

1974

16 September

GlenStudio. Recording ‘Stop And Listen To Your Heart’ (working title of ‘Bang-A-Boomerang’); ‘Dixie’ (working title of ‘Here Comes Rubie Jamie’, a working title of ‘Terra del Fuego’).

Benny Andersson (keyboards), Janne Schaffer (guitar), Rutger Gunnarsson (bass), Roger Palm (drums).

ABBA’S LEVEL OF AMBITION had truly increased with the recording of their third album, as today’s session would prove. Since the group began recording together as a pop band in 1972, save for one or two re-recorded backing tracks, they had never been able to scrap songs they felt weren’t up to scratch. For instance, had there been more time and money available, a song like ‘Watch Out’ probably wouldn’t have made it onto the *Waterloo* album – as it was they couldn’t afford not to use certain recordings they felt were below par. But after the global and domestic triumph of ‘Waterloo’, the situation was different.

For one thing, with success came added confidence and ambition: if people really like what we’re doing, the group now seemed to reason, we should put everything we have into our songwriting and recording, offering an even better product, and not give up until everything is just so. And the commercial rewards also brought with them the financial possibilities to spend more time in the studio, which was necessary if they were to achieve those goals; for all its shortcomings, GlenStudio was available to them for extended periods of time, and however much they may have preferred Metronome Studio, and whether or not they could afford to buy more studio hours, they could only be certain of one day per week there. This wasn’t only inadequate, unless they wanted to spend several years on recording one album, but also meant that they would lose momentum while they were in the midst of the creative process.

‘Rikky Rock ‘n Roller’, recording for which began the previous day, was a case in point – had it been recorded during the *Waterloo* sessions, it would

certainly have been included on the album. But now ABBA could afford to shelve anything they didn't feel good about indefinitely, no matter whether it was virtually finished, like 'Ricky Rock 'n Roller', or little more than a backing track, like the two tracks recorded on this day.

RULLE: 5 PLATS:		TITEL: BANG-BOOMERANG		
KUND:		1	DUKNV	L
		2	DUKNH	
ARTIST:		3	ORGELN	
		4	ORGELN	
DATUM:		5	BASKED	
MIX:	21/13 22.10.74	6	BASEL	
MATRIS:		7	PIANO I II	
TID:		8	PIANO I	
TAG:	1 2	9	PIANO II	
OS		10	ELG. I	
BR		11	TRUMPETEN	
HEL	1 1	12	TRUMPETEN	
OK		13	ELG. I+II	
ALLA DOLBY JA NEJ		14	ELG. III+III	
ARM:		15	QUIT V	
		16	QUIT H	
RULLE: 5 PLATS:		TITEL: TERRA DEL FUEGO		ARM. L
KUND:		1	DUK I	
		2	DUK II	
ARTIST:		3	DUK III	
		4	DUK IV	
DATUM:		5	BAS	
MIX:		6	BAS	
MATRIS:		7	DEMO SING 12.9.74 NA I	
TID:		8	PIANO	
TAG:	1 2	9	ELG. I	
OS		10	ELG. II BERNH. ULFSSON	
BR		11	STRÅK A-F	
HEL	1 1	12	STRÅK B-B	
OK		13		
ALLA DOLBY JA NEJ		14		*
ARM:		15		*

The recording sheet for 'Terra del Fuego' and the original, unreleased version of 'Bang-A-Boomerang'.

'Stop And Listen To Your Heart' was the original working title of a song that Stig Anderson soon re-christened 'Bang-A-Boomerang'. Once it had acquired this new title, Agnetha and Frida added what sounds like demo vocals to the track – but then the recording was put to the side for the time being, probably because Björn and Benny's gut feeling told them they hadn't quite got it right. 'Bang-A-Boomerang' would resurface a few months later (see 7 and 8 January 1975) in a markedly different version. The interpretation begun today featured lots of acoustic guitars, had a slower tempo, and lacked the galloping feel of the released version. Most notably, its verse melody was also partly different.

