SOFTWARE & TECH

# Ylvis The Fox What Does The Fox Say

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## Introduction: The Unforgettable Internet Phenomenon

In 2013, the world was introduced to a question that seemed both absurd and irresistible: **Ylvis The Fox What Does The Fox Say**. Released as a comedic single by the Norwegian comedy duo Ylvis, "The Fox (What Does the Fox Say?)" quickly became a global sensation. The song's catchy melody, bizarre lyrics, and playful music video captured the imagination of millions, turning a silly question into an internet-defining moment. But beyond the laughter and the countless memes, the track represented a unique intersection of humor, music, and viral marketing. This article explores every facet of the phenomenon, from its origins to its enduring legacy, while diving deep into why the question "What does the fox say?" resonated so powerfully across cultures.

## The Origins of Ylvis and Their Musical Comedy

Before the fox took over the internet, Ylvis—brothers Vegard and Bård Ylvisåker—were already well-known in Norway for their variety show "I kveld med YLVIS" (Tonight with YLVIS). Their brand of humor blended satire, slapstick, and musical parody. The duo had a history of creating viral music videos, but none reached the scale of the fox song. "The Fox" was originally conceived as a one-off sketch for their TV show, written in collaboration with the songwriting duo Stargate. The goal was to parody the increasing trend of dance-pop songs that asked nonsensical questions about animals. Little did they know that this parody would become a genuine chart-topping hit worldwide.

### How "The Fox" Was Born

The idea for **Ylvis The Fox What Does The Fox Say** came from a simple observation: in children's songs and folklore, animals have clearly defined sounds—dogs bark, cats meow, cows moo. But the fox? No one has ever definitively assigned a sound to the fox. The brothers exploited this gap with absurd, made-up sounds like "Ring-ding-ding-ding-dingeringeding!" and "Wa-pa-pa-pa-pa-pa-pow!" They paired these with a genuinely catchy electronic dance beat, creating a track that was both hilarious and strangely addictive. The music video, directed by Lars Kristian Flem, featured the brothers in animal costumes dancing in a forest—a perfect visual representation of the song's mix of high energy and low-budget charm.

## The Viral Explosion: How the Internet Embraced the Fox

Published on YouTube on September 3, 2013, the video for "The Fox" spread with unprecedented speed. Within weeks, it had amassed hundreds of millions of views. The question "What does the fox say?" became a global meme, spawning thousands of reaction videos, covers, parodies, and even academic analyses. Major media outlets from CNN to The New York Times covered the phenomenon. The song reached number six on the Billboard Hot 100 in the United States, making Ylvis one of the few Norwegian acts to achieve such commercial success in the American market.

### Why Did It Go Viral?

Several factors contributed to the viral nature of **Ylvis The Fox What Does The Fox Say**. First, the song was perfectly tailored for shareability: it was short, funny, and had a memorable hook. Second, it tapped into a universal

curiosity—everyone has wondered at some point what sound a fox makes. Third, the juxtaposition of a serious dance track with ridiculous lyrics created a cognitive dissonance that people loved to share and discuss. Finally, the timing was right: 2013 was the peak of the YouTube viral era, and the song benefited from being widely shared across social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter, long before TikTok dominated short-form content.

## Analyzing the Lyrics: A Playful Deconstruction

The lyrics of "The Fox" consist of a repetitive structure that lists various animal sounds before arriving at the central question. The verses are filled with rhymes that are both clever and silly:

- "Dog goes woof, cat goes meow / Bird goes tweet, and mouse goes squeak"
- "Cow goes moo, frog goes croak / And the elephant goes toot"
- "Ducks say quack and fish go blub"

The chorus then erupts with the classic **Ylvis The Fox What Does The Fox Say** refrain, followed by a series of nonsensical responses: "Ring-ding-ding-ding-dingeringeding!", "Wa-pa-pa-pa-pa-pa-pow!", "Hatee-hatee-hatee-ho!", and "Joff-tchoff-tchoffo-tchoffo-tchoff!" The bridge even includes a spoken-word section where a voice asks, "What does the fox say?" only to answer with "The fox says ringa-ding-ding-ding..." The absurdity is deliberate, and the brothers have confirmed in interviews that they aimed to create the most ridiculous possible sounds for the fox.

