



**Eskilstuna**



**Frida (ABBA)**



**Douglas Carr**



**Kent**



**Vapen & ammunition**

### **Artists and songwriters from Eskilstuna (by Jimmy Granström)**

Eskilstuna is a town with only about 100.000 inhabitants within its municipality limits. Situated within the landskap Sörmland, it is only about an hour away from Stockholm by train but still feels quite different than the capital, as Louise wrote about in her August 2022 newsletter article. In that article, we also learned that Anni-Frid (Frida) Lyngstad of ABBA was raised in the Eskilstuna suburb of Torshälla (she was born in Norway). However, many Eskilstuna-born artists and songwriters have also had very prominent music careers. Douglas Carr is one of the corner stones of what is often called “the Swedish music wonder”. In 1993, he co-produced the Ace of Base song “The Sign” with the late Denniz Pop. The song became an international hit, topping the U.S. Billboard Chart as well as its Year-End list in 1994. Carr and Pop formed the music studios Cheiron in 1992/1993, which became one of the world’s most famous recording studios by the late 1990’s. Pop and/or later Cheiron songwriters and producers like Max Martin went on to co-write or produce hits for artists such as Britney Spears, Celine Dion and Ed Sheeran.

Joakim Berg formed the rock band “Jones & Giftet” in 1990, which was later re-named Kent in 1993. The band released its self-named debut album Kent in 1995, and would go on to sell around two million albums in Sweden until they were disbanded in 2016. This is roughly equivalent to 63 million albums in the United States, which is on par with the sales for Rolling Stones and Madonna over here. In addition, Kent released 11 albums peaking at the #1 spot on the Swedish sales charts - only their debut album had to settle for the #2 spot - and is often referred to as “Sweden’s greatest rock band”. Kent also toured the United States with the Cardigans in 1999 and had several #1 albums in Norway and Finland. Kent’s 2002 album “Vapen & ammunition” sold over 600.000 copies, mostly in Sweden where it is one of the best-selling albums of all time. The cover of the album features a white tiger, which is a celebration to the white tigers which could be found in Parken Zoo in Kent’s home town Eskilstuna at the time (also covered by Louise in her article). The album featured the hit single “Dom andra”, which contains lyrics characteristic of Jocke Berg’s early lyrical style “Men plåtarna till himlen, var slut när vi kom dit, och priset vi betalad, för att klassas som elit, var att vi blev som de andra (But the tickets to heaven, were sold out when we got there, and the price we had paid, to be classified as elite, was that we became like the others”. The album ends with the song “Sverige”, a quiet acoustic ballad which contains themes of xenophobia and comments on the rise of the current far-right in Sweden. These themes are also present in many of Kent’s other songs on later albums.



**Du och jag och döden**



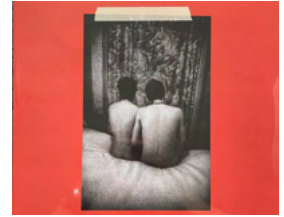
**Kent's last album**



**Joakim Berg**



**Fiender är tråkigt**



**Jag fortsätter glömma**

Kent's sound was initially characterized by alternative rock with distorted guitars in the 1990's but switched to a more synth-based sound with the album "Tillbaka till samtiden (Back To The Present)" in 2007 and was cemented with the release of "Röd (Red)" in 2009. In addition to Berg's broad lyrics about the social state of contemporary Sweden, Kent has also often returned to Eskilstuna in their songs. The 2005 album "Du och jag och döden (You And Me And Death)" contains the acoustic ballad "Järnspöken" (literally "Iron Ghosts"), which is a play on words with the more common expression "Hjärnspöken (Brain ghosts)" referring to lingering memories. The change from "Hjärnspöken" to "Järnspöken" may be alluding to Eskilstuna's iron- and steel manufacturing of the past and present, as Louise also covered in her article. In the song, singer/songwriter Jocke Berg describes his home town in both melancholic and appreciative words as evident in the lines "De fäller kastanjeträden i allén framför skolgården. Och jag rör mig tyst, hör inte hemma här, jag är vålnaden.....Och jag vet inte varför men jag återvänder alltid hit, det var väl något vi gjorde, något vi sa här som förändrade mitt liv" which can be translated to "They cut down the chestnut trees in the avenue in front of the schoolyard. And I move quietly, don't belong here, I'm the ghost.....And I don't know why but I always return here, it must have been something we did, something we said here that changed my life". Similar sentiments are echoed in other songs including the somber 2010 ballad "Passagerare (Passengers)" where Berg sings "Vad är min tystnad värd? (What is my silence worth?) as he travels through Eskilstuna.

