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# Who loves you, Mamma?

**T**HE BRIT with the platinum blonde hair mingles with the Broadway audience as they grapple for interval drinks at Mamma Mia!

Judy Craymer (pictured right), the Mamma behind Mamma Mia!, likes to eavesdrop on the crowd.

'You hear these little comments,' she told me later in her posh hotel suite on Madison Avenue. And, in her understated way, she adds: 'They seem to like it.'

The horse-riding, former private school girl from Mill Hill in North London has gone from working for the likes of Tim Rice, Cameron Mackintosh and Andrew Lloyd Webber to becoming a big-time producer in her own right — the force behind the biggest London musical since *Cats*, *Les Misérables*, *Phantom Of The Opera* and *Miss Saigon*.

It was Judy's determination

and passion that persuaded Abba boys Benny Andersson and Bjorn Ulvaeus to take a chance and let her hire writer Catherine Johnson and director Phyllida Lloyd and create Mamma Mia!

If the money, money, money hadn't started rolling in, Judy's nice home in Holland Park would have been the first thing to go.

Two-and-a-half years — and a gross of £52 million in London alone — later, Mamma Mia! opened at Broadway's Winter Garden Theatre last night with a stonking \$27 million dollar advance.

Pretty good for a show that could have been shut down before it even opened, following the September 11 tragedy.

'After that, in the back of our minds, we all wondered: "Do we continue?"' Judy said.

'Many of the cast had seen it happen, because the rehearsal rooms are downtown. I was just off to the dentist when I saw it on television.' But to

have withdrawn would have been a huge psychological blow to New York.

Having seen a preview performance, I think the show has come at exactly the right time. 'The audience are on their feet dancing at the end,' said Judy. 'You feel that it's something they can lose themselves in.'

The show has already given a big boost to the community.

**F**UND-raising from the five Mamma Mia! productions in London, Melbourne, Boston, Toronto and Broadway raised \$410,000 for families of those killed on September 11.

Before the show's success in London, Judy's bank manager had told her to watch her spending.

Now she shops for jeans at Voyage in New York, and sports a glittering stone the size of a rock on her finger.

'It's a fake!' she insists. 'I haven't done that well!'

