

Motown... The Final Word...Again!

"The more things change the more they remain the same!" is a saying we can often apply to the music of Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons. Well that has certainly been the case since 2002 and the efforts we have made to get the Motown Anthology of their work out on CD.

Back then we doubted this would happen and now even with the efforts of the highly respected compiler Paul Nixon at Motown/Universal this CD remains no more than a dream.

Back in 2002 we heard from Harry Weinger, the head of A&R at Motown/Universal USA about the difficulties.

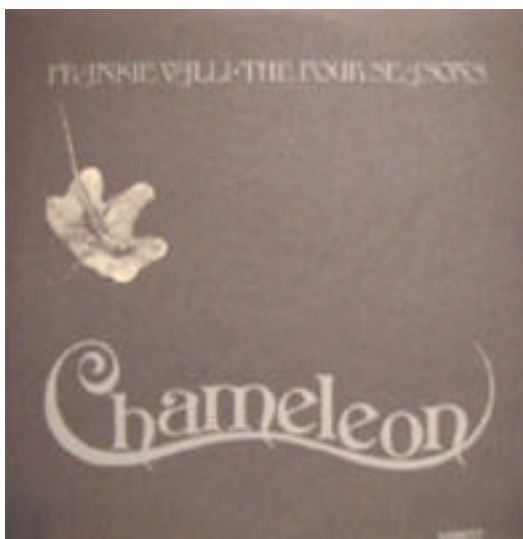
In **"Motown... The Final Word"** we wrote.....

"In his latest edition of 'Chatbusters' magazine Rik Williams covers the most recent and perhaps most significant output from the vaults and has an interview with the man responsible for what is released, Harry Weinger. The release of "Let's Get It On" Marvin Gaye – Deluxe 2 CD set is getting rave reviews and the interview with Harry Weinger gives an insight into the process. It also helps to explain the difficulties in producing un-released material at a time when Harry has admitted that "the Four Seasons project will probably never happen". There are 38 tracks listed in the database at Motown/Universal on Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons (for listing see issue Nr. 29, September 1999). But the database is known to be unreliable, even when a track exists it may be missing vocals. Harry reveals from his work on the 27 previously unreleased Marvin Gaye tracks, "Just because it exists in the database doesn't mean it really exists. The only way to find out was to play them all ". The work is long and complex without the artist's involvement. This of course wouldn't be a problem with Frankie and Bob if they were interested in their past work at the label. The other problem appears to be a lack of contractual data from the period which casts doubt on ownership.

This may only be resolved after their demise. Motown, the current owners?/holders of these tracks admit that they could only consider going forward with the project with Frankie and Bob's (i.e. The Four Seasons

Partnership) approval and involvement. Unless Bob Gaudio's stated "dislike for re-visiting the past" changes it is now probable these tracks will never appear."

Nothing appears to have changed except for the success of 'Jersey Boys'. Motown UK have a Four Seasons project 'penciled in' at present for UKONLY release. No better time exists to complete the story of their music than on the strength of this resurgence in their popularity.



Our hope was perhaps that Bob may now be prepared to contribute and help pull together the best of this important period in their history. But the e-groups and UK group number only around 500 and the Partnerships marketing obviously focuses on the many thousands of the general public who are responding to 'Jersey Boys'. Motown in the UK usually target sales as low as 3,000 with their releases and with a Motown/Northern Soul Collectors network of at least 3,000 and possible additions due to the success of the play, a release would be viable.

We know how successful Paul Nixon has been in putting together fantastic representations of an artists' work at Motown. His most recent achievements have included the work of artists like Kim Weston, Chuck Jackson and Chris Clarke.

All of these are packed with previously unreleased tracks in a format that tells the story of their career at the world's most famous label. Chuck

Jackson contributed greatly to the compilation of his work to produce a superb 50 track double album capturing his album releases and best quality unreleased material. Chuck says of this compilation, **"As you can see, all the songs that were recorded during the time I was with the company speak for themselves.....Today I don't think all that work was in vain"**

In fact, Chris Clarke is to visit the UK next month for the first time ever in the UK to perform a concert to her Northern Soul fans on the strength of her Anthology. But for the dedicated collectors, the issues of missing contracts and artist involvement are only half the problem. As we have previously been advised by Harry Weinger,

the listing of a track does not imply it exists. These database records go back over 40 years and their accuracy is questionable. Also we must realize that there are scores of thousands of tapes in the vaults. From a purchaser's position it seems that this asset should be fully digitized and documented. But this would be a mammoth task and not very cost effective. Tracks by artists are frequently discovered by chance when researching another artist and backing or lead vocal tracks may be the only tracks found. Take the 'Cellar Full Of Motown' sets which collect

such finds. We are awaiting Volume 3 of these compilations with another 40 tracks surfacing in this way.

