

"Wings of Eurovision" - release: June 4, 2010

Jørgen & Noller Olsen - Background and European Song Contest History

Press release

By Jørgen de Mylius

Of course we have to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the super hit "Fly On The Wings Of Love" by the Olsen Brothers. Their mega triumph in the 2000 European Song Contest stands out as one of Denmark's finest moments in the history of the European Song Contest. After creating countless own productions in their incredible career - still running in a high gear - the Olsen Brothers have now presented their favourite songs on albums such as "Rockstalgi", "Songs", "More Songs" and "Respect". And now is the time for a new release: Their new version of a series of carefully selected European Song Contest songs - the Brothers' favourite Eurovision gallery, painted in a variety of colours that are all theirs, on their new album "Wings of Eurovision", which is released on June 4, 2010.

Today, Jørgen and Noller Olsen are a unique phenomenon in that they are both super hot, constantly working with new concepts and compositions as well as a vibrant piece of Danish musical history. In many European countries, the name of "The Olsen Brothers" is inextricably linked with their winning song "Fly On The Wings Of Love" from the 2000 European Song Contest. In Denmark, we have a more multi-faceted picture of them since the Brothers started out as a children's pop group in fierce competition with the Lollipops in the 1960s. In those days, the Olsens teamed up with the brothers Morten and Niels Thybo, calling themselves The Kids. At the time, they managed not only to record three singles, they also appeared in the film "Masser Af Pigtråd" from 1967, while dutifully tending to their school work at the same time. And the latter with such great success that Jørgen Olsen chose to stay within the world of school and teaching as a teacher himself right up to their ultimate success in the year 2000. After the Kids period, the Danish staging of the musical Hair in 1970 turned out to be yet another stepping stone into their future career.

Johnny Reimar, the grand old man of Danish pop music, was very much involved - financially and otherwise - in the staging of the musical Hair. Together with his good friend Steen Wittrock, the two men came to promote the future career of The Olsen Brothers: Wittrock as their manager and Reimar as the director of the record company that was prepared to spend time and money on the Brothers. Jørgen Olsen wrote songs that - to Reimar and Wittrock - were serious candidates as future hits if they were only launched in the proper manner.

And so they were in 1972. Backed by Peter Knight's large orchestra in Sessions in London, the Brothers were properly launched. A massive marketing campaign, a grand concert in Copenhagen's famous Tivoli Garden and a fine, primetime television appearance in those days when there was only one channel - and on a Saturday night, of course! Jørgen and Noller became almost overnight idols and ranked first on the Danish hit lists that I managed in those early days of Danish Radio (DR), Programme 3. Their very first hit was "Angelina", a song that held an iconic status for many years. And that song also opened a door to their later international career.

In 1978, DR entrusted me with the job of re-introducing the Danish version of the European Song Contest at a time when the sun was going down on the Brothers' professional pop careers. There were jobs, of course, and the two brothers did write songs and recorded a few things, as well. But the Danish version of the European Song Contest was an attractive platform because it represented the opportunity to go live and launch a brand new song on national TV with an enthusiastic audience, and on top of that, it contained the potential to reach out to the whole of Europe with a winning song. But they were beaten on the finishing line by the Danish group Mabel and their song "Boom Boom". So the Olsens came in second in 1978 with a song that I - a member of the jury - helped to select in the first place. The name of the song was "San Francisco", a Song Contest song, by the way, that is proof that you don't have to be a winner to become an evergreen. "San Francisco" ended up being the Brothers' new hit song that has seen them all the way through their career. A few years ago, they recorded a German language version of the same song that helped boost their popularity in German speaking regions of Europe.

To this date, Jørgen Olsen has entered a new song as many as eight times in the Danish Song Contest. And, interestingly enough, in 2005 the Brothers ended up second again in their 8th attempt with their contribution "Little Yellow Radio", a fine little song about the music on their little yellow radio. In 1979, they participated with "Dans Dans Dans", which came in 8th in the national Song Contest that was won by the Danish singer Tommy Seebach for the first time with his "Disco Tango". 1980 saw them take a fifth place with their "Laila", whereas the winning title of that year was "Tænker Altid På Dig" by the Danish group, Bamses Venner.

In the years that followed, the Brothers did not compete in the Song Contests; in return, they were able to attract major interest from German audiences with songs such as "Marie Marie" and "Neon Madonna" that sent the brothers on tours up and down Germany. In 1986 they returned to the Danish Song Contest with their tribute to the national football team. The song "Fællessang i Parken" took a 6th place in the finals. Today, this song is one of the rarities in the Brothers' collection despite its good hook line and classic structure since it has not been published on any subsequent records or CDs.

The late 80s and early 90s represented a somewhat quiet period in the professional lives of the Olsens. Noller was playing jazz and Jørgen went a bit solo - also in the Danish Song Contest, where he won a third place twice in 1989 and in 1990 - with his song "Fugle" and then with "Berlin". His impressive solo ballads were miles away from the songs we had come to associate the Olsens with, but, nonetheless, in this musical arena Jørgen also managed to attract Danish attention.

In the mid 90s, DR chose to focus on other areas than the Song Contests and in this period, the Brothers confined themselves to occasional public appearances. I, myself, have been compère and DJ at many local dances where the Olsen Brothers have been on the stage. The century, however, drew to a close, and DR shifted its focus back on the European Song Contest that was up-scaled into a magnificent show - especially the 2000 version that was held in the grand circus building in central Copenhagen. The Brothers had qualified with their new song "Fly On The Wings Of Love" and the vibrations during rehearsals promised imminent success for the grey-haired gold boys, or simply "the Grey Gold" - as they were called by their younger Danish colleagues. On the show night, every last speck of doubt was swept aside: "Fly On The Wings Of Love" was proclaimed the indisputable winner by the Danish people. The Brothers were back at the top in their seventh Song Contest attempt and were virtually lifted through the night on a wave of sympathy for the two Brothers' indisputable talents and their tireless efforts within the business.

That night became the start of a very active and much welcomed period in their career that was crowned by their impressive victory in the finals of the European Song Contest at the Stockholm Globe. And the whole thing culminated in an unforgettable open air concert in... - you guessed it, of course! - Tivoli, on the self-same spot where they were initially launched as a group under the name of "The Olsen Brothers" 28 years earlier.

The Olsen Brothers have combined their Song Contest activities with an impressive parallel career that has given us a number of highlights: A few years ago, they recorded Jørgen Olsen's and Stig Kreutzfeldt's "Look Up, Look Down" in a duet with Cliff Richard, because Cliff had also heard their "Fly On The Wings Of Love" and subsequently praised it in a radio programme. And now they are celebrating the 10th anniversary of their European Song Contest victory by releasing an album with their favourite European Song Contest songs over the years and a number of guest stars who have been singing on the European Song Contest stage themselves. As a tribute to Cliff Richard, the Brothers are giving their private version of "Congratulations" from 1968, and the new album also includes both Nicole on "Ein Bisschen Frieden" and with Alan Sorrenti on "Non So Che Darei". More details about the guest stars on the track list.

Jørgen and Noller have been indefatigable in Danish showbiz. And they carry on - full speed. Therefore, this fine Eurovision tribute - from the Olsen Brothers to the Danish People.

The Olsen Brothers in Danish Song Contest history:

1978: San Francisco, 2nd place
1979: Dans Dans Dans, 8th place
1980: Laila, 5th place
1986: Fællessang I Parken, 6th place
2000: Fly on the Wings of Love, 1st place
2005: Little Yellow Radio, 2nd place

Jørgen Olsen solo:

1989: Fugle, 3rd place
1990: Berlin, 3rd place