

# ABBA MANIA pays tribute to (dancing) queens of '70s pop

By JAMI KUNZER [jkunzer@shawmedia.com](mailto:jkunzer@shawmedia.com)

When it comes to Abba tribute concerts, consider ABBA MANIA the queen. Or perhaps the dancing queen.

The concert comes to Crystal Lake, with a performance at 8 p.m. Nov. 16 at the Raue Center for the Arts, 26 N. Williams St.

Formed in 2000, ABBA MANIA is the world's number one touring ABBA tribute show, designed to replicate a true ABBA experience.

"What we've tried to do is reproduce what it would have been like to actually see ABBA perform live," said Mark Thomas, who came up with the concept for the show while driving one day in 1998.

A fan of the legendary Swedish band, loved for its live performance and hits of "Dancing Queen," "Take a Chance On Me," "Mamma Mia," and others, Thomas knew fans would never get enough.

Formed in 1972 and reaching superstardom throughout the decade, the band once received 2 million requests for tickets for a two-night, 2,500-seat venue.

"Something like at the time 3 or 4 percent of the United Kingdom's population wanted to go and see that concert," Thomas said. "That was all throughout the world wherever they played. There was an enormous amount of people who wanted to see them play live, and the vast majority never did."

A drummer in the band, Thomas remembers where and who he was with when he first saw ABBA's videos as a child.

The songs appeal to this day to people of all ages from grandchildren to their grandparents, Thomas said.

The Broadway show, "Mamma Mia," as well as a 2008 film of the same name, reenergized interest in the band in the United States.

"There are so many things that make ABBA appealing," Thomas said, from the band's image to its songs to its "amazing singers."

"You can literally look at every single aspect of ABBA as a project, and everything was the best that it could be at the time," he said. "It really was the classic '70s."