It would take thousands of man hours to fully research the material and document each artist. It is possible that unheard Seasons/Valli tracks may not be uncovered for many years and then only by chance. A detailed search by Motown is needed to find the best of the material listed (see later) or other tracks we know were recorded like "I Wonder Why", which has surfaced amongst collectors. No sign of this track has yet been found in the vaults.

It is understandable that Bob and Frankie might be nervous about this project as, with follow up products from the success of 'Jersey Boys' due later in the year, a release on Motown may not be part of the 'business plan'. There is also lack of clarity about payments with no contracts in existence. We know that they do feel there is a risk that tracks are incomplete or not up to their exacting standards. We

believe this fear is unfounded. It is also clear from our conversations that their involvement would be welcomed by Motown. Paul told us..."**I never use unsuitable or unfinished tracks in these compilations as the reputation of the label is paramount and the artist involvement and satisfaction with the collection is highly desirable**" One thing is certain however and that is that the recorded tracks from 'Chameleon', 'Inside You' and the singles exist, and their compilation could happen. It remains to be seen if any of the listed unreleased tracks can be found and what else may turn up. From our knowledge of Paul's work and of his clear commitment to this project there is a chance that it may happen. If that 'commitment' is matched by a corresponding willingness from the Partnership to overcome the legal issues and give us something special to reflect this period of their career, then a quality release could result. We know Paul and Motown are committed to make a good job of it and we certainly want to buy it. It seems to be upto Frankie and Bob.

The Unreleased Motown tracks. What we know !

The list of unreleased tracks in the Motown database by Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons provides some intriguing questions. The Partnership have always maintained that these are no more than incomplete vocal tracks or 'demos', not written for Frankie's voice and often in the wrong key by producers not used to working with him. That may be true and we would all agree the release of such work would be damaging to his career. Nobody wants that, least of all Motown who have their reputation to protect.

But with possibly between 20 and 50



Ellie Greenwich with Bob Crewe. Did the Four Seasons record their composition with Steve Tudanger, 'Be My Lover, Be My Friend' whilst at Mowest? Courtesy George Showerer

tracks in the vaults there is surely some probability that some would be complete as was the case back in 1975. So what do the titles reveal? Many of us can all recall when



Comment

Mowest back in 1975 dipped back into the vaults to put together 12 tracks on the UK release of the "Inside You" album (Mowest 7007).(Motown 852 In USA: 9 tracks) At that time with the Four Seasons having left the label, the Motown management then clearly thought they owned the rights to the tracks and were able to issue unreleased titles. Maybe it was the core of the 'Inside Out' album (Motown 788 – August 1973) which had been abandoned. That 1975 album confirmed what we had heard about the group's career during the latter stages of their time at Motown. Bob Gaudio was producing other artists (like Martin and Finlay or Diana Ross) and Frankie Valli was doing covers of Motown standards and working with other producers in an attempt to find a hit. Hal Davis, Willie Hutch , Jerry Marcellino and Mel Larson all tried with Frankie but only 'Just Look What You Have Done", the Brenda Holloway Northern Soul classic was up to an acceptable standard. The album did however include some classic previously unreleased Bob Crewe penned and produced efforts('Inside You' and 'With My Eyes Wide Open') which may have been the concept for that lost 1973 album as well as the singles 'Hickory', 'Charisma', 'Life and Breathe' and 'And I Will Love You' which had previously only been available on 45. So what clues can we gain from examining the list that was provided by an anonymous Motown fan back in 2001?.

