

Books

ABBA – The Complete Recording Sessions*Reviewed by Barry Livingston*

Swedish author Carl Magnus Palm is recognized as the world's foremost Abba scholar and historian. His works include liner notes for ABBA deluxe edition CD and DVD releases, and he is the author of several books about the group including the acclaimed biography, *Bright Lights Dark Shadows – The Real Story of ABBA*. His newly published and revised volume, *ABBA – The Complete Recording Sessions*, may well be the crowning achievement from this writer who sets the gold standard for music journalism in general. Originally published in 1994, the book has now been expanded to 450 pages and comes as a beautiful clothbound edition, with four times as much text as in the original book.

Some critics might view this as a coffee table or reference volume; however, readers willing to delve into the actual contents will be richly rewarded with a fascinating journey through the group's creative process.

*Carl Magnus Palm. Photo: bjornfotograf.se***ABBA****The Complete Recording Sessions
Revised and Expanded Edition**

By Carl Magnus Palm

Published by CMP/Text (Stockholm)

Ordering Information:

www.abbathecompleterecordingssessions.comwww.carlmagnuspalm.com

The book is divided into essentially 13 sections, each chronicling a different phase or album in Abba's career. Carl Magnus Palm leaves no stone unturned as he takes us through the recording of each ABBA song from its inception to the final steps of production.

A real highlight is the multi-page boxed sections devoted to such topics as writing the songs and recording the vocals. Each section features extensive interview excerpts with the band members, backing musicians, and production staff, including chief engineer Michael Tretow. The section titled *Writing the Songs*, for example, delves into how and where Björn Ulvaeus and Benny Andersson worked together, and the fascinating story of their creative process as a song-writing team.

There is also much new information that has come to light since the book was originally published in the 1990s. In particular, the author was given unprecedented access to the newly digitized ABBA music archive, including a number of unreleased and unheard recordings. As the book editor notes, "these sessions reveal hitherto unknown facts about how Abba's music was created, and the process by which the group worked through their songs, trying out and discarding many ideas along the way." In other words, there is much for the reader to discover here, including the early recording histories of each band member prior to their eventual collaboration.

Abba – The Complete Recording Sessions is a volume that will certainly appeal to Abba fans, as well as to anyone interested in popular music culture and artistic processes. Author Carl Magnus Palm is a national treasure, and *Abba – The Complete Recording Sessions* may well be his greatest accomplishment. At least, until his next book comes along!

*Arrival is ABBA's fourth studio album.*