The cheerful and somewhat country-flavoured 'Terra del Fuego', meanwhile, started out with the

working title 'Here Comes Rubie Jamie', but again received its final title from Stig Anderson. The lyrics were something of a tourist brochure depiction of the pleasures to be had at this destination (the actual name of this South American archipelago is Tierra del Fuego): "a name full of mystery, a mirage and a fantasy", according to the chorus lyrics. But although individual vocal parts were recorded by all four members, something apparently felt wrong with the track. On the tape, Björn can be heard suggesting that the recording

of the vocals should be terminated halfway through the song – “Once we’d started working on it, it just ground to a halt,” he recalls – and today he and Benny can hardly stand listening to it. “‘Terra Del Fuego’ was one of those recordings where we felt that there was no way we could ever get it right,” explains Frida. “There was no feeling whatsoever in it, we didn’t enjoy singing it, and so we finally decided to scrap it.” For outside listeners, the song sounds tuneful and catchy enough, but apparently the group itself felt differently.

An extract of ‘Terra del Fuego’ – the intro and the first verse, sung by Benny and Frida – is included in the ‘ABBA Undeleted’ medley of outtakes, first released on the 1994 box set *Thank You For The Music*. However, in the medley it has been titled ‘Here Comes Rubie Jamie’, which, as we’ve seen, was its working title. According to Polygram, the then-owners of the ABBA catalogue, it was Michael Tretow who insisted that it should be known under this preliminary title – the recording you hear in the medley had already progressed into its final version, ‘Terra del Fuego’ – and maybe this was to protect Björn and Benny’s feelings. The song nearly didn’t make the medley at all because of their negative sentiments about it, but Michael wanted it on there just because he was amused by the fact that Benny had a lead vocal part (had it been made public when it was first recorded, it would have been his final such performance after the *Waterloo* album’s ‘Suzy-Hang-Around’). A compromise was reached when Michael promised not to include the chorus.

A CLOSER LOOK

Waterloo: alternate mixes & recording secrets

No other ABBA song was recorded by the group in more studio versions than ‘Waterloo’: apart from the familiar English-language hit single there were also Swedish, German and French versions (for the latter two, see 15 March and 18 April 1974), all utilising the same basic backing track. While the English, German and French versions are more or less identical (except the French mix seems to have a more prominent bass drum) there are some subtle and not so subtle differences in the Swedish mix. For instance, the distinctive Minimoog in the intro is much louder in the Swedish version, as are



the handclaps on the choruses. Perhaps the most striking difference is the “aaah” choirs heard after the first chorus on all other versions, which are completely missing from its Swedish counterpart. “This may have been

because we recorded and mixed the Swedish version first, and then we had more and more ideas for overdubs as we continued working on it,” Michael Tretow theorises. His theory makes sense, since the German and French mixes were done after the English version, which would have been used as a blueprint for those versions.

Of course, none of the above versions differ as much from each other as the alternate mix of the English version, briefly released before the familiar mix (see 4 March 1974). This version has more echo on the lead vocals, aggressive male-vocal bursts of “oh yeah!” in the verses (these can also be heard faintly in the familiar version at 01:12), more audible “oohh” and “aaah” choirs during the choruses, a burst of harmony singing on the words “when I lose” before

the second and third choruses, plus the saxophone isn’t heard at all until the second chorus. In general, this mix is more chaotic and “dirty” than the familiar version: the saxophone almost sounds like a human being imitating the horn instrument rather than the real thing. Funnily enough, when ‘Waterloo’ was performed live on ABBA’s tours of 1979 and 1980 a rough mix of the original 16-track tape was used as a blueprint for rehearsing the backing vocals, which led to the “oh yeah!” outbursts being heard loud and clear on this live version.

Some of the other mixes feature an additional, high-pitched and somewhat whiny harmony line

The Polar Music archives also hold a number of tapes of various attempts at mixing ‘Waterloo’ which reveal a few further secrets. One mix features Benny playing brief piano lines during the chorus, and, rather than a fade-out, also has a clean ending for the song: one single low piano note. Some of the other mixes feature an additional, high-pitched and somewhat whiny harmony line on the word “Waterloo” in the choruses; whether this is a human voice or an instrument is hard to tell, but it’s probably some kind of instrument. At some point, an instrumental mix used when ABBA performed the song in Brighton, England at the Eurovision Song Contest was also prepared.

Finally, apart from these mix variations, circa 13 seconds of the song have been edited out of the recording as it appears on the original 16 track tape. At 02:07 on the released version, after “...I feel like I win when I lose”, the unedited version goes into the chorus on the line “Waterloo, I was defeated...”, whereas the edited version goes straight into “Waterloo, couldn’t escape...”