'Be My Lover, Be My Friend' is a song written by Bob Crewe with Ellie Greenwich and Steve Tudanger. Steve was a member of the 4-Evers and died recently. He produced an album for legend Ellie Greenwich during the early 70's Her long standing relationship with Bob Crewe makes this track a 'must hear'. The next interesting track 'Hymn To Her' would have been suspected as the

Pretenders track of the same name. Highly unlikely as that track was written in 1986 by Meg Keene for their 'Get Close' album. This song is a Crewe/Nolan composition, and is reputedly sung by the Four Seasons. Perhaps it is one of a series they wrote for Frankie and the group (which also included 'My Eyes Adored You' which the Partnership took to Private Stock).

Bob Crewe always registered his songs at BMI and as revealed by Jim Huggard in our Newsletter 37 there are several other songs in the list equally intriguing and clearly connected to the superb Crewe produced tracks from this time. 'After You' (Crewe/Corbetta/Marmelzat) reveals Jerry's early association with the group he would eventually become a member of, whilst 'Give Us This Day' (Crewe/Shatkin) and 'Turn It All Around' (Crewe/Hardwick) reveal other associates writing with Bob. Another unmissable track is yet another Crewe/Nolan composition 'Lovers' Other familiar compositions occur through this list. 'Whatever You Want' (Crewe/Gaudio) was an awesome piece of soul Bob Crewe produced with Jerry Butler back at Vee-Jay in 1962. (see 'Seasons' Connections Volume 1 – Newsletter 37) Presumably this great song was planned to be resurrected by either Valli solo or with the group as versions are listed by each.' Stop Look and Listen (To Your Heart)' was a song produced by Bob Gaudio and record-

ed with Diana Ross and a version of that by Frankie Valli is reputed to be in the vaults. Along with it is another track from that Diana Ross album 'Include Me In Your Life' Would anyone else have produced this with Frankie? We think there is a good chance Bob Gaudio may have cut these with Frankie as the demos for that album. There are other intriguing titles like 'Wigs and Lashes', or 'Minute By Minute, Day by Day' and 'Future Years' but no more information can be found about them. We are sure further research by Motown would reveal other exciting finds (maybe even an early version of 'My Eyes Adored You'), but with the problems of finding material amongst all those tapes even these listed gems may never be heard.

There is certainly enough to convince us that complete versions of some unreleased tracks do exist in the Motown Vault.

If this article was enough to capture Bob and Frankie's imagination and persuade them of the potential value of their previous work, then it would have been worth the effort. We would all like to think maybe they would be inspired to work with Motown and check what exists and its quality and completeness. At the moment there is no sign of this. To fans it remains another 'wish list' that is just part of the sadly untold musical story at Motown. **Chameleon**

The Songs Of Robert John Francis!!! Who?

The first time we noticed this name was when we queried how a song by Bob Gaudio turned up on the excellent "Touch Me" 1985 album by the Temptations.

'Deeper Than Love' was listed as composed by Bob Gaudio – Judy Parker – Lenny Goldsmith. When we asked Bob about this he mentioned an album he had produced for 'Stoneground' in 1979 called 'Hearts Of Stone'. This album we discovered had several tracks written by the mysterious Robert John Francis including 'Deeper Than Love'. Confirmation indeed that this writer must be the infamous Bob Gaudio. Many well known writers adopt a name when pursuing alternative projects so we went to the BMI site and downloaded the list of songs as written by a Robert John Francis AKA Bob Gaudio. Here they are:

- Every Heartache
- Free Spirit (Stoneground)
- I Got A Happy Feeling In My Heart
- Mother In Law
- Whats A Nice Girl Like You Doing to this we can also add:
- Let It Go (Stoneground)
- Deeper Than Love (Stoneground)

Does anyone recognize any of the these titles ? Maybe this will involve some more sleuth work to locate these songs and who they were performed by. Listening to 'Deeper Than Love' one can't help but be reminded of a line from Jersey Boys... "When I heard that voice (ie Frankie Valli) I knew I had to write for it..." Whilst Stoneground's rock group performance of the song is slow and OK, The Temptations deliver a pacy and intense imitation of the Four Seasons with a lead by Ron Tyson which reminds us that this is a song just made for Frankie Valli. How we have never heard him perform it is a mystery...but there is still time.... on his forthcoming album. Catch an excerpt of the Temps great version on our web site and imagine Frankie's voice doing it. If enough people tell him, maybe he'll record it! **The Music Detectives**

