

# **ABBA: THE COMPLETE RECORDING SESSIONS**

**Carl Magnus Palm**

*(Century 22, £12.95)*

This painstaking documentation of Abba's studio days is a wet dream for completists—Palm has set about his task with a voracious appetite for trivia. As Benny and Bjorn acknowledge in their foreword: "This is a serious guy."

The involvement of the two songwriters, who contribute comments about sessions and records, throws up a few surprises. According to Bjorn, the later Abba songs 'Soldiers' and 'The Visitors' deal with the rise of Neo-fascism and Soviet dissidents respectively, a stance at odds with their reputation as kitsch gay icons—'Dancing Queen', 'Gimme Gimme Gimme (A Man After Midnight)'—and the voice of suburbia.

But Palm has sweated over his material for too long to treat Abba as affectionate figures of fun and ridicule, despite the hilarious pictures included in the book, and such fanaticism does reveal little nuggets, albeit deeply buried in excessive information. For instance, the dire 'I Have A Dream' had a much better working title of 'Take Me In Your Armpit', while before settling on 'Knowing Me, Knowing You', they were cocky enough to christen the song, 'Number One, Number One'. **7**

**Steve Malins**

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