should be no exception, as students at Penn State Behrend have always supported the various charity events and seem to genuinely enjoy them. Events like this are what keep our Behrend community thriving and it is the involvement and support of students that has made the ASA Date Auction such a notorious success. So anyone looking to take a break from the books Tuesday, come to the McGarvey Commons in the Reed Union Building and have fun with the sisters of Alpha Sigma Alpha as they have an auction for charity.



Students walk the runway for a good cause during Alpha Sigma Alpha's annual date auction in the McGarvey Commons

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