### The Musical Structure

Musically, the song follows a typical pop structure but with an extended build-up that mimics tracks like "Levels" by Avicii or "Wake Me Up" by Avicii. The production, overseen by Stargate (known for hits with Rihanna and Katy Perry), is polished and professional. This high-quality production is what made the parody so effective—it sounded like a real hit, which allowed listeners to enjoy it on two levels: as a genuine dance track and as a comedy piece. The juxtaposition of serious electronic music with silly lyrics is a hallmark of Ylvis's work.

## Cultural Impact and Legacy

Few internet memes manage to sustain cultural relevance beyond a few months, but **Ylvis The Fox What Does The Fox Say**has proven remarkably durable. The song is still referenced in popular culture, from TV shows like "The Office" to Halloween costumes. It has been used in educational settings to teach about animal sounds, and it has inspired countless remixes and mashups. In Norway, Ylvis continued to produce similar comedic tracks, but none matched the global success of "The Fox." The song also sparked debates about the ethics of parodying animal sounds—some criticized it for confusing children, while others praised it for encouraging creativity.

### Memes and Parodies

The viral nature of the song led to a flood of user-generated content. YouTube was filled with:

1. Reaction videos - People watching the video for the first time, often with exaggerated confusion or laughter.
2. Covers and remixes - Musicians from all genres, including heavy metal, bluegrass, and a cappella, reinterpreted the song.
3. Parody versions - Everyone from "What Does the Bank Say?" to "What Does the Shark Say?" appeared, often for commercial promotions.
4. Animations and fan art - The fox character from the music video became a popular subject for fan creations.

Major brands like Coca-Cola and McDonald's even incorporated the meme into advertisements, a testament to its mainstream penetration.

## The Science and Folklore of Fox Sounds

One of the more unexpected outcomes of the song's popularity was a renewed interest in the actual sounds foxes make. Biologists and nature enthusiasts were suddenly flooded with questions. In reality, foxes are known to make a variety of noises, including barks, screams, and howls. The most distinctive sound is a high-pitched scream often heard during mating season, which can be eerily human-like. While Ylvis's sound effects are entirely fictional, they sparked genuine curiosity about the animal. Many articles and videos were produced explaining what real foxes say, creating an educational counterpoint to the song's absurdity.

## Ylvis After "The Fox": Success and Challenges

Following the viral hit, Ylvis faced the inevitable question: could they replicate the success? They released subsequent singles like "The Cabin" and "Stonehenge," which were well-received in Norway but did not achieve global traction. They also continued their television show, but the shadow of the fox loomed large. In interviews, the brothers expressed mixed feelings—grateful for the success but aware that they were now forever associated with a novelty song. Nonetheless, they leaned into the meme, performing the song at major events and even releasing a children's book based on the lyrics. Today, Ylvis remains active in Norwegian entertainment, but "The Fox" remains their defining work.

### The Business of Viral Hits

The economic impact of **Ylvis The Fox What Does The Fox Say** was substantial. According to reports, the song generated millions of dollars in revenue from YouTube ad shares, streaming royalties, and merchandise. Ylvis also toured internationally, performing the song alongside their other material. The phenomenon demonstrated the power of internet virality to create financial success without major label support. It also highlighted the risk of being typecast as a one-hit wonder—while Ylvis earned significant short-term profits, they struggled to build a sustainable long-term career outside of Norway.

## Conclusion: The Fox That Never Grows Old

More than ten years after its release, the question **Ylvis The Fox What Does The Fox Say** remains a touchstone of early 2010s internet culture. It is a reminder of a time when a silly YouTube video could unite the world in shared laughter. While the song's lyrics are intentionally nonsensical, its impact is anything but. It taught us that humor and music can intersect in unexpected ways, that a simple question can spark global conversation, and that even the most absurd ideas can become iconic when executed with charm and quality production. The fox may not actually say "Ring-ding-ding," but thanks to Ylvis, a generation will forever associate that sound with one of the most memorable memes in internet history. Whether you love it or find it annoying, there is no denying that the fox has left its paw print on pop culture.

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