Q&A

Aino Jawo, Caroline Hjelt

Fredrik Etoall

# ICONA POP

## A monster hit launches a club-friendly debut album for the Swedish duo

FROM RADIO TO TV ADS TO MOVIES, Icona Pop's "I Love It" has infiltrated every corner of pop culture. "I didn't expect over 40 million views on YouTube," says Aino Jawo. She and Caroline Hjelt formed the duo in 2009 and recently released their debut album, *This Is...Icona Pop*. "We went out clubbing and heard our song in every one," says Jawo. "We were like, 'Oh, my God, this is one of those songs that people are going to start to hate because they play it so much!'" The ubiquitous single kicks off an album packed with raucous synths and club hits.

**Were you in bands before Icona Pop?**
Caroline and I have been musicians for a long time. Caroline had come back from New York where she was writing with people, trying to find what she wanted to do. And I had a rock-pop-electro band together with six guys. But I started to go more toward electro.

**Did you release an album in Sweden?**
We felt like Swedish fans were craving it, so we decided on a small release there so they could see what we were up to. But we're just going to keep on releasing. We just released "My Party," but have another in the future with Zebra Katz, an amazing rapper from New York. We have developed a lot since we released that album. Though it's only been a year, a lot has happened in that year.

**When did you begin the new album?**
We've been basically writing for five years, and have something like 200 songs. We've picked our favorites from all the writing sessions we've had. Most of the songs on *This Is...* are actually from this year, because we did so many things, and we got into a very emotional spot where we wrote a lot. Every song on the album was made in a different place, which makes it very interesting. For example, some vocals were recorded in Australia, and some, like the latest single, "All Night," were recorded in New Orleans. We actually recorded a choir we invited onstage. And we were like, "Can you please sing along to our new song?"

**Do you have a writing process?**
We have a rule, and that's not to have rules when we head into the studio. We love writing in different ways. Sometimes Caroline might write the song, and I'll come in and sing something—or I'll write the song, and maybe we start with a beat. It's always different. We love to collaborate with people, because that also offers a different way of working when there's another person, another energy in the room. And sometimes it doesn't work at all. Sometimes you might like a person, but when it comes to the music, you don't speak the same language.

**How about songs you didn't write?**
You have to feel that it's 100 percent you. It's very important, because you've got to live with that song. Even though we didn't write "I Love It," we made it our song. I could never have a song that I didn't feel 100 percent about.

**Why cover Tupac's "Girlfriend"?**
We love that song, and we've been singing it for quite a while. We went into the studio, and we were like, "Let's try to do something with it." So we emailed Tupac's mom, and she answered us. She was like, "I would love to." So in honor of Tupac, we're singing the song. And I think it's kind of explaining what Caroline and I are going through right now, because sometimes it can be pretty lonely, but we always have each other.

**–Amanda Farah**

**'We have a rule, and that's not to have rules when we head into the studio.' –Aino Jawo**