Kent released their last album "Då som nu för alltid (Then as now forever)" in 2016, which was followed by a sold out farewell tour. The album contained the highly personal ballad "Vi är inte längre där (We Are Not There Anymore)", where Berg sings "Våra drömmar är som filmer, filmer vi såg som barn, och de utspelar sig på natten, men vi drömmar bara på dagen, vi är inte längre där, nej vi är någon annanstans" which can be translated to "Our dreams are like movies, movies we watched as kids, and they take place at night, but we only dream in the daytime, we are not there anymore, no we are somewhere else". After Kent, Berg has continued to work as a songwriter and producer for other major Swedish artists, including several songs for the Swedish "Queen Of Pop" Veronica Maggio for her 2019 album "Fiender är tråkigt (Enemies Are Boring)". The songs on the album were included in a 12-minute short film featuring Maggio which can be seen here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oh5zsd0co2o>. In the film, a pregnant yet fearless Maggio hits the road with a new love interest, robbing banks and rich people before ending up on a beach in a distant part of the world where they go separate ways. In 2022, Joakim Berg released his highly anticipated debut solo album "Jag fortsätter glömma (I Keep Forgetting)". The album follows in the footsteps of Kent's last album, featuring less guitars as well as softer and arier vocals than on many of Kent's albums. Berg described it "as if a Frankenstein's monster of constructed self-confidence and assertiveness suddenly ceased to exist" as reported by Håkan Steen in his Aftonbladet review on May 26 2022. Steen continues in his review "The softer vocals are likely a reason why the songs touch the soul so deeply, it is music with a lowered guard".



Daniel Gildenlöv



Pain of Salvation



Entropia (1997)



Road Salt (2010)



Pappa (2015)

Daniel Gildenlöv’s progressive rock band “Pain Of Salvation” may not have enjoyed the same domestic successes as Kent, but has instead toured the world extensively, from Europe and Australia to the United States and South America. They released their critically acclaimed debut album “Entropia” in 1997, which was described by the American online music database Allbase as “a well-needed breath of fresh air for a genre that was full of self-parody and self-indulgence” as it was “delivered with emotion, intelligence, integrity, passion and poignancy”. At the time of the release, Gildenlöv was writing music reviews for a morning newspaper, and I contacted him after one of his reviews. He surprisingly responded, and soon introduced me to his band “Pain of Salvation” and their debut album “Entropia”. Although I do not listen to a lot of music in the metal genre, and have not done so since a brief Metallica period in the early/mid 1990’s, I was immediately captured by the epic scope and unique song structures on “Entropia”. It is a concept album that takes place in a fictional society that is torn apart by a war. The title is a portmanteau of “Entropy” (disorder) and “Utopia” (the ideal society). It contains both heavier electric guitar tracks such as the opening “!” and “Winning A War” to the softer guitars in “Oblivion Ocean” and even mostly piano as in “Never Learn To Fly” where Gildenlöv sings “When I was a little child, I once found a bird lying on the ground...With dirty hands I dug a hole and gently laid the bird to rest in soil, a wound in a tear stained mud...that was then I’m older now, but still I can’t forget that rainy day, I raged against the ending times, though someday soon my son will maybe find the tree I cleansed of skin, no chain-sling will ever climb its rotten limbs”. These lyrics clearly showcase Gildenlöv’s impressive skills as a lyricist and storyteller.

“Entropia” was followed by 10 more albums loved by critics and audiences alike. Pain of Salvation’s albums are all ambitious concept albums, covering difficult topics like water pollution, the weapon industry, drugs and sexual exploitation. In 2010, “Pain Of Salvation” competed in Melodifestivalen, which is the Swedish trials for the Eurovision Song Contest. Their entry “Road Salt” was a stark musical and visual contrast compared with most other Melodifestivalen entries, which are often upbeat songs with performers wearing flashy and colorful outfits. “Road Salt”, on the other hand, is a slow and somber piece, with Daniel wearing worn out jeans and a white tanktop with the rest of the band dressed in similarly modest attire. In 2015, Daniel returned to Melodifestivalen as a solo artist with “Pappa” about a son missing his father. In the song, Daniel sings “Jag har så många frågor som bränner inom mig, om du bara kunde svara när jag ringer hem till dig....pappa du, vad gör du nu, kommer du hit hem, när det blir jul, pappa du” which can be translated to “I have so many questions that burn inside of me, if only you could answer when I call you, daddy, what do you do now, are you coming home for Christmas, daddy”. This song shows a simpler yet still elegant side of Gildenlöv’s songwriting. From the people behind joyful pop like ABBA and Ace of Base to edgier music like Kent and Pain of Salvation, Eskilstuna has produced musical successes far greater than what one would expect of a small Swedish town.