

Sweden has a semi-socialist economic system, but old-fashioned capitalism is also thriving there, in part because a Swedish rock group has developed into one of the country's most profitable business emprise-- enterprises. The group has yet to score in the United States the way it has in the rest of the world, but its first American tour, now underway, may change all that. Doug Tunnell has a report on the phenomenon of the music world known as "Abba".

[Movie excerpt - rock group "Abba" singing]

DOUG TUNNELL: To their critics they are little more than a suburban lounge act. Music to cut prime rib by, one called it, with lyrics as hygienic as a Swedish sauna. To their fans around the world, they are "Abba"—four attractive young Swedes who, since 1974, have put out more than enough good music to justify their self-proclaimed title as the world's ultimate pop group.

["Abba" performance excerpt]

TUNNELL: But as almost anyone in the record industry knows, the undeniable fact about Abba is that it is well on the way to being

the most successful pop group of this decade. And no matter what you think of their music, it sells. In fact, it sells more records around the world than any other group since the Beatles, a total of 50-million at last count. And last count, by the way, was a year ago.

The Abba empire begins in a house on a quiet side street in residential Stockholm. It is the headquarters of Polar Music International, the company that runs the business end of Abba's music. Polar Music has become Sweden's most profitable export enterprise, controlling record and sheet music sales that totalled more than \$11-million in profits in 1978. It has proved to be a lucrative blend of the Abba formula: Swedish ingenuity, coupled with some down-to-earth big-business sense.

To break into the record market in Poland, Polar's entrepreneurs had to circumvent the Polish government's stringent currency control laws. So, they joined in a Swedish bartering firm, and exchanged records for oil. They are ready to sell records for almost anything, they say, from cucumbers to horses. Abba's latest gold and platinum records lie stacked in vacant corners, waiting to be put on display.

More than three-and-a-half million persons once requested tickets for an Abba concert in London. In Australia, more people watched Abba performing on TV than watched the coverage of the first man landing on the moon. But Abba's legendary success is still not complete.

[Abba song excerpt - audience joining in]

TUNNELL: There is one more major market for Bjorn Ulavues, Agnetha Faltskog, Benny Anderson and Annifred Lyngstad. It happens to be the biggest one of them all—their first tour of the United States.

AGNETHA FALTSKOG: We've not had the big success in America as we've had everywhere else, and we get very spoiled.

BENNY ANDERSON: A lot of people bought our records, and they don't know-- they don't know anything about us.

ANNIFRED LYGSTAD: And I think, in some way, you want to be established before you-- you take a chance to do a thing like this, you know.

BJORN ULAVUES: I'm sure, within myself, at least, we'll have a
success.

[Abba in performance - excerpt]