



PER GESSLE

THE ROXETTE SONGWRITER REVEALS ALL TO CLASSIC POP ABOUT THE BAND'S LATEST EXTENSIVE RARITIES COLLECTION PLUS GIVES US A HINT ABOUT HIS FUTURE PLANS AS A SOLO ARTIST

STEVE O'BRIEN

Per Gessle was, for 33 years, one half of Sweden's second-best-selling music act after ABBA, Roxette. The band came to a close in 2019 following the death from cancer of Gessle's bandmate and singer, Marie Fredriksson. Since then, Gessle has been scouring the Roxette archives for the 4LP/3CD boxset *Bag Of Trix: Music From The Roxette Vaults*.

Tell us how this boxset came into existence...

I was looking around for live stuff, and I found so much material that I'd forgotten about. I uncovered a couple of tracks that we'd recorded for the *Good Karma* album that were never finished. That album was pretty special because Marie, well, she had good days and she had bad days. As soon as we had enough material done for an album we just stopped, so there were a few songs that we never

really finished. Then I found these Abbey Road songs from the 90s and some old demos. There was a lot of material that had got lost when we moved from CD into streaming, lots of bonus tracks on CD singles and stuff like that.

How did the name *Bag Of Trix* come about?

I have a list of titles and phrases in my computer. They could be song titles, they could be album titles, so when this compilation came up I started thinking about what to call it. I thought of *Bag Of Tricks* and then I changed the 'Tricks' to 'Trix' so it reminds you

of Roxette. It's the marketing guy in me, I suppose.

What was your process for finding all these songs? Did you have them all on a hard drive somewhere or did you have to go looking further afield for the material?

I have a big archive here of cassettes, CDs, CD-Rs and DAT tapes, all going back to the 70s. Over the last decade I've been transferring everything to my computer. Only the other day, I found five cassettes that I'd forgotten about, from the early

80s before Roxette. I wish I was more organised, though – I'm a seven out of 10.

Did you rediscover any songs that you wished, in retrospect, that you'd included on an album?

On every album that we made there were always eight to 10 songs that we didn't record because we had so much material. I don't know, most of the time we made the right choices. There are a couple of tracks off every album which I don't really rate, like *Physical Fascination* off *Joyride*, I think that's a crap song.

Which songs from this boxset are you most excited about sharing with fans?

The live version of *Wish I Could Fly* is great. The Tom Lord-Alge mix of *Soul Deep* is really good, too.

How did you decide what to include and what not to include?

It wasn't really about, 'let's see what we've got so that we can put out four volumes'. It was originally about, 'let's see if we can make one album with leftovers', and it just grew. Then someone reminded me that we'd done all these Spanish tracks and that they weren't available anymore, so suddenly we had four Spanish tracks on there. It just went on and on.

How did it feel revisiting those songs? Are you a nostalgic person?

It was a very positive thing, you know. I remember Roxette very fondly, we had an amazing journey together. It's terrible when I think about Marie, she was only 44 years old when she got ill. But I listen to it and it's all coming back. I just love to hear her voice still.

What are you up to now musically?

I'm currently releasing a Swedish acoustic album I did over the summer. I'm also writing a new album in English, and I've recorded eight tracks for that so far. Hopefully, that'll be done by next spring. And one of these years, I'll go out and do another tour. I miss touring. ■

● ***Bag Of Trix: Music From The Roxette Vaults* is out now via Warner Music Sweden. Read our review on page 90.**