

ABBA (left to right): Benny Andersson, Anni-Frid Lyngstad, Agnetha Fältskog and Björn Ulvaeus performing in 1978.



# TUNE INTO ENGLISH

## ABBA's Mamma Mia

Il quartetto svedese che conquistò la scena con questa stereotipata interiezione italiana ottenne il successo all'Eurovision e anche in una redditizia saga cinematografica.

For their self-titled third album, released<sup>1</sup> in 1975, the Swedish pop group ABBA upped their game<sup>2</sup>. Lyricist<sup>3</sup> Björn Ulvaeus explained that “my grasp<sup>4</sup> of English had got much better so I began to think that it would be fun to say something.” The group’s manager Stig Anderson often suggested song titles and came up with<sup>5</sup> *Mamma Mia*, an Italian expression of surprise, anguish<sup>6</sup> or excitement.

Although infectiously upbeat<sup>7</sup>, the song is about ongoing<sup>8</sup> heartbreak: the singer has suffered in a relationship, but cannot leave her partner. Improvising in the studio, pianist Benny Andersson found a marimba, a xylophone-like African instrument, and began trying to play it, saying “I just wanted to see what it sounded like. And it changed

the course of the song. It made for a really catchy<sup>9</sup> start.”

ABBA had no plans to release *Mamma Mia* as a single, but yielded<sup>10</sup> to pressure from their Australian record company. It then spent ten weeks at number one! This led to renewed interest in the band in the UK, where a huge music industry was prejudiced against bands whose first language was not English. ABBA had been considered a one-hit wonder<sup>11</sup> following their Eurovision-winning, chart-topping<sup>12</sup> song *Waterloo*. In 2008, the ABBA-inspired musical movie *Mamma Mia!* was released, starring Meryl Streep and Pierce Brosnan. This cemented<sup>13</sup> the iconic status of the song in pop culture and set ABBA on course to become one of the biggest pop bands of all time! ☺



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04

LOWER INTERMEDIATE B1

### GLOSSARY

- 1 **to release:** pubblicare
- 2 **to up one's game:** migliorare
- 3 **lyricist:** paroliere
- 4 **grasp:** comprensione
- 5 **to come up with:** inventare, proporre
- 6 **anguish:** angoscia
- 7 **upbeat:** allegra
- 8 **ongoing:** continuo
- 9 **catchy:** orecchiabile
- 10 **to yield:** cedere
- 11 **one-hit wonder:** artista famoso per una sola opera
- 12 **chart-topping:** in testa alla classifica
- 13 **to cement:** consolidare
- 14 **to cheat:** imbrogliare
- 15 **calling:** vocazione
- 16 **to slam the door:** sbattere la porta

**I made up my mind:** the idiom ‘to make up your mind’ or ‘to make your mind up’ means to decide something.

**there's a fire within my soul:** this idiomatic expression refers to feeling a strong passion towards something. It can be a love interest but also a motivation or calling<sup>15</sup>.

**here I go again:** this common expression means “I’m doing the same thing again”.

**blue:** the colour blue is often used as an adjective to mean ‘sad’ – as in Blues music!

SCAN & WATCH



Scan this QR code with your smartphone or tablet and listen to the official song on YouTube while reading the lyrics.

I've been cheated<sup>14</sup> by you since I don't know when  
So I made up my mind, it must come to an end  
Look at me now, will I ever learn  
I don't know how, but I suddenly lose control  
There's a fire within my soul  
and I can hear a bell ring  
(One more look) and I forget everything, whoa

[chorus]  
Mamma mia, here I go again  
My, my, how can I resist you?  
Mamma mia, does it show again  
My, my, just how much I've missed you?

Yes, I've been brokenhearted  
Blue since the day we parted  
Why, why did I ever let you go?  
Mamma mia, now I really know  
My, my, I could never let you go

I've been angry and sad about things that you do  
I can't count all the times that  
I've told you we're through  
And when you go, when you slam the door<sup>16</sup>  
I think you know that you won't be away too long  
You know that I'm not that strong  
and I can hear a bell ring  
(One more look) and I forget everything, whoa

[chorus]  
Yes, I've been brokenhearted  
Blue since the day we parted  
Why, why did I ever let you go?  
Mamma mia, even if I say  
Bye-bye, leave me now or never  
Mamma mia, it's a game we play  
Bye-bye doesn't mean forever

[chorus]  
Yes, I've been brokenhearted  
Blue since the day we parted  
Why, why did I ever let you go?  
Mamma mia, now I really know  
My, my, I could never let you go  
[repeat chorus]

**will I ever learn?:** this common expression means “I’ve made (yet) another mistake”.

**I can hear a bell ring:** this is a metaphor for being alarmed or worried.

**My, my:** this is an expression of surprise or pleasure.

**we're through:** this is an informal expression to mean the relationship is over.

Fergal Kavanagh runs the website [www.tuneintoenglish.com](http://www.tuneintoenglish.com), the web's largest free resource for learning English through pop music.

Tune into English

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