



As Ruby Sheridan, the mother of Donna [Meryl] Streep], Cher was the unexpected, secret weapon of *Mamma Mia! Here We Go Again*. One thing led to another and, in the wake of the 2018 hit film, the Oscar, Emmy and Grammy award-winning legend announced she would release a complete album of songs from ABBA's catalogue. The result, *Dancing Queen*, was a critical and commercial success, giving Cher her first number one on the US Top Album Sales chart and hitting the top ten in a further 18 countries. To promote the album, Cher embarked on the aptly-named *Here We Go Again* tour.

Inspired by the album's success, Cher has recorded

additional ABBA songs, including *Voulez-Vous*, *When All Is Said And Done* and the Spanish version of *Chiquitita*. It is presently unclear what will happen with these recordings although Cher is apparently discussing their release with her management. Hopefully, they realise that fans are eager to hear them; as Benny once said, "The combination of Cher and ABBA is pretty exciting." In the meantime, we are happy to present you the following compilation of ABBA-related Cher quotes.

Cher, an ABBA fan?

Indeed, she has said so herself: "I've always liked ABBA. Like most Americans, I knew *Dancing Queen*, *Waterloo*, *Mamma Mia*, and that's probably much of it. Then I became really a fan with the movie *Muriel's Wedding*, a hidden gem. And I saw the original *Mamma Mia!* musical on Broadway three times."

ABBA's music

Cher is full of praise for Benny: "Benny is really good, and his riffs are like all over the place and going one inside another. These songs are much more intricate and much more designed than people realise. I think that people love ABBA, but I'm not so sure they appreciate them on a musical level. I don't think they ask themselves, why am I loving this?"

The lyrics

It took her a while to fully appreciate them: "When I used to hear ABBA, although I liked the music, I never listened to the lyrics. I didn't know Fernando until I started to sing it, and I didn't realise how pertinent and emotional that song is. They didn't write from an American or English perspective, so the lyrics are arranged differently, and they just grabbed me. I was listening to Super Trouper, and I recognised the girl in the lyrics from the beginning. ABBA knew how to write a story within a song. Björn's lyrics are great. He is a brilliant, the most incredible lyricist - just listen to *When All Is Said And Done*. I adore it. Björn asked me to do *Chiquitita* in Spanish, which I have done, though it hasn't been finished yet."

Her album *Dancing Queen*

The idea hit her unexpectedly: "It came out of nothing. I didn't plan it. I didn't think about it. I did the movie. I did Fernando and the beginning of Super Trouper. One day, I just thought it really would be wonderful to do a cover album, and I'd never thought that in my entire life. I couldn't even imagine matching two people or two groups less alike than me and ABBA. After filming *Mamma Mia! Here We Go Again*, I was reminded again of what great and timeless songs they wrote. I started thinking, why not do an album of their music? So the movie was a blessing in disguise.

"I had Mark [Taylor, Cher's producer] at my house, we had all the different songs to look at and made a selection of those we thought were a good idea to try. Then I did *One Of Us*, my managers heard it, and they played it to the record company. They just said, "Do what you want!" The songs on the album are so different. There is not one that is like the other. Gimme! Gimme! (A Man After Midnight), for example, isn't like any of the other songs, it's completely electronic. But all the songs go together well. They're like cousins, they're not like brothers and sisters.

"With some of the songs, people said, "Don't do those, they are too iconic: *Waterloo* and *Mamma Mia*."

I just said, "I have to do them because I saw *Muriel's Wedding*, and that's what made me a huge ABBA fan."

Were the ABBA songs hard to sing?

"The songs were harder to sing than I imagined. I thought that they were like poppy songs, but some of them are as hard as hell. I've struggled with a few, and some of the songs fit me like a glove, but I'm so happy with how the music came out... "I definitely tried to approach them as an 'actress'. That's why I love *One Of Us* so much - that's when I started the show, one of us had to go..."

"Their songs go from really low to really high.

The girls and I have such different voices, which was quite hard sometimes. I didn't want to disregard them, but I wanted to be myself. I'm at the absolute tip-top of my range. They have got ranges that go up to Yma Súmac [a Peruvian coloratura soprano singer with an extreme vocal range and who was one of the most famous exponents of exotica music in the 1950s]. I had a hard time with two: Dancing Queen and The Winner Takes It All. I was singing high, but I couldn't get some of the words. I had to go back and do a couple of lines again. And I had to sing Fernando twice because the first time I did it, it was awful. I thought, I'll go in and ace it. Well, I went in and got my ass kicked."

A camp project?

Cher does not think so: "In my mind it wasn't. I didn't mean it to be camp! I just thought it to be either fun or a little bit heart-breaking. But

I'm happy if it can make people happier than they were before they heard it."

Cher's favourite songs on *Dancing Queen*

She has quite a few of those: "One Of Us for sure, and I just love Chiquitita. I'm very proud of The Name Of The Game, and I like Mamma Mia, too; it makes me laugh. I was thinking about how grateful I am to Benny, Björn, Agnetha and Anni-Frid for having made this album possible. They were beyond supportive."

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Original sources: Associated Press, Variety, Attitude, NY Times, LA Times, NBC Today, Cher on twitter, Dion Singer, album and film